

Lesson for February 8, 2009

Old Testament Survey

The Poetical Books – Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon

The term poetical assigned to these books refers to their form only. The Hebrew poetic form is not achieved by repetition of similar sounds, but by repetition of ideas. These ideas can be identical, in contrast, or when the thought is developed further.

Job is a dramatic poem, which was written before the giving of the Law of Moses and is probably the oldest book in the Bible. The theme of the book of Job is, “why do the godly suffer?” The story of Job is well known by most of us and tells of a man who was a faithful believer. Satan accused Job of being faithful because God had prospered him, which we will see was not the reason. As a test, and to prove Satan wrong, God allowed Satan to take everything that Job had and loved including his family and his health. Job’s wife encouraged him to curse God and die, but Job remained faithful and refused to curse God.

When Job’s three friends heard the news of Job’s misfortune, they assumed it was because of some sin Job had committed. The book of Job contains the individual discourses of each of Job’s friends and a discourse from God. Each friend represents a different human viewpoint regarding Job’s testing. Eliphaz was the first to speak and set himself up as the authority on why human beings suffer and dogmatically declared that Job was suffering because of some secret sin against God. Bildad spoke second in religious platitudes that he believed set him apart as the authority on suffering. However, Bildad was superficial and depended on tradition, using pious phrases to explain Job’s suffering. Zophar was the last friend to speak and assumed to know all about God, what He will do in any given situation, why He did it and all His thoughts about it. Void of reason, Zophar was the most arrogant of the three. All three were wrong and lacked the true understanding of why believers sometime suffer.

Suffering for the believer can be either deserved or undeserved. Discipline from God is deserved suffering, but testing from God is undeserved suffering. Both can be blessings if the believer responds to the suffering in the proper way. In order to orient to suffering, the believer must exhibit the same mental attitude that Jesus Christ exhibited when He suffered in His humanity. What was His attitude? Peace, joy, stability, single-mindedness, humility and obedience to the plan of God. (Isaiah 26:3-4; Hebrews 12:2; II Timothy 1:7; II Corinthians 13:11; II Corinthians 10:5-6; Philippians 2:5-8)

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The book of Psalms (150 chapters) forms the Psalter, which was the hymnbook of the Temple. The majority of the Psalms were set to music and accompanied by instruments and were used by the Temple choir. Psalms gives us a glimpse of the devotional spiritual life of the psalmist (David). The Psalms were greatly loved by Jesus and His apostles and quoted regularly. (Acts 1:16, 20; James 5:13; Luke 20:42-44)

During the Church Age, God, in His grace, has set up certain protocols that must be strictly adhered to if a believer is to advance in his spiritual life. Random intake of Bible doctrine will not accomplish the goal. If a believer is to properly execute God's protocol plan, he must be consistent with his intake and application of Bible doctrine. *There is no other plan for believers in this Age.*

During this age, believers receive all the necessary tools for the fulfillment of the Protocol Plan of God. The objective for the believer should be to reach the status of "spiritual maturity," which results in a tactical victory over Satan in the Angelic Conflict. Only by residing in God's system under the control of the Holy Spirit can the believer reach this status.

God's policy for dealing with mankind is always His grace. This grace begins with providing salvation through Jesus Christ. Since Christ paid the penalty for the sin of the entire human race, anyone can have eternal life and be saved from eternal separation from God. All that God requires is a simple act of faith in Jesus Christ (apart from any human merit). This simply means that you are relying (trusting) upon Jesus Christ for eternal life and not on your good works or anything else. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

After salvation, God's policy continues to be grace. Only by orienting to His grace can a believer execute the Protocol Plan of God. The Christian Way of Life was not designed to be a life of human good works performed as a means of gaining the approbation of God. The Christian Way of Life is a life of thinking divine viewpoint and the divine production that results. Divine production can be visible or invisible. (Titus 2:12)

The book of Proverbs was compiled by Solomon and some were perhaps his personal writings. In this book we see Solomon's wisdom in dealing with everyday life. Even though Solomon was gifted with great wisdom by God, he did not always use that wisdom in a wise manner. The object of Proverbs is to inspire a reverence for God, a referential fear for His commandments, a love for God's wisdom and a desire to possess and use it.

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Application of God's Word means that we have metabolized it (it has become a part of us). The best illustration is eating food. You can buy the food, but it does your body no good. You can even prepare the food, but it does your body no good. You can then place it on the table, but it does your body no good. You can even put it in your mouth, but it does your body no good. Not until you chew the food and swallow it does it do your body good. It can then be converted to energy, etc. God's Word is the same, you **MUST** put into practice what you are learning or the Word of God will do you no good. If the Word of God is not changing your thoughts and actions, then you are not applying it. A wise believer (wisdom is application of Bible doctrine) is a believer that **USES WHAT HE LEARNS**.

David knew and applied this principle. (Psalms 138:2) David also taught us a divine principle in this verse: God, specifically Jesus Christ, has magnified His Word over His name (a reference to His reputation). In no other way can we approach God, understand God, or fulfill God's plan than to **KNOW** and **APPLY** His Word. God's blessings are poured out upon those who know and use Bible doctrine because they have developed the capacity to receive blessing. Even nations are blessed because of believers with doctrine in their souls. (Isaiah 53:12; Micah 4:1-6)

The book of Ecclesiastes was written by Solomon. The meaning of the word Ecclesiastes is preacher. The theme of the book is the inability of man to find happiness apart from God. Solomon concluded that all in life without God is vanity. That human pleasure, worldly pursuits and human wisdom cannot bring a person lasting happiness is the conclusion of Solomon in this book. Who better to speak to this subject than Solomon? He was one of the wealthiest men of his time and had all the worldly possessions and power a human being was capable of having in this life. Yet Solomon's conclusion was that his life is nothing without God.

Sharing the happiness of God is having *permanent contentment* as your constant companion. This happiness is permanent because it does not depend on the circumstances in your life. It is actually God's own perfect happiness that He shares with the advancing believer as a grace gift. Sharing God's happiness is obtained only by consistently learning, believing and applying the Word of God over a period of time. The more time you log under the power and control of God the Holy Spirit and thinking Divine viewpoint, the happier you are going to be. Therefore, sharing the happiness of God is not for the novice believer. It is impossible to share in something that you know nothing about. Being happy is one of the many spiritual blessings that comes with increased capacity. Increased capacity to receive God's blessing of happiness comes only by the study and the application of Bible doctrine. (Jeremiah 15:16; John 13:17)

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The Song of Solomon deals with the relationship between a bridegroom and his bride and has been seen by many as an analogy of Christ and His bride (the Church). This book was rejected as part of the canon of Scripture by some who thought it too sensual. The truth is that the Song of Solomon is an expression of true marital love between a man and a woman as ordained by God. The book can be divided into six parts: 1) the loving communion of a bride and a bridegroom 2) a lapse and restoration 3) the joy of communion between the two 4) the bridegroom unsatisfied and seeking others 5) the bride seeking to find the straying bridegroom 6) restoration and unbroken communion.

During the Church Age, God is forming a bride for the Bridegroom (Jesus Christ). It is the body of Christ (the Church) that will become the "Bride of Christ" in the eternal state. This analogy refers to the fact that we are uniquely united to Christ at salvation. We are placed into union with Him in the same manner as a bride and a bridegroom "become one" in marriage. (I Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 21:9) As the Bride of Christ, we will participate in the marriage feast, which will be a time of joy and celebration. As the Bride of Christ, Church Age believers will be "dressed in fine white linen," which is a reference to God's righteousness. (Revelation 19:7-9)