

2116 - GOING to CHURCH - Eccles 5.1-7

PRELIMS. Solomon has been insisting that life is meaningless - without God! He speaks of all the **injustices** that are in the world, even in the places where we ought to expect justice. The world is 'upside down' - without God. He talks of marriage, work, oppression!

He has talked of life in the **marketplace**, and in the **highways** and **fast-lanes** of life, life in the palace, and, as we said in the **courtroom** - all the **important** places, buildings and centres of life, - and now he speaks of something completely new - **House of God!** He is talking really of **going to Church!** Well, we may ask, '**Who goes to Church today?**' Look at how small we are tonight! And yet, Solomon reminds us that Church is a **very important place** - because it is the place where great things can take happen - **lives can be changed** for ever - and a place where God can **comfort** and **bless** His people, as well as **pronounce judgment** on the wicked who refuse to repent!

Some people, even Xns, do not even go to church - just now and again! They do not respect God's **warning** about **neglecting to meet together**, *as is the habit of some* [Heb 10:25] That is sad and **is** the reason why the Church is so **weak** and **powerless**. Church is the place where God dwells and where He meets/speaks with His people.

In church God **reveals** to His people truths which they are to **share!** God's people are to **speak often** to one another to **build** themselves up in the faith. We need one another to share the various 'truths' God has led us into. **Fellowship** is vital to spiritual **maturity!**

Now some people, not all, but some, go to church **to talk with their friends** and to share their experiences of the week! Some people 'live' for **counselling others** - but church is the place where God counsels us and puts us in our place! God does the talking in church!

Now, going to worship God requires **preparation!** In this passage, God is making it clear that while we contribute in *the house of God*, we also **learn!** We *draw near to listen!*!![1] Listening is *better than* offering foolish talk. So, did **you** prepare for coming to church today? I remember reading that there was a day when any families would have prayer as a special at breakfast on a Sunday morning!

CHURCH - the PLACE for HUMILITY

Going to worship implies **submission** to a Higher Power! That calls for **humility!** It means we are not 'Masters' of our own **destiny!** This is something mankind must never forget. Since the '**Enlightenment**' period, mankind, have **assumed** a prominence that we have no right to. The enlightenment was a period when '**reason**' (man's intelligence) became the **most important 'tool'** in determining what was truth and what was real. Mankind then, being the **only** creature possessing reason, **assumed** the place of **God** as the one who alone was **able** to determine truth and reality and judge right from wrong! **That is arrogance**, especially coming from **creatures** who not only were **not around** at the beginning of creation, but who are **utterly dependent** for the **breath** in his nostrils! Man's **pride** enjoys the idea of being masters of the universe and of our own destiny - but the fact remains, we are **dependent** creatures, so **humility** is called for!

APP We have gathered ourselves together this evening to **worship** the **Creator** of **all** things! The One who has given us **breath** and determined the **bounds** of **where** and **when** we are to live and die! We have come to worship the One **in whom**, as Paul said, *we live and move and have our being* [Acts 17:28] We are here on earth **for God**, and not for ourselves. We are here because God created us **for Himself**. *For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever* [Rom 11:36] *Oh the depth of the riches and wisdom of God! How unsearchable are His judgments...inscrutable His ways* [Rom 11:33] Man is not the **centre** of the **universe**, God is! How big is God? There are **over** 150 billion stars in our galaxy 'The Milky Way'! And there at least **150 billion galaxies!**

Listen to the great Prophet Isaiah talking about God: *All the nations are as nothing before Him, they are accounted by Him as LESS than nothing and emptiness. To whom then will you liken God? Do you not know? ...Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood...It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;...who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness* [Isa 40]

We are little 'specks' on God's earth - a very small planet - but God

is the Creator of all the **galaxies** in the universe! That is why Sol reminds us that *God is in **heaven** and you are on **earth*** [2]! Sol is conveying to us the **magnitude** of God and the **smallness** of man!

So it is not surprising that Sol says *Be not **rash** with your **mouth**, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word **before God**!*[2] No wonder he finished this passage with *God is the one you must **fear*** [7c] We need to be **humble** before God, and as James says *If anyone thinks he is **religious** and does **not** **bridle** his **tongue**...this person's religion is **worthless*** [Jm1:26] We come to church to hear what **God** has to say! Some people **speak a lot** when they are **excited** about something in their life. Some Xns talk a lot when they '**feel**' God has spoken to them! They feel they have to let people know that God has spoken to them. They want to **share** what they feel God has been saying to them! But that is not what the Bible says we should do. The Psalmist said *I am **dumb**; I do not open my mouth, for it is **You** who have done it* [Ps39] God had spoken, so he was **mute/dumb**! When God speaks we are **humbled** and it is time for **thinking/praying/listening**! When God speaks to us - it makes an **impact** that we are more likely to be **silenced** rather than **liberated**! We **walk softly** after God speaks to us and not, as Spurgeon says, to be 'full of our own wind'!

Sol mentions **dreams** in this passage. God certainly can work through dreams and **has done** throughout Biblical history and no doubt He still does. We know that God 'spoke' to the patriarchs in dreams. **Jacob's ladder** was a dream. Even the heathen were 'spoken to' by God. **Abimelech** was told that the latest woman he took into his harem was Abraham's wife! [Gen 20:3]. **Nebuchadnezzar** had dreams. **Daniel** had dreams. Our Lord was 'protected' because God often spoke to **Joseph** in a dream to flee into Egypt.

Young Joseph's life was full of dreams, so much so that it caused a rift between him and his brothers! Because he was **unwise** about them! *Here comes this **dreamer*** [Gen 37:19] Again we see the principle, that if God speaks to us, we should be **silent**. *While on the subject we ought to mention that **visions** are **distinct** from dreams! Vision is a completely **different word**! Dreams occur when we are **asleep**! Visions when we are **awake**!

Now dreams are **so realistic** that we place a lot of **emphasis** on

them! We need to be **very, very careful** about dreams! Sol tells us here that they come through ***much business!*** [3] Even in OT times, **caution** was required! Even in our verse, Sol equates it with *a fool's voice!*[3] In Biblical times **ALL** dreams, visions, inner voices **had** to be **tested** - they were **not** to be **automatically assumed** as a voice from God. Dreams had to be **interpreted!** Daniel was an interpreter! Look at what Jeremiah was called to say: *I have heard what the prophets have said who **prophecy lies in My name**, saying, 'I have dreamed, I have dreamed!' How long shall there be lies in the heart of the prophets who prophecy lies, and who prophecy the deceit of their own heart, who **think** to make my people forget my name by their dreams that they tell one another, even as their fathers forgot my name for Baal? Then he **contrasts** dreams with God's Word Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has **My word** speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the LORD. Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that **breaks the rock** in pieces? [Jer 23:25]*

*Beloved, do **not believe** every spirit but **test the spirits** to see whether they are from God [1J4:1] was, and **is**, the warning for Xns! In fact the **last verse** about dreams in the Bible talks about fallen angels: *in like manner these people also, **relying on their dreams**, defile the flesh, **reject authority**, and **blaspheme** the glorious ones [Jude 8]!**

So, as Sol reminds us here: *when dreams **increase** and words **grow many**, there is vanity [7b]* The **unchangeable, infallible, standard** that believers, past and present **can rely on** is the Word of God. **Study** God's Word, which means **more** than just reading it! We need to do 'exercises' in it! With computers we can look up all the references to a word, examine their **context**, etc. The minister's job!

In the OT going to worship **involved vow- making!** A **forgotten** means of grace! **Only** people of **faith** make vows? Only believers made vows! The OT Church **recorded their** vows! Thus *do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake* [6] Too often they just said: 'a mistake'! Today we don't vow at all! After all it says *It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. Let not your mouth lead you into sin [5,6]*