

# Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

## Bible Study Notes: Ecclesiastes 5

### *"The Worship of God"*

4/24/13

#### **SUMMARY**

Having observed much folly during his search for the purpose of life, the Preacher in this chapter offers counsel on such things as worshipping God, making promises, seeing injustice in high places, and properly using riches.

He urges caution when one goes to the house of God. It is better to draw near to hear than to offer the sacrifices of fools. Therefore be careful what you say (cf. [Jm 1:26](#)). When you do make a vow or promise, don't delay to pay it. It is better not to vow, than to vow and not keep it. Do not let your mouth get you into trouble, thinking you can simply excuse your way out of promises you have made. The righteous anger of God is to be feared (1-7).

Returning to a theme discussed earlier (cf. [3:16-17](#); [4:1-3](#)), he says not to marvel when you see the oppression of the poor, or the perversion of justice and righteousness. Remember that every one answers to someone higher. Even the king is dependent upon those who serve him, implying that he too will be held accountable (8-9).

Another theme recurrent throughout the Preacher's observations is the proper use of riches. Here he discusses the vanity of loving riches, and the evil of hoarding riches to one's hurt. Riches in of themselves do not satisfy, they can be the source of much anxiety, and can easily perish through misfortune (10-17).

It is fitting to enjoy the good in one's labor, but the ability to enjoy is a gift from God. God will keep one who is so blessed busy with the joy of his heart (18-20).

#### **I. THE WORSHIP OF GOD (5:1-3)**

*<sup>1</sup>Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong. <sup>2</sup>Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few. <sup>3</sup>A dream comes when there are many cares, and many words mark the speech of a fool.*

##### **A. WALK CAREFULLY (1)**

1. When you go to house of God, draw near to hear
2. Do not give the sacrifice of fools, for they do evil

##### **B. TALK CAUTIOUSLY (2-3)**

1. Do not be rash with your mouth
2. Do not be hasty with your heart may utter before God
3. Let your words be few
4. Dreams (misleading?) come through much activity
5. A fool is known by his many words

## ECCLESIASTES 5:1

When we enter the house of God, we should have the attitude of being open and ready to listen to God, not to dictate to him what we think he should do.

### II. THE TAKING OF VOWS (5:4-7)

*<sup>4</sup> When you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfill it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. <sup>5</sup> It is better not to make a vow than to make one and not fulfill it. <sup>6</sup> Do not let your mouth lead you into sin. And do not protest to the temple messenger, "My vow was a mistake." Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands? <sup>7</sup> Much dreaming and many words are meaningless. Therefore fear God.*

#### A. FULFILL YOUR VOWS (4-5)

1. When you make a vow, do not delay to pay it
2. God has no pleasure in fools, pay what you have vowed
3. It is better not to vow, than to vow and not pay

#### B. WATCH YOUR MOUTH (6-7)

1. Do not let your mouth lead you to sin
2. Don't think you can excuse your rash statements and avoid God's anger
3. The multitude of dreams and many words are vanity; fear God!

## ECCLESIASTES 5:4, 5

Solomon warns his readers about making foolish promises to God. In Israelite culture, making vows was a serious matter. Vows were voluntary, but once made, they were unbreakable (Deuteronomy 23:21-23). It is foolish to make a vow you cannot keep or to play games with God by only partially fulfilling your vow (Proverbs 20:25). It's better not to vow than to make a vow to God and break it. If you make a vow, keep it.

### III. THE INJUSTICE OF MEN (5:8-9)

*<sup>8</sup> If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still. <sup>9</sup> The increase from the land is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields.*

#### A. DON'T MARVEL AT OPPRESSION (8a)

1. When you see the oppression of the poor
2. When you see violent perversion of justice and righteousness

#### B. EVERYONE IS ACCOUNTABLE (8b-9)

1. High officials must answer to even higher officials
2. As the profit of the land is for all, even the king is served by the field

#### **IV. THE VANITY OF RICHES (5:10-17)**

*<sup>10</sup> Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless. <sup>11</sup> As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owners except to feast their eyes on them? <sup>12</sup> The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether they eat little or much, but as for the rich, their abundance permits them no sleep. <sup>13</sup> I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owners, <sup>14</sup> or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when they have children there is nothing left for them to inherit. <sup>15</sup> Everyone comes naked from their mother's womb, and as everyone comes, so they depart. They take nothing from their toil that they can carry in their hands. <sup>16</sup> This too is a grievous evil: As everyone comes, so they depart, and what do they gain, since they toil for the wind? <sup>17</sup> All their days they eat in darkness, with great frustration, affliction and anger.*

##### **A. THEY DO NOT SATISFY (10-12)**

1. He who loves silver and riches will not be satisfied with increase
2. As goods increase, so does one's appetite; there is little profit (satisfaction) other than to see them
3. While the sleep of a laboring man is sweet, the abundance of the rich troubles his sleep

##### **B. THEY ARE PERISHABLE (13-17)**

1. A severe evil seen is riches kept (hoarded) to the hurt of the owner
2. Such riches can perish through misfortune, leaving the owner...
  - a. With nothing for one's descendants
  - b. To go as naked as he came into this world
  - c. Eating in darkness, with much sorrow, sickness, and anger

#### **ECCLESIASTES 5:10, 11**

We always want more than we have. Solomon observed that those who spend their lives obsessively seeking after money never find the happiness it promises. Wealth attracts freeloaders and thieves, causes sleeplessness and fear, and ultimately ends in loss because it must be left behind (Mark 10:23-25; Luke 12:16-21). No matter how much you earn, if you try to create happiness by accumulating wealth, you will never have enough. Money in itself is not wrong, but loving money leads to all sorts of sin. Whatever your financial situation, don't depend on money to make you happy. Instead, use what you have for the Lord.

#### **V. THE PROPER USE OF RICHES (5:18-20)**

*<sup>18</sup> This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given them—for this is their lot. <sup>19</sup> Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God. <sup>20</sup> They seldom reflect on the days of their life, because God keeps them occupied with gladness of heart.*

##### **A. ENJOY THEM AS A GIFT FROM GOD (18)**

1. It is good to eat, drink, and enjoy the good of one's labor
2. This is one's heritage from God

**B. THE ABILITY TO ENJOY IS A GIFT FROM GOD (19-20)**

1. Riches, and the ability to enjoy them, are a gift from God
2. One whom God has so blessed will not reflect unduly on his life, because God keeps him preoccupied with joy and gladness

**ECCLESIASTES 5:19, 20**

God wants us to view what we have (whether it is much or little) with the right perspective—our possessions are a gift from God. Although they are not the source of joy, they are a reason to rejoice because every good thing comes from God. We should focus more on the Giver than the gift. We can be content with what we have when we realize that in God we have everything we need.