

trouble that David had. These prayers are examples of how one man really went to God with his woes. I Peter 5:8 encourages us to go to God with all of our cares because he cares for us...David did just that...and so should we. God is not some immovable stone idol that heathen worship. God is a God that is concerned with you and me. He is a loving God that is willing and ready to assist in any way...but we never tell him our concerns. Read through the book of Psalms once just to write down and list all of the 1) sins which David confessed, 2) all of the prayers in which David thanked God for something, 3) all of the requests for deliverance which David uttered, and 4) the number of times that David expressed confidence that God would deliver him. It is important for us to see how the books of the Bible apply to us today. They are not just books of biography and history. They are books of continuing relevance by which man can come to a knowledge of what he needs to do to be saved eternally by the blood of Jesus the Christ the son of the living God.

PROVERBS

The book of proverbs, like the previous book of Psalms, is rich in wisdom and practical information for man today. Proverbs, written to a large extent by Solomon the son of David, does not have any one major theme with the exception of the general theme of the attainment of wisdom. That general theme is, however, applied to just about every pursuit that one can imagine. Within the book it is applied to knowledge, immorality, purity, business, domestic affairs, et al. The book is written in a style which is distinctly Jewish. The writer often states a fact in the beginning of the verse and then repeats that same thought in different words in the concluding portion of the same verse. Often times the author will state something in the beginning of his thoughts and then contrast that facet of the subject by stating the opposite in the final section. Because of the immense amount of subject matter within each chapter it will be necessary to discuss only a few of the topics in each chapter, and that only sparingly.

CHAPTER ONE

Within the first chapter of the book of proverbs we are given the title, the author, the purpose (vs.2-6), and the major theme (knowledge, wisdom and instruction-Vs.7). The chapter also deals with warnings against violence and wicked ways. In the last section of the chapter wisdom is personified and depicted as addressing the reader. This method of teaching will be used time and again within the book. The last section has wisdom telling us the consequences of neglecting her.

CHAPTER TWO

The second chapter talks about the rewards of seeking wisdom and just how wisdom is obtained. After it is obtained, man must always walk in wisdom. Note that reference is made to a "strange woman". This does not indicate any specific person, but it is a reference to all who are foolish in their ways. The book of Proverbs often uses the imagery of the harlot and the whore as the epitome of sinfulness and foolishness. Such is to be avoided at all costs. With regard to the attainment of wisdom it is essential to mention that wisdom is gotten by a twofold method: 1) man seeks wisdom with all his might, and 2) God grants wisdom (James 1:5ff). These two thoughts are not to be taken as being contradictory, but rather supplementary and complementary. God does not grant wisdom to anyone, but only to those who seek wisdom. In the books of Kings we noted that Solomon prayed for wisdom and God subsequently gave it to him. Wisdom is not, however, just a thunderbolt which comes down to man and all of a sudden he has wisdom. Man's part is seeking after that wisdom. It must be understood that wisdom is not just knowledge, even though knowledge is involved. Wisdom is properly understood as the proper application and usage of knowledge. It is up to mankind to seek for knowledge (vs.1-6). God does not miraculously tell us the things that we need to know. We have to look diligently for them (Matthew 5:6, Hebrews 11:6) and really apply ourselves in order to gather and collect knowledge. But the knowledge does not necessarily make us wise. Many of us have known or heard of men and women who were smart but who did not have any "horse sense". The proper application of acquired knowledge is wisdom and that element is provided by God to those who truly seek it.

CHAPTER THREE

Within the third chapter of proverbs we see exhortations to obedience. Another teaching method is employed in this chapter. Here we notice a father giving instructions to his son about wisdom and its necessity. The blessings of wisdom are spoken of. Wisdom is depicted as being more precious than material wealth and the wise are those who are going to inherit honor. The last section of the chapter contains information with regard to the proper treatment of friends and neighbors. This is involved in the exercise of wisdom. Note the admonitions in vs.9ff to be good stewards of our possessions.

CHAPTER FOUR

This chapter continues the picture of a father instructing his son. There is a command to obtain wisdom and to avoid wickedness. Note that in vs. 16 the wicked are portrayed as refusing sleep until they have committed some crime. One of the striking aspects of the book of Proverbs is its true and accurate portrayal of the lives and hearts of all men. The message is sometimes pointed and stinging, but it is never off the mark. It is always straightforward. Note the use of contrast with reference to those who are wise and those who are foolish. Throughout the book this contrast, as well as that of the righteous to the wicked, is repeated. The last section of the book (vs.20ff) contains positive instructions for the son. Note that wisdom is pictured as the life and health of a person.

CHAPTER FIVE

This chapter contains warnings against immorality to the son and in general deals with the principles of marriage. The son is taught to be chaste and to keep the sexual relationships that he has within the boundaries of the institution of marriage.

CHAPTER SIX

This chapter contains further warnings, this time about idleness and falsehoods. Honest labor is often exalted in the book. Note the seven deadly sins which God is said to hate in vs.16ff. The last section of the book (vs.20ff) is a further warning against adultery. Notice the very graphic representation of the harlot (vs.24,25ff) In contradistinction to such sin, the son is encouraged to seek the laws of the Lord. (vs.23)

CHAPTER SEVEN

This entire chapter shows the wiles and the deceits of the harlot as she engages in her business. The son is to be on guard at all times against such deceptions. Again, notice the very blunt language. It is not meant to intimidate nor to encourage rebellion; it is intended only to truthfully inform the son of the realities of sin and the consequences of that sin (vs.27).

CHAPTER EIGHT

Again, we note the personification of wisdom as she addresses the reader. In this section of the book wisdom is declared to be everlasting. She calls for man to seek after her and invites him to treasure the joys which she can offer. In contrast to the wiles of the evil harlot, wisdom is shown to be pure, simple and honest.

CHAPTER NINE

In this the ninth chapter of the book of Proverbs we see the continuation of wisdom's address. She again invites man to seek for her. The chapter concludes by presenting yet another scene of the deceitfulness of the harlot. Notice the message of the last verse of the chapter and the verse immediately preceding it. We often say that the grass is always on the other side, and the passage here teaches the "pleasure" which so many seek to find in immorality. It is only fleeting (Heb.11:24ff). We must learn to satisfy such desires within the bounds of marriage (ch.5:15ff).

CHAPTER TEN

Beginning in this the tenth chapter of Proverbs we note a long list of contrasts between the wise and the foolish. The righteous are those that exhibit wisdom; the wicked exhibit foolishness. Again, note the straightforward and uncompromising language in which the wicked are shown to be foolish.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Within this chapter we have a continuation of the contrast between the righteous and the wicked, the trustworthy and the talebearer. The last portion of the chapter (vs.24ff)

deals with the liberality of the righteous man. Note the blessings that are depicted for giving so freely (cf. Luke 6:38). Notice once again the clear and uncompromising way that sin is described. (vs.22)

CHAPTER TWELVE

This chapter continues to contrast the wise and the foolish. Note that man is encouraged to love knowledge. So often members of the Lord's church have the idea that to know God's word requires an infinite amount of study and that one must be a virtual genius to be able to acquire a reasonable amount of Bible knowledge. This concept is unfounded in the least. The desire to learn is that which leads to knowledge and not necessarily the greatness (or lack of it) of one's mental capacity. Notice within the chapter the exhortation for man to care for both life and land. The poignant portrayal of the foolish is expressed in vs. 15 where we note that "the way of a fool is right in his own eyes". Note also the continuing mention of the relationship between righteousness and physical health, good works and health, and proper attitudes and physical well being. In vs. 25 we note the value of a good word. We should always be trying to do our best to encourage one another.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The contrast continues. Note that righteousness and wisdom is shown to be the source of great wealth, hope, and contentment. Sin and wickedness is always portrayed in the opposite light. Note that in vs. 15 "the way of the transgressors is hard". Please be sure to avail yourself of the rest of the practical knowledge that this great book possesses. This book does not just contain information that is wise and witty; but it contains information that is practical and practice-able.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

This is yet another chapter that continues the contrast between the wicked and the righteous, the wise and the foolish. Note vs.9: "Fools make a mock at sin:...". This is so very true. Verse 34 is another often quoted verse. If the individual is righteous, the home will be affected; if the home is righteous, then that will affect each entity until the nation will be affected as well.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

As the contrast between the foolish and the wise continues we notice the difference in the tongues of the two. The wise answers in such a way that wisdom is exuded. The foolish answers in such a way as to show the character of a fool. Notice that in vs.13ff the relationship between proper living and good physical living is again set forth. Studies have been conducted among those of Mormon persuasion which determined that their lifestyle affects their health to a very great degree. Their avoidance of alcohol, tobacco, and certain food products which are known to have adverse effects on health produces a group of people that live longer and happier. It is sad to say that members of the Lord's church are not so characterized. Note such verses as 15, 16, 20,21, et al. teach this principle.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

This chapter and the following few chapters list numerous moral, spiritual, and ethical precepts that man is to follow. Note that the Lord is aware of all that a man does (vs.2ff). Commitment to the Lord, seeking for wisdom, and encouraging words are all taught to be beneficial patterns by which the righteous should live. Wisdom is declared to be the fountain of life (vs.22)

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

This chapter also discusses numerous moral, spiritual, and ethical principles. Fine speech is contrasted with false and flattering speech in the first section of the chapter. The last portion of the chapter talks about the price and the value of wisdom. Again, note the method of portraying sin. In vs. 12 a fool in his folly is said to be worse than a bear robbed of her cubs. Pointed, yet true teachings are characteristic of Proverbs. The beginning of strife is like a person who pours out water (vs.14)..it seems to flow everywhere. Note once again the relation between a proper attitude and health (vs.22).

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

This chapter also contrast the speech of the righteous and the wicked. Note that vs. 4 states that "the words of a man's mouth are as deep waters." We must always remember that

even though the tongue says the words, it is the mind and the heart which serves as their source (Mt.12:34). Note the picture presented in vs. 19: "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle." Note also the value of a faithful wife in vs.22.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

This chapter continues teaching through the use of contrasts. The first section contrasts the rich and the poor. Note that the poor man who is honest and has integrity is seen to be better than the fool. The continuing admonition to seek after knowledge is again noted. In vs. 8 we note that "he that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul: he that keepeth understanding shall find good." The thought of fearing (i.e. respecting) the Lord is noted in this chapter and throughout the book.(vs.23)

CHAPTER TWENTY

Chapter twenty continue the method of teaching by contrast, and teaching ethical precepts. The chapter talks about the integrity of the righteous, the foolishness of drinking, the virtue of honest labor, the sin of meddling and flattery, et al. Notice that in vs. 15 and following that wisdom is again shown to be of greater value than the physical riches of this world.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

This chapter talks about the treasures of the wicked and compares them with the treasures of the wise. The subjects of the tongue, wisdom, pride, etc. are also dealt with.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

This the twenty-second chapter talks about the value of a good name. The popular verse which deals with the upbringing of a child is found in vs.6 (cf. Eph.6:1ff). In addition to vs. 6, note vs. 15 as it relates to the rearing of children. The chapter also contains numerous admonitions to righteous living such as : following the Lord, treating the poor fairly, etc.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

This chapter talks about the delicacies of the rich. The wise man is not to labor to be rich, that is he should not make riches his goal simply for the sake of the riches. Notice vs. 7: "for as he thinketh in his heart,so is he:". The chapter contains further words of exhortation for the son as they are given by the father.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Chapter 24 continues to depict the advice a father gives to his son. The value of wisdom is gainfully mentioned. Many wise sayings are given by which a man should live. (vs.23ff) Notice the admonitions not to be desirous of evil men. Verse 9 teaches that "the thought of foolishness is sin." Not only is a man not to desire to be like the wicked, but he is not to rejoice when his enemy falls (vs.17), and not to worry because of wicked men (vs.19). Rather than concerning oneself with all of these things, the son is encouraged to respect the Lord (vs.21ff).

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

This chapter and the following ones contains additional proverbs of Solomon as they were copied by Hezekiah the king of Judah's men. They contain numerous comparisons, warnings, and instructions. This chapter speaks about the counsel for the king's presence and the relationship between a person and his neighbor or his enemy. Practical wisdom is given in such verses as vs.11 ("A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.")

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Chapter twenty-six talks about the fool and his folly and the lazy man and the lying tongue. This chapter paints the wicked in their true colors. The sins of the wicked are openly described and they are most certainly not presented in a favorable light.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

This chapter talks about wisdom for today and wisdom for tomorrow. The subjects of pride, friendship, wisdom, and desires are among the many discussed in this chapter. Note that vs. 20 teaches that "hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied." This sort of inclination is seen in the description of the wicked in Genesis 6

and in the description of the false teachers and prophets of II Peter 2. Some people are never satisfied.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

This chapter presents us with another contrast of the wicked and the righteous. Proper respect for the law, the poor, the land, and all people is taught in this chapter. The righteous are those who trust in the Lord, as all men should do.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Chapter twenty-nine continues the contrast between the righteous and the wicked. The righteous consider the poor, love wisdom, have vision, judgeth fairly, and are depicted as those who will reign one day. The wicked, of course, are represented as being the opposite of the righteous.

CHAPTER THIRTY

Chapter thirty contains the words of Agur the son of Jakeh. These personal observations closely relate to much of the previous information which has already been presented by Solomon in the preceding chapters of Proverbs. God's word is said to be pure (vs.5), wrath is said to be vain (vs.33), and the way of the righteous is generally upheld.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

The last chapter of the book of Proverbs are the words of king Lemuel. Within the chapter we note that the follies of lust and strong drink are discussed. The last portion of the chapter contains a lengthy description of the woman that is virtuous in the sight of the Lord. She is more valuable than physical possessions. She is profitable to her husband and industrious in deed. She is respected by all and worthy of praise.

PROVERBS: A REVIEW

The book of Proverbs talks about the place of knowledge, the products of knowledge, and the procurement of that knowledge. Knowledge is and of itself is not the all-important key, but rather the proper application of that knowledge...this is wisdom. Proverbs "is for practical ethics what the Psalms are for devotion." [Dickson Analytical Bible, p 73] Note the following:

"This book, however, is more than a collection of pithy sayings. It has a historical background and throws light on the age. It was a time when new vices appeared, a time of great wealth and luxury. With the increase of wealth came temptations to ignore the virtues of the fathers under which the nation had grown and flourished.

It was a new age to which the counsels of this book are addressed, and many of them would not have applied to a simple, patriarchal, agricultural people. It is in the light of these new conditions that the Proverbs should be read and studied. It is this important fact that is frequently overlooked by the reader. We must keep in mind that it was a time endangered by the temptations of sudden wealth. It is true that "The Lord is a very present help in time of need," but it is equally true that the Lord is a greatly needed help in time of prosperity to preserve the soul from its snares and allurements. There is far less danger to the moral and spiritual life of the average person under limited conditions, and even conditions bordering on poverty, than under conditions of plenty and opulence." [Dickson Analytical Bible, p. 745]

No part of the Bible is given without purpose. The book of Proverbs is no exception, but the purpose of the book is not merely to supply the reader with an abundant supply of cute sayings. The purpose is to give direction..direction which must be followed.

"The proverbs emphasize the external religious life. They teach how to practice religion and overcome the daily temptations. [In this regard the Proverbs are closely akin to James 1:12ff. jla] They express a belief in God and His rule over the universe and, therefore, seek to make His religion the controlling motive in life and conduct. They breathe a profound religious conception, but put most

stress upon the doing of religion [Again, this is the emphasis of James 1:22. jla] in all the relations of life." [THE BIBLE BOOK BY BOOK, J.B. Tidwell, p.102]

The messages of the book of Proverbs are many. Some are: 1) God is to be obeyed, 2) wisdom is to be sought after vigorously, 3) sin is to be avoided at all costs, 4) righteous living is to be practiced, 5) discipline is involved in living and teaching others to live, 6) the righteous and the wicked are at opposite poles, 7) money is not the greatest source of value; wisdom is more important, 8) immorality is to be avoided, 9) respect for parents is pleasing to God, 10) liberality is pleasant in the sight of God, 11) fair and honest treatment is to be given to all people, 12) sins of the tongue are to be avoided, 13) foolishness is to be avoided, 14) some men revel in sin, et al. The book of Proverbs is not intended to be aimed at any one people; its intent is to influence the lives of all people.

ECCLESIASTES

The book of Ecclesiastes, written by Solomon, is quite similar to the book of Proverbs as far as the subject matter goes. It contains words of wisdom, but not so generally as does Proverbs. Most of the book of Ecclesiastes is directed to exposing the vanities of life. The book seems to have a very negative attitude, but when the purpose is fully understood that attitude is seen to be very significant.

CHAPTER ONE

The first chapter begins on what many call a sour note. Solomons writes informing us that all is vanity. Initially we must note the extent of the word "all" as it is used in this passage. By glancing at the remainder of the context we note that the very next verse teaches that a man's labor does not profit for anything under the sun, that is to say that the labor of man is not going to bring any ultimate reward in and of itself. This limits the breadth of the word "all" to those things which are of men, performed by men, and confined to this world with reference to their final end. It does not mean that righteousness is vain, that prayer is vain, that worship is vain, or that teaching the truths of God's word is vain. The vanity applies to things of this world. That fact is borne out by the conclusion of the book which shows us the light at the end of the tunnel. Solomon goes on by saying that wisdom is vain. This seems to be in flat opposition to the message of the book of Proverbs, but again the usage of the word "wisdom" is confined to a certain meaning. It does not mean that all wisdom is vain, but it does mean that wisdom in and of itself is only a means to an end and not the end (goal) itself. As a man increases in wisdom he should be ever aware that there is more and more that can be known which he does not know nor will he be able to know. If wisdom were the sole goal of mankind, then this sort of perpetual seeking but never finding would prove to be most vain indeed. Wisdom is to be used for the purposes which God intended it. In this role wisdom is subservient to us and is therefore placed in proper perspective to the goal of eternal life. (cf. ch.12)

CHAPTER TWO

As Solomon continues his discussion of the vanities of life he comes to pleasure and he concludes that this too is vain. As rich and powerful as he was, Solomon would have had ample opportunity to indulge in any worldly pleasure that he chose. Whether or not he sought to exercise his privilege to do so we do not know, but we do know that he was at the very least aware of the vanity in seeking pleasure for pleasure's sake. Again we must note that pleasure (worldly, physical, and sensual pleasure) is not the goal. In verses 4ff Solomon then addresses the subject of great works and likewise concludes that along with pleasure such pursuits are vain. After that he examined wisdom, madness, and folly and concluded that these, too, were vain. The last portion of the chapter informs us that he concluded that work was vain (per se).

CHAPTER THREE

When everything is examined in perspective it can well be said that there is a time for everything and everything in its time. Beginning with verse 16ff Solomon notes that God will judge the righteous and the wicked. All will be judged, and regardless of which a man is he will die and return to the dust. Life, in and of itself, is not the goal.

We must, therefore, realize that we must have a prudent attitude toward life and realize that there is a time for everything. There is a uselessness in human striving simply for things of this life. Man must make the best of this present life realizing that this present life is not the best.

CHAPTER FOUR

As Solomon continues his apparent pessimistic attitude toward all avenues of life he reasons that the oppressions of this life make life a dubious blessing and thereby increase the vanity of life. Vanity is increased by idleness, envy, and covetousness; but the trials of life are better faced by partners than by those who are alone. Even those who are in places of political power must realize that vanity is in that aspect as well.

CHAPTER FIVE

The fifth chapter of the book opens by expressing warnings against making hasty vows. Beginning with verse eight he addresses the general vanities of all things in life and concludes that man must make the best of this present life.

CHAPTER SIX

In the sixth chapter, Solomon turns his attention to the vanity of riches and honor. For all a man's effort he must one day realize that his ambition and his desire will be frustrated if he seeks such things only for the present. The apostle Paul informs us in I Timothy 6 that the pleasures of earth will remain here on this earth when we die. What, therefore, is the purpose of attempting to gather so many during this life. Riches must be taken in proper perspective just as everything else must be. Riches, per se, are not sinful, but the pursuit of riches solely for the purpose of possessing them is sinful. Solomon, of all men, knew what it was like to possess great physical treasures, but he also knew that there was vanity in them.

CHAPTER SEVEN

In this chapter Solomon discusses the counsels of prudence in a world that is corrupted by sin. He cautions men to choose that which is better ("approving the excellent"- Philippians 1:10). He teaches that wisdom is more valuable than wealth. He contrasts asceticism with excess. He speaks of the value of wisdom as it relates to the wickedness of folly. With regard to prosperity we must remember that righteousness does not guarantee wealth, nor does wickedness necessitate poverty. The degree to which a person is righteous or wicked has no direct bearing to the amount of physical possession which he possesses (vs.15).

CHAPTER EIGHT

In this chapter Solomon speaks about expediency in an imperfect world. He teaches that authority is to be accepted, that the wicked will be judged, and that there are injustices in this life. He also mentions that it is impossible to know all the ways of God (cf. Romans 11:33).

CHAPTER NINE

In the ninth chapter Solomon states once more that we must make the best of this life. Death is inevitable for the good and the evil (Heb.9:27). We should, therefore, enjoy life while we can but not solely for the purpose of enjoying the life but because we must learn to be content with that which befalls us in this life. Paul learned to be content in all of the situations which his life encountered. Solomon sets forth in this chapter some basic principles for living which all mankind should follow. In the last section of the chapter he states that wisdom is better than strength.

CHAPTER TEN

Solomon teaches that life is uncertain (i.e. life itself) and that folly is the cause of ruin. Wisdom is to be preferred above folly. (vs.10) In vs. 12ff he states that empty talk is the product of the foolish.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

In the eleventh chapter Solomon talks about how to invest a life. He enjoins all to practice charity (I Cor.13). In the concluding verses he admonishes the young to remain faithful to his creator throughout his life.

CHAPTER TWELVE

In this, the last chapter of Ecclesiastes, Solomon speaks about vanity and the fear of God. He presents an injunction which states that all must live for God and not for the vanities of this life. He concludes the chapter and the book by teaching that we must live life in the light of (i.e. in view of) eternity. Only then will life lose the vain aspect which so often accompanies it, only then will life have the purpose which God intended. Life has true meaning when it is lived as God intended; all else is vanity. The conclusion is: "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man."

ECCLESIASTES: A REVIEW

In this book Solomon addresses the different purposes which men pursue in this life: the quest for wisdom in and of itself, the quest for pleasure for pleasure's sake; the quest for treasures for the sake of the treasure; the quest for power, and all other pursuits. When the bottom line is drawn the total is that all of these pursuits are worthless in and of themselves. Wisdom by itself does not measure up to what God intended wisdom to be; pleasure for pleasure's sake is nothing compared to what God intended; wealth in and of itself is nothing compared to what a true life can be; power is nothing when seen only withing a finite perspective; everything is vain unless it is view from the standpoint of eternity. When such a view is taken into consideration and when man is living in proper respect for God by keeping his commandments, he is fulfilling his WHOLE duty. In this respect, and only in this respect does life become worth something ultimately. Apart from true obedience to God, life has no real value; it has only illusions. Though the book seems to be exceedingly pessimistic in its initial outlook, it closes on a high note. From this perspective we can all realize what Solomon was saying in the early chapters of the book. Note the number of times that he said that something was vanity. Note some of those things that he said were vain. In our own lives we need to be sure that we are not caught in the rut of following after that which is vain, but rather we should be seeking to follow the Lord whatever the cost may be, even at the expense of losing all of the vain things that charm us most. This is true faith, true discipleship, and true Christianity. The book of Ecclesiastes teaches us that: 1) any worldly pursuit viewed from this world alone is involved in vanity, 2) the events of the present have significance only as they are related to the future, 3) God judges on the basis of life and conduct. If this message were more openly declared to the world we would have an easier job of converting the lost. Far too many people are materialistic in their views of life and the world. With this sort of attitude and outlook it is hard to teach them the promises of eternal life. We live withing the confines of space and time. God does not. He is without body, form, and space; he is beyond time. He existed prior to time and will exist subsequent to time...he is eternal. From this standpoint, and only from this standpoint, must we view our lives. The treasures of earth pale into insignificance when compared to the eternal glories of God. God is permanent; earth is temporal. Even we as Christians have a lot to learn from Solomon's final injunction. We must fear God and keep his commandments. Jesus realized this same teaching. In Matthew 6 he spoke about food, clothing, shelter, etc. and said that all of these must be viewed from God's standpoint. As human beings we must seek God, his kingdom, his righteousness; then these things will be understood in their proper light.

SONG OF SOLOMON

This book addresses itself to the marriage relationship and specifically to the physical relationship within marriage. It is neither lewd nor pornographic. It was not written to depict perversion nor to instill the element of lust. It was written to inform us of the beauties of the marriage relationship and the sanctity of that institution in the eyes of God. Though neglected by many Christians today, we must remember that such was not always the case. It was read during the Passover for centuries by the Jews and is still read during that feast up until this day by the Jews on that occasion. The book of Song of Solomon portrays not only the physical love of man and woman, but is also depicts the love of God which he has for his people. In this frame of reference it is

parallel to the book of Hosea. (See notes on Hosea.) Because of the shortness of the book, it will suffice to review the book all at once rather than provide an introduction, chapter analysis, and then a conclusion. The message of the book is manifested through a series of both monologues and dialogues in which the bride-to-be and the groom-to-be exchange their expressions of devotions one with another. The meaning of the story is noted in the following remarks by J.B. Tidwell [The Bible Book By Book, p.107-108]:

"MEANING OF THE STORY. (1) To the Jews of that time it was a call to purity of life, for a return to those relations which God had ordained between man and woman. It was a protest against polygamy which had become almost universal. Indeed, they regarded it as setting forth the whole history of Israel. They had often gone away from God to whom they were plighted as this girl was tempted to turn from her lover. (2) To the Christian it sets forth in allegory Christ and His church as Bridegroom and Bride and the fullness of love which unites the believer and his Savior. The Christian must not yield to the temptations of the world and be untrue to Jesus. Thus the attitude of the girl illustrates the true Christian attitude. (3) To all the world there is shown the purity and constancy of a woman's love and devotion to her ideals. It furnishes an ideal which, if properly held up, would cast out of human society all those monstrous practices that come from unworthy ideals. It would purify the relation of the sexes and save us from the ruin of the social sin."

[For a summary of various interpretations of the book see Dickson, p.796ff.]

ISAIAH

The books of the Old Testament are divided into four separate groups: 1) Law [This group is composed of the books of Gen.-Deut.]; 2) History [This group is made up of the books Joshua-II Chronicles.]; 3) Poetry [This group consists of Job-Song of Solomon.]; and 4) Prophecy [This group contains the books of Isaiah-Malachi.] Though we have spent some time in the preceding 5 books of poetry/wisdom, we must realize that no time has transpired between the close of Chronicles and the opening of Isaiah and the rest of the prophets. The books of Chronicles represent the record of the latest period of time in the Old Testament. All of the prophets lived prior to or during that time. Isaiah, the current prophet under discussion, was contemporary with many of the kings which we have already noted in Kings and Chronicles. You may want to review those two groups of books in order to understand the setting for the book of Isaiah. Isaiah was a prophet to the southern kingdom of Judah. The messages which he delivered to the people told of the wickedness of their times and of the consequence which would be sure to follow if the people did not change their ways. [NOTE: The first books of prophecy; Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel (Jeremiah-Lamentations are generally considered as being written by the same author), are often referred to as the major prophets while the remaining twelve books are often referred to as the minor prophets. This designation has nothing whatsoever to do with the relative importance of each of the men or the messages proclaimed by the men. It is simply a distinction made with reference to the size of the books which were written by the respective men. The initial four are simply larger (hence the title major) in volume than the others.]

CHAPTER ONE

1. In the opening verses of the chapter the book is identified as being that of a vision revealed unto Isaiah. The time frame (consult Kings and Chronicles) is given by naming several of the kings which ruled during the days of Isaiah's prophecies (vs.1).
2. Immediately after the introduction the subject/theme of the book is set forth. Israel, like a child, has wandered away from the paths of God. Animals are well aware of where they receive their sustenance, but the people of God have rebelled against their provider. Note that the nation is referred to as a body which is eaten with sores and bruises; it without soundness. The only reason that it continued to exist was because the Lord had left a remnant, a small portion of faithful followers. Without these few remaining faithful, Israel would have gone the way of Sodom and Gomorrah. [Note: The Lord not only has knowledge of actualities; he also has knowledge of contingencies. cf. Mt.11:20ff and David hiding from Saul.]