WALMSLEY BIBLE STUDY – ECCLESIASTES SESSION 3

3 LIFE UNDER THE SUN #2; Chs 8 to 10: Authority & Injustice; Wisdom & Folly

Chapter 8 vs 2 – 17. **Authority** cf: Rom 13 vs 1-7; 1 Pet 2 vs 13-17 (25); Tit 3 vs 1-2(9) Heb 13 v 17; but also Acts 5. 29
Q 1: For the most part, we are to obey our leaders. How, then, are we justified in standing up for injustice in government and laws? If we be pilgrims in this world, does it matter to us? If it does matter, then what are the governing factors of our behaviour? Should we ever take up arms in the cause of justice and righteousness?
Yes, we do have a duty to stand up for injustice and right behaviour: the calm acceptance of an ever-collapsing morality is incidious – like the 'Frog –n Boiling Water' analogy – gentle increase from cold to scalding is not noticed – but violet change invokes violet reaction. Taking up Arms is a difficult one, but there have been times when the threat of real evil demands our action, but NEVER 'My Country Right or Wrong'. Our minds need to be focused upon the First Two Commandments; if our actions defy either then think again: but even physical defence of the oppressed and wronged cannot be excluded at times – 'For Everything there is a Season'.

Chapter 9 vs 1-6 : **Fatalism, Serendipity, Fortune, Luck : the Destiny of Mankind & Ultimate Reward**
Q 2: What is the use of planning anything at all, given these fates and vagaries of life? cf: Prov 3; Prov 16 vs 1-9
Combining Q s 2 & 3:
Chapter 9 vs 7-16 : **The Way of Wisdom and Understanding**
Q 3: What does this passage teach us about our stance in life towards 'success and failure', and towards good and bad things that happen? Where be the LORD in all of these things? Why do people reject God in times of evil events? What is our message to such people when they rail against God or the very notion of a God?
'The Mind of Man Plans His Ways, But The LORD guides His Steps'. It is not what happens in this world so much as what our reactions should be and how we help others. In this context all that we plan is really 'Vanity' – we cannot be certain our plans will work, nor that they will produce the desired effects.

Chapter 9 v 17 - 10 v 4: **Wisdom versus Folly**
Q 4: Some colourful examples and contrasts! Pithy statements. What examples do we have that relate to these?
mindful not to ruin a lifetime's good efforts by a hasty word or action. Nor by a secret life of vice and selfishness – we must examine ourselves constantly. – Prayer Book: 'Our Manifold Sins and Wicknedness...Neither Dissemble nor Cloak them'. Too many examples in the news, recently and in the past!

Chapter 10 v 5 - 10 v 7: **Another Evil – Fools in High Places**
Q 5: Can you relate incidents now or in the past that relate to these verses? What was the final outcome?
Pride comes before a fall!

Chapter 10 vs 8-15: **Wisdom Versus Folly**
Q 6: More pithy sayings; What do they tell us about life and our approach towards our own actions? (cf Alexander Pope – Fools rush in where Angels Fear to Tread..) What messages are contained within these verses?
Haste, Hotheadedness, Self-interest, Self-Pride – these are some of the factors that can easily lead to Folly. Wisdom is found in Quiet Contemplation, Self-Awareness, Humility, and after all that, and with committal to God, Wise Actions and Motives ensue.

Chapter 10 vs 16-17 & 20: **Woes and Blessings of having Proper Rulers**
Q 7: Why do you think the Preacher is advocating high-born rulers instead of low-born? What dangers are there in criticising Rulers?
'Low-born' – perhaps an analogy to Greed for Power and Wealth by the Selfish; whereas 'Noble' might refer to those whose lives are driven by Duty and Service rather than Advancement, Greed and Self-Adulation. We see enough of this in our Local, National and World politics and Business! Just Try being a Ruler yourself! It needs the 'Judgment of Solomon' so very often! Criticism and lack of deference to authority will lead to Anarchy.

Chapter 10 vs 17-19: **More Pithy Sayings**
Q 8: Discuss these sayings.
Consider Ref: Ch 9 v 7-10; & Ch 8 v.15