

Ecclesiastes 9: 13-16; “One Poor but Wise Man”, A Bible Study
Prepared for the Evening of December 14th, 2011, and conducted
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Here is wisdom which seemed great to Solomon. It was the wisdom that saved a city which was under siege from a great king. This does not appear to me to be the relation of an actual event in the history of Solomon’s day, although many commentators have tried to impose this view upon these verses. It is rather a parable which is telling us what is commendable in terms of wisdom. But it is more than that. I hope to be able to prove to you that it is also a parable of the Lord Jesus Christ, and what He did by wisdom in delivering sinners from the siege which comes against them, and how what He has done has not always been remembered. First of all we want to look at the little besieged city which is mentioned in this parable. Secondly, We would like to examine the wisdom of the one poor, but wise man. And thirdly, we want to see how wisdom; this kind of wisdom, is better than strength.

1st of all – Let’s look at the little besieged city which is mentioned in this parable. (verses 13 and 14)

Verse 14 says, “there was a little city with a few men in it; and a great king came against it, besieged it, and built great snares around it.” The little besieged city represents the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. There are many places in the Scriptures where the Church is represented in this way. But let us look at a few. Turn with me to Psalm 87, verse 3. “His foundation is in the holy mountains.” “The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.” “Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God!” This foundation that is spoken of is God’s founding of the Church among the kingdoms of this world which are like so many mountains. Christ’s kingdom would not be founded as a large kingdom to start with; but rather a city with a small number of people in it; just a few men, to begin with. In verse 5 here it says, “And of Zion it will be said, ‘This one and that one were born in her; and the Most High Himself shall establish her.’” “The Lord will record, when He registers the peoples: ‘This one was born there.’” That is; the picture that we have here is; that all of God’s dear people, His saints, are born in Zion; the Old Testament and New Testament Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. There will be many notable people who are born in this city; the Church. And all of the people in this glorious city are registered there. They are all written down in the Lamb’s book of life. The foundation is Jesus Christ; no other foundation can be laid for salvation from sin, and eternal life. God has had plans in place for the building of the New Testament Church through Jesus Christ; from of old; plans formed long ago in perfect faithfulness. Glorious things are spoken of this city in the history and the prophecies of the Old Testament.

Turn over to Isaiah 14: 32. Here God promises His judgments would come upon those who oppressed and persecuted God's people; Babylon, Assyria, and Philistia. But He would take steps to deliver and preserve His people. Messengers would be sent from the surrounding nations asking why Israel would not be destroyed in judgment. Verse 32 - "What will they answer the messengers of the nation?" "That the Lord has founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall take refuge in it." Zion was a refuge for the people of Israel from their enemies. Zion was a stronghold from the days of its first physical existence. The Old Testament city of Zion was located on the mountains surrounding Jerusalem. The city of Zion was originally taken from the Jebusites by King David. You see this if you will turn over to 2nd Samuel 5, verse 4. "David was 30 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years." "In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah." "And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who spoke to David, saying, 'You shall not come in here; but the blind and the lame will repel you,' thinking 'David cannot come in here.'" It is said by some commentators that the "blind and the lame, here, were the stone idols of this city. David would not hate blind and lame people who were living. But their idols were the false gods who really had no strength. "They have eyes which see not, and feet and walk not." It says of David: "Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion (that is, the City of David)." The Jebusites called these idols their "Mauzzim, or strong-holds (Daniel 11: 38) and as such they relied on them. There are other ideas about what the blind and the lame were, here in this passage. John Gill says, "The strong-hold of Zion they especially depended on, as that which could not be forced." "Probably they set blind and lame people, invalids or maimed soldiers, to make their appearance upon the walls, in scorn of David and his men, judging them an equal match for him. Though there remain but wounded men among them, yet they should serve to beat back the besiegers." But none of these things prevented David from taking this stronghold of Mt. Zion, and making it the refuge of himself and his people.

The New Testament spiritual Zion, is the City of our God which is designed for poor sinners to become saints who will dwell with God forevermore. They come into this city as a city of refuge; to live in it, to worship God, and to learn together, how to so live and walk that they glorify God. As they grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ; they become witnesses to His truth. The purpose of the existence of this city is bring glory to God in the salvation of sinners. Look at Matthew Chapter 5, verse 14. "You (speaking of believers in Christ) are the light of the world." "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden." "Nor do they light a lamp and put under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." Turn with me also over to Matthew 9, verse 35. "Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their

synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.” “But when He saws the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.” “Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few.” “Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into the harvest.” Notice that the laborers in this kingdom are few even as the parable in the text we are studying says that there were only a few men in the city who were able to defend it, and to advance this city-kingdoms’ interests of righteousness and truth.

There are not only few who can defend the city and go forth to battle for its interests, but there are times in the history of this city that there are only few who are being saved and brought into this kingdom. Turn over to Matthew 7: 13. Here the Lord Jesus shows us that in comparison to all the world and those in false religion that this is a little city in comparison. “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.” “Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. These few men in this little city take refuge in it, against the great king who comes against it The great king represents Satan. Why would a great king come and besiege such a little city? Because the Devil is the king of domain of darkness, and his cause is to destroy the growth and progress of this kingdom of Christ; to bring down the cause of truth, meekness, and righteousness if possible. Our parable in Ecclesiastes says that he (the Devil) “came against it, besieged it, and built great snares around it.” Turn to 1 John 5: 19. “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.” This is the way that Satan wants to keep things. He does not want our Lord Jesus Christ to reign over the kingdoms of this world. So He wages war against the church, this little city. The city that Satan is building is Babylon; the city of those who promote a false worship and a false gospel of Christ. He does this by spewing froth false doctrines through false prophets who even try to counterfeit Christianity. Revelation 12, verse 15. “So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood.” “But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.” “And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” So the Church is a besieged city. And sometimes it seems that Satan may actually win in this battle for truth and righteousness and the souls of men. Turn to Isaiah 1: 7. Speaking of Old Testament Israel and what state they had fallen into in the days of Isaiah it says, “Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire; strangers devour your land in your presence; and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers.” “So the daughter of Zion is left as a booth in a vineyard, as a hut in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.” “Unless the Lord had left to us a very

small remnant, we would have become like Sodom, and have been made like Gomorrah.”

But now 2ndly - We would like to think about the wisdom of the one poor, but wise man. (Verse 15)

“Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city.” The poor but wise man in this parable represents the Lord Jesus Christ. He by His wisdom delivered this city under siege. We need to notice that our Savior-deliverer was a poor man. He was certainly a poor man at the time before and during his earthly ministry. Turn to 2 Corinthians Chapter 8, verse 9. “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” The Lord Jesus Christ was and is the Lord of Glory, but here is how He used His wisdom. He had been rich in the presence of His Father in heaven; having had all things made for Him, through Him, and by Him; He, the only-begotten Son of the Father, left the halls of heaven and came to this earth, and condescended to be born of poor parents. They had no money to send Him to the finest schools or to give him the best education. He was the earthly “son” of a carpenter. During his ministry, he said that he had no place to lay his head, and had to ask those who were asking Him about things related to paying taxes, “Show me a denarius”. At His death, he has nothing to bequeath to his mother but He asks His disciple John to take her into his house.

Not only was He physically poor, He became poor for our sakes by assuming human nature with all of its weaknesses and imperfections, except for sin. He did not come into this world appearing as a king, even though He was the King of Glory and the Lord of Lords. No, instead He took on the form of a servant. He became poor in order that we might become rich; not in material things, but in spiritual things. By His obedience, His sufferings, and His death, He has paid the sin-debt of all who will believe in Him for eternal life. He worked out in His obedience a perfect righteousness to the law of God, and gives to you and I who believe in Him a beautiful and perfect robe of righteousness which we wear in the sight of God. He has so satisfied the justice of God on behalf of sinners that the battle against them, as a city, is won. “Do not be afraid, little flock, for the Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom,” Jesus says as one point in His ministry. Turn with me over to John Chapter 12, verse 31. “Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler (the prince) of this world will be cast out.” “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself. “This He said, signifying by what death He would die.” This was the wisdom of this one poor wise man. He would through His humility, through His self-denial, through His love for us God’s Elect people, so live and so suffer, and so die, that all of Satan’s schemes would be destroyed.

Turn over to Hebrews Chapter 2, verse 10. “For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to

make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” “For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying “I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.” “And again: ‘I will put My trust in Him.’” “And again: ‘Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.’” “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those (we could say according to our study here tonight – deliver those) who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” This was and still is for us today, the wisdom of the one poor man that delivered the little city.

And then finally - We want to see how wisdom; this kind of wisdom, is better than strength.

We will speak more of this in our next study, but look at verse 15b – “Yet no one remembered that same poor man.” “Then I said, ‘Wisdom is better than strength.’” “Nevertheless the poor man’s wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.” We saw last time that we were together that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. But now tonight, by the wisdom of the one poor man Jesus Christ; that we have been delivered and have been given all things in Him. But is it not also very true that it is entirely possible not to remember what the Lord Jesus has done for us, as we should? Ah, how important it is for believers to partake of the Lord’s Supper and to remember the basis of our whole salvation. Christ has become to us the power of God and the wisdom of God. 1 Corinthians 1: 30 – “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption—that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.’” This is what we do here tonight; we glory in the Lord. The Lord helping us we will come to see that His wisdom is better than our fleshly strength. If we will incline our hearts to the wisdom of God which is found in the Bible, and which is perfectly seen in Christ, then we (believing in Him) will also become wise. We will not trust in our own strength to do and keep His commandments. We will look to Him for the grace to do what pleases Him most; the grace to live out the truth of His Word, by faith.