

# SUBVERSIVE WISDOM / Sunday School- October 9, 2011

## Unifying Topic: THE SUPERIORITY OF WISDOM

### Lesson Text

**I. The Importance Of Wisdom (Ecclesiastes 9:13)**

**II. The Actions Of A Wise Man (Ecclesiastes 9:14-18)**

**The Main Thought:** Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard. (Ecclesiastes 9:16, KJV).

**Unifying Principle:** People are drawn in by loud voices that make an impression even though these voices lack true wisdom. To whom should we listen? Ecclesiastes teaches that we should not ignore the quiet, thoughtful words of the wise.

**Lesson Aim:** To introduce the students to the story of an obscure person, wise but poor, who delivered a city in order to help them understand the importance of wisdom.

**Life aim:** To help students recognize the superiority of godly wisdom over force and the value of asking God for wisdom. A Christian's life must be lived in a way that reflects God's wisdom.

9:13 This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me:

9:14 There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it.

9:15 Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man.

9:16 Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.

9:17 The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools.

9:18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good.

### **HISTORY:**

<sup>1</sup>The Book of Ecclesiastes is in the Bible's Old Testament. We do not know who wrote Ecclesiastes. Many people think that the author of Ecclesiastes was King Solomon. However, in the book, the author simply calls himself 'The Teacher' (*In the KJV, he is known as 'the Preacher'*). The Preacher identifies himself as the son of David, king in Jerusalem (1:1), but the name of the author never appears in the book.

Solomon was very wise. But he did not know the purpose of his own life. He discovered that pleasure achieved nothing. He realized that even a wise man would die like a fool. And he did not know the purpose of work (Ecclesiastes 2). He even saw that money has no real value (Ecclesiastes 5).

Solomon did know that rulers should be fair (Ecclesiastes 8). And everybody must respect God ((Ecclesiastes 5). And he believed that wisdom is good (Ecclesiastes 9:13-18). His life prepared him to see and come to understand the superiority of God's wisdom.

**Chapter 9:1-6 Death Is Unavoidable:** In this first section, Solomon explains that death is the "*Great Equalizer.*" Death plays no favorites and overlooks no one. Regardless of your strength and wealth, you are going to die. <sup>v1</sup>**The righteous and the wise; their works are in the hand of God.** God knows our future, whether it will bring blessing (*love*) or sorrow (*hatred*). There are no guarantees as to what life will bring, but the certainty of life is that God is involved in the lives of those who trust Him. Everything that man is, God created him to be. Solomon is only wise, because God gave him wisdom. <sup>v2</sup>**It's the same for all; one event for the righteous, the wicked, the good, the clean, the unclean, the sacrifice, the one that didn't sacrifice, the sinner, the swearer, and the one that fear an oath.** The word says, "*It rains on the just and on the unjust*" *Matt.5:45*. Certain things happen to all of us. There are general blessings, and general natural evils, that equally affect the just and the unjust. We share a common destiny in earth—death and the grave; but we do not share a common destiny in eternity. How people deal with the reality of death reveals itself in the way they deal with the realities of life. There are three possible responses people make to the ever-present fear of death. (1)They try to **ESCAPE**. The fact of death and the fear of death will bring out the best in people or the worst in people. Death is however, inescapable! This one fate, death itself, <sup>v3</sup> **is an "evil" (a tragedy) among all things that are done under the**

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-outline/ecclesiastes-summary.htm>  
<http://www.pitem.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

**sun** (on earth) that awaits everyone. **The heart of the sons of men is full of evil and madness while they live.** The Hebrew word translated "*madness*" implies a "*blindness to the true issues.*" They lack the ability to see things rightly. Somehow we sense this even though we will not talk about it. Hence, from their darkness and evil they go to their death. The hope is that they might repent before they die. As long as they are **joined to all the living there is hope.** That's why this second response to the ever-present fear of death is (2) **ENDURANCE.** "*Where there is life, there is hope!*" <sup>2</sup>Enduring (*lasting, continuing*) the certainty of death occurs by:

- 1) Remembering that death happens to all
- 2) Enjoying family and work
- 3) Expecting the unexpected
- 4) Utilizing wisdom that is available to us

We endure through life no matter what is dealt. The description of <sup>4</sup>**a living dog and a dead lion** shows that life is to be preferred to death. The dog was thought of as a useless animal, and the lion was thought of as being the bravest. For a dead lion, there is no such possibility; no existence for a second chance. On the other hand, God gives chance after chance to the living and in so doing they embrace the joy that life has to offer. <sup>5</sup>**The living, know they shall die.** As long as one considers this while alive, it may move them to consider his ways and thereby prepare him to meet the Lord. **The dead knows nothing** means once you die, you can't change what you've done or even suddenly plan to become a better person. The dead does not know what is happening on earth, but the living does and can respond to it. The dead cannot add anything to their reward or their reputation, but the living can. Those that die, **the memory of them are soon forgotten.** Oh yes we mourn for a while, however, the death of the flesh is forgotten but the spirit of a man lives on in our hearts. The point to all of this is:

#### POINT:

*Necromancy was the contacting of the dead on behalf of the living. It is found in ancient literature from the Sumerian period (late 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium B.C.), such as the Mesopotamian story of Gilgamesh and Enkidu in the netherworld. Heroes would make their way to the edge of the land of the dead to speak with those who had passed into the land of Death. Or they consulted a medium who connected them to the spirit to whom they wished to speak.*

*The Law of Moses forbade such practices (Deut.18:11). However, Saul was one that sought to gain information from the spirits of the dead, asking the medium of En Dor to call up the ghost of Samuel. Saul thought he could learn the will of God from the dead. Not only did this act violate God's law, but also Saul's own proclamation against necromancy (1Sam.28:3, 9).*

The dead cannot relate come back to people on earth by <sup>6</sup>**loving, hating, or envying**, for **it is now perished**, but the living can. There is a show that airs now on TV called "*A Gifted Man.*" A doctor's ex-wife is killed unexpectedly and comes back as a ghost to try to finish what she did not have an opportunity to finish through her ex-husband who is a renowned surgeon. This is only in the movies. After death there is no feeling of hate or envy. All of their feelings that manifested themselves in their lives **under the sun** (on earth) perished. Their love is for God. Whatever they would have loved to do, or whatever envy was in the heart, or hatred in the heart perished when the person died.

**Chapter 9:7-12 Principles For Living:** Coming from verse 6 now it says, <sup>7</sup>**Go thy way...** because the third response to the fear of death is **ENJOYMENT.** It says **go eat bread and drink wine with a merry heart for God accepted your works.** This is a daily meal. This is what David did after his son died. Don't sit and brood! Get up and live! Life is allotted back to you. He has approved your life of labor; it's already pleasing to God. In eastern times, life was difficult in the average home, but every family knew how to enjoy special occasions such as weddings and reunions of those coming back home. That's why <sup>8</sup>**white garments** were worn and the **ointment** of special perfume upon their heads was used, which expressed a sign of joy. Upon these joyful occasions, they anointed themselves with expensive perfume instead of the usual olive oil. In enjoying life, man is to <sup>9</sup>**live joyfully with the wife he loves.** His **days** are empty and fleeting **which God gave him under the sun.** Solomon knew nothing about live-in couples or trial

<sup>2</sup> [http://executableoutlines.com/ec/ec\\_08.htm](http://executableoutlines.com/ec/ec_08.htm)  
<http://www.pitem.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

marriages. He saw a wife as a gift from God (Prov.18:22' 19; 14). It's too bad Solomon didn't live up to his own ideals. Here in this verse, the emphasis is on monogamy and the intensity of relationship which the man and woman are to share which would not be possible in a polygamous structure. This is his portion and labor in life. This is all the outward happiness of a man in this life. <sup>V10</sup>**Whatever you find your hand to do, do it with might** (*strength*) because the things that make up employment in this life will not be present in the grave, so make the most of your opportunities now. It is wonderful to be loved and wanted, but it is much more wonderful to be needed. There is a feeling of accomplishment that comes from a job well done. **For in the grave where we're going, there is no pursuit, or plans, or knowledge nor wisdom.** What we do, we must do it well. Jesus expresses the same thought when He says, "*I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work*" Jh.9:4. <sup>V11</sup>**I returned and saw...** means, **I again saw; I have seen something else; I resumed my investigation under the sun,**

- **the race is not given to the swift,**
- **nor the battle to the strong,**
- **neither is bread to the wise,**
- **nor riches to men of understanding,**
- **nor favor to men of skill;**

Evil times and unfavorable circumstances fall on each of these, and they come with alarming suddenness. **Time** (*moment*) **and chance** (*opportunity*) **happens to them all;** for there is a certain "*time*" fixed by the Lord for every event. The word "*chance*" also means "*occurrence or event.*" God has a time for everything (3:1-8), a purpose to be fulfilled in that time, and something beautiful to come out of it in the end. You may be in the right place at the right time to get a job, and ability had very little to do with it. Time and chance are in God's hands. <sup>3</sup>But in this time and chance (*opportunity*) there is incident, what may fall in; and occurrence, what may meet and frustrate an attempt. These things should be wisely weighed, and seriously balanced. While you have time, seek an opportunity to do what is right; but calculate on hindrances and oppositions, because time and opportunity have their incident and occurrence. Rest assured that trouble comes on the scene and wreck plans and <sup>V12</sup>**man knows not his time.** The statement of this verse is that man is suddenly ensnared by death, as birds and fish are by a net. Though it is fixed and settled by the Lord, yet times and seasons are kept in His own power, and not known by men. Just when you think you have something under control it can all fall apart. This fact reveals man's ignorance and his helplessness. How uncertain life is without God.

What these three responses to the fear of death says is: you needn't fear death because you can't escape it; you needn't fear death because your endurance, your staying power, your continued existence gives you time to prepare and respond in a better way while you live; and thirdly, you needn't fear death because your life can be an enjoyment to God and not be an empty life that does not please Him while you live. Under the cloud of death savor the joys of life. Do not allow yourself to get mired down in its vexatious problems. If we fear God and walk by faith, we will not try to escape or merely endure life. We will enjoy life and receive it happily as a gift from the Lord, knowing His best is always our best, even on the other side.

## **LESSON:**

### **Ecclesiastes 9:13 The Importance Of Wisdom**

**913 This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me:** The first half of this chapter talked about death. Therefore, after knowing that man does not know his time of departure and all are in the hand of God, here is another case of wisdom I have seen on earth; I have observed this wisdom and it left a great impression on me. When wisdom is given, it is supposed to leave you with understanding and it is to leave you knowing that there is something else you didn't know. So take heed because true wisdom from God will turn awesome things around. He only gives it to those under the sun, while you live. It is not given to the dead. The next verse will show how wisdom of a poor wise man seemed great. People can say many things, but it doesn't leave an impression of greatness.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Bible.show/sVerseID/17487/eVerseID/17487/RTD/Clarke>  
<http://www.pitem.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

## **Ecclesiastes 9:14-18 The Actions Of A Wise Man**

**9:14** There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it. The name or the city was not given and numbers don't mean anything to God (of few men). The little history mentioned here may have either been a fact, or intended as an instructive fable or parable. When I look at this city with few men, know the enemy, the devil is bound to attack. He comes in to take hold of and overwhelm you by building great strongholds; by erecting great walls. When strongholds have taken hold of a city, a home, or an individual, what do you do? What action do you take? Do you use your strength or God's wisdom? It says, "*there came a great king.*" A king is mighty, coming in to take over. I don't know if there was disobedience in the city but we can look at Adam and his disobedience to God (Gen.3); Achan sinned and brought defeat on the army of Israel (Josh.7); David's sin brought trouble to Israel (2Sam.24), and the revolt of Absalom led the nation into a civil war (2Sam.15). Why would a great king want such a little city with few men? Well, the word would probably be greed because he surely wasn't afraid of them. And he surely didn't count on one poor wise man.

**9:15** Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. The name of the man was not given. God's hero, His hidden treasure was this poor wise man who is ready to do his part, even though men will despise him, refuse to hear his words, and ultimately forget him. Such a man is, however, a man compelled by a sense of duty. He continues to speak the words of wisdom, regardless of the response of others. He is the Preacher of wisdom who delivered the city. In the Book of Esther, there were those that plotted to kill the king. Mordecai, a poor Jew saved the king but was never rewarded for his faithful duty, until God revealed it to the king in a dream. Can you remember when Jesus delivered you? It was not by your might or power, but by God's Spirit. Our abilities are no guarantee of success. It is only through God's Son that we are saved and set free. You can't forget God's grace, yet, many do. Jesus suffered; delivered us from the Law and its condemnation; He died because of love. Just as here, no man remembered this poor man. <sup>4</sup>It never once entered into their thoughts that he could ever be their deliverer; they never imagined he had a capacity to advise, direct, or assist, in such service, or bring about such an affair: so Christ, when He appeared in the world, the Jews saw nothing that was promising in Him; they could not believe that He was sent to be the Saviour and Deliverer of them, and therefore rejected Him.

**9:16** Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard. From the scenario in verse 14, we saw the contrast of a small city with few men against a great king; in verse 15, a poor wise man delivering a city against a great king, but was never remembered; and this verse is the contrast of wisdom and strength. The Teacher/Preacher's summation is that wisdom is better than strength; he understood from viewing this situation, a man may by his wisdom affect that which he could never compass by his strength, and may overcome those by out-witting them who are able to overpower him. Now that's something to think about. Nevertheless (*on the other hand*), this poor man is regarded with contempt even after delivering them from the snare of the enemy. His words were regarded at one time but now they are not even heeded. Most people would listen to the wise man, if he was wealthy. But we see they have no respect for the poor man.

**9:17** The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools. Now we see the contrast is between the words spoken quietly by wise men against the cry of a ruler of fools. A quiet voice will tend to quieten things down against those who wanted to be loud. You've seen the commercial where the woman is speaking to her dog? She says "*use your quiet voice*" (*smile*). Well, a dog only knows how to use his yapping voice. That's all! (*smile*). Think about it, which message do you want to get over and what message will they get? A wise man who speaks the truth through wisdom from God will be heard; they may not always be received. But God will somehow bring back those words spoken to the hearer's remembrance. Even though people are drawn to loud voices, they will not hold your attention if they're not saying anything constructive. A fool shouting will be ignored. You would shut off your hearing from the fool. He has nothing of profit to say, even if the fool is a king, and those who hear him, will not receive his message. However, wise men hear from God and know when to speak at the right time, for His plan

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<sup>4</sup> <http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/9-15.htm>

<http://www.pitem.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

is more profound than the one who is trying to exercise authority among fools.

**9:18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good.** Now we have the contrast of that wisdom is better against weapons of war. Through one error, using weapons of war too hastily would destroy all the good that had been accomplished and still could be accomplished through the wisdom of men. A grave error would be for individuals to not sit down to communicate first. One sinner speaking adversely (*harmfully, unfavorably*); being subversive (*rebellious, insubordinate*) in his actions or so called wisdom, can destroy themselves forever and others who believe him, thereby dragging all to hell with him. Don't you know that one sinner destroys much good? It shows that one's disobedience destroys much! When we look at our government and those placed in office to help us, we see that they are really starting wars with their antics. The way of wisdom is still the better; and who has that wisdom? Well, it comes from God! You can hear God's wisdom by reading the bible and asking Him for understanding. Thereby, you can hear the superiority of God's wisdom over subversive wisdom of those in government.

#### **SUMMARY:**

Wisdom is pre-eminent though often unappreciated. Life's decisions sometimes come from common sources which we didn't think to rely on. Wisdom was important enough against a great king. It is important enough against the strength of the mightiest. It is important against the cry of the ruler of fools. And it is important against weapons of war. By it being unappreciated, sometimes means that it will be overlooked at, not received by many, but their ears heard it even though they didn't want to. The superiority of wisdom is still vulnerable to neglect, and it can easily be overshadowed by loud voices or one sinner. It proves that subversive wisdom will lead you straight to hell along with others that want to be rebellious, thereby leaving the claim that people hear what they want to hear. On the other hand, God's wisdom does not turn you away from truth. God's wisdom allows you to learn something you didn't know at first. God's wisdom will be spoken quietly in your inner spirit and your actions will always turn out right for you and those around you.

#### **APPLICATION:**

In these days and times, it pays to listen from the heart instead of from the head.