

2125 - THE WISE MAN - Ecc 8.1-17

PRELIMS. Man is his own worst enemy, although *God made man upright...they have sought many schemes* [7:29]

WHO IS THE WISE MAN?

Sol is really asking here, Who is wise? How can you tell if a man is wise. We have mentioned several times that wisdom is **doing** the right things. There are people who have a lot of knowledge but are unwise - they do not use it or put it into practice. I have seen many clever and knowledgeable people ruin their own lives!

What does Sol mean by knowing the *interpretation of a thing* [1]?

Ans: We need to **understand** the **whole** situation in which something is situated. We need to be able to **comprehend** the **significance** of things. Everything is in a **context**! Every **detail** in life has a **function** and a part to play in God's world. The whole world is **made-up** of '**little things**' which contribute to a **whole**! Here is wisdom.

1. A wise man submits to authority! Keep the king's command - especially King Jesus! To run **counter** to **any** authority is not wise - provided, of course, they are **not opposed** to God's laws. There is a tremendous **benefit** in obeying superiors. It is a lovely thing to see a man obeying the law when he could 'get away' with breaking it! Children obeying a parent **immediately** is rare these days, but it is beautiful to see it! We live in an age of **rebellion** against **authority**.

Mention is made of *God's oath*! In a **democracy** the people promise to give their **allegiance** to the authority in power - and the king (or the authority in power) takes an **oath** to serve the people honourably. We must all keep our vows to God. We must **submit** to the powers that be. Even if we disagree with the authority, it is wise and right to submit to it. Jesus of course, is the **perfect example** of obeying authorities and keeping covenant - Paying taxes to an **evil despot** - i.e. *render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's*[M22:21]

Running **against appointed authorities** will only **increase** your difficulties. Accepting authorised decisions **alleviates** further problems *Whoever keeps a command will know no evil thing* [5a] An example might be **Tom Watson** in bringing up **Lord's Brittan's** case

- it only made matters worse for him! If he left it alone, people would have forgotten it! So he had to make a **public apology**! Of course, **if new** and **sound** evidence arises, then indeed raise the matter up again! Otherwise, we have to accept authorities *For the word of a king is supreme and who may say to him, 'What are you doing?'* [4]

2. True wisdom knows the **right time** to do something *the wise heart will know the proper time and the just way* [5b]! We can be **too late** in doing the proper thing! You can be **too early**! You can prune the **roses** too early and the frost comes and ruins them! You can leave studying too late for your **exams** and then you take **ill** and can't!!

Moses tried to help Israel **before his time!** *it came into his heart to visit his brothers...He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand...Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?* [Acts 7:23] What happened? He **delayed** his usefulness **40 years!** Yes, 40 years!

Not just too early, not just too late, but also the **right circumstances!** If you know the Boss does not like being disturbed when he is reading the morning newspapers or having his lunch, it is not wise to go in then and ask for salary rise! **APP** Re the most important matter in the world, viz: our salvation, we must seek the Lord **while He may be found** - when we are **young, healthy, free** from constraints and handicaps of later life when we will have additional considerations. As you get older, many things become more difficult, not easier - and making **life-changing decisions** are one of them!

3. Doing the right thing in the **right manner!** You can do the right thing, at the right time, in the right circumstances, but in the **wrong way!** *For there is a time and a way for everything...* [6a]! The word for 'way' is 'mishpat', translated 39 times as 'manner'! How you do something and how you **say** something can be almost as important as **what** you do and say! We have all heard 'It is **not what** he said, it was the **way** he said it'! Many a good work has been spoiled by not being done in a right manner. 'He did it with such **bad grace!**'

4. Finally, the wise man is the man who considers the **long-term consequences!** Children are **short-term** oriented. They do not think

ahead. They want all the good things **now!** They want to have their sweets **before** their mince/potatoes/vegs!! As we **mature**, we begin to see the benefits of **waiting!** Patience is a sign of maturity.

I like the way the NLT records [vv8,9] *Indeed, how can people avoid what they don't know is going to happen? None of us can hold back **our spirit from departing**. None of us has the power **to prevent the day of our death**. There is no escaping that obligation, that dark battle. And in the face of death, wickedness will certainly not rescue the wicked !!* No one can keep himself from dying or put off the day of his death. This is a battle we cannot avoid! We have to die. To **consider** this is wise. Wise people consider long-term consequences!

The MYSTERY of PROVIDENCE

As we said Sol was a **philosopher**. He could not get rid of the idea that life should be simple yet he was constantly confronted with the **mystery of providence**. He says it again in the last verse *I saw all the work of God, that **man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun**. **However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out**. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out [17]!* Sol finds **4 matters** very **worth considering**:

1. One-sided Memorial Services! The **funerals** of talented people which are filled with praise, while **deliberately forgetting** their evil deeds! *I saw the **wicked buried**. They used to go in and out of the holy place and were **praised** in the city where they had done such things. This also is vanity [10]!* When you think of Michael Jackson and his child abuse case and his drug taking, etc, and then how he was **praised** as a hero! Just because he was an excellent musician! Freddy Mercury, Michael George, Elvis Pressley - so many **popular** stars and entertainers have come to ruin! Pop stars, film stars, TV stars, footballers, golfers, etc, yet when they die, they are heroes! Yes, we must **comfort** the bereaved, but we need not **tell lies!**

Yes, people have a **one-sided** view when it comes to death. All the good things **rise** to the **surface** - and the **bad** things **evaporate!** Not so with God. He has **fixed** a **day** on which he will **judge** the world - how, in what way - **in righteousness** [Acts 17:31] All **injustices** will be **reversed** as Jesus said the last shall be first and the first, last!

2. Life is full of ‘Raw Deals’! *there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous* [14]. Do not allow the injustices of life destroy your faith. Whether it is injustice in your own life or to others! It can be very disturbing - but that is life - God has told us **in advance!** **Jesus said to His disciples** *I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may **remember** that I told them to you* [J16:4]

3. Men Distort God’s Grace When He Grants Them a Stay of Execution! *Because the sentence against an evil deed is **not** executed **speedily**, the heart of the children of man is fully set to **do evil*** [11] God must really ‘**feel**’ that! For people to misunderstand and misrepresent **kindness/mercy/love** to be opportunities to continue in sin, is evil work! Although Adam experienced spiritual death immediately, we might say that Adam didn’t die until 900 odd years after eating the forbidden fruit! If he did not repent, Adam could have said after 500 years, ‘God lied to me - look I haven’t died’! But not true! Men **do twist and take advantage** of God’s gracious **patience**.

Finally - Two Certainties - Promises! Again they are **long-term!** Its wise to think in the long term! Despite all the negatives in life, there were **two** things Sol saw **consistently**. He was certain that *Though a sinner does **evil a hundred times** and prolongs his life, **yet I know that it will be well** with those who fear God, because they fear before him.* And the 2nd conversely, *But **it will not be well** with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God* [12,13] **Wicked** people can live long - and well - but it is **temporal!** It comes to an end! The **righteous** may live long and have a **hard life** - but it ends too! The **awful** end of the wicked lasts forever. The **blissful** end of the righteous also lasts forever!!

The **5th time** Sol **commends JOY!** *And I commend **joy**, for man has nothing better under the sun but to eat and drink and be **joyful*** [15] *we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and **rejoice** in Christ Jesus* **Wisdom!** What can make you wise for salvation?

Ans: Holy Scripture *which are **able to make you wise for salvation** through **faith** in Christ Jesus* [2Ti3:15] We will never get to heaven without wisdom! *you are in Christ Jesus, who **became to us wisdom** from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption* [1C1:30]