

Old Testament Wisdom Literature:
Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

Text: The Bible

Course Outline:

Session	Dates	Topic
1	9/8	Introduction
2-3	9/15,22	Proverbs
4-5	9/29,10/6	Job
6-7	10/13,20	Ecclesiastes
8-9	10/27,11/3	Song of Solomon
10	11/10	Final Exam

Homework:

1. Read the biblical books of Wisdom literature (Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon) at such a rate as to keep ahead of class lecture.

2. Prepare a collection of biblical proverbs (as complete as you can make it) on one of the following subjects (due Nov 3):

foolishness vs wisdom	retribution (revenge)
futility (vanity)	sexual behavior
laziness vs hard work	teamwork
life & death	marks of the fool
poverty & wealth	truth in life & business
raising children	

[Hint: use a concordance to look up key words and/or mark passages as you read through Proverbs, Ecclesiastes]

Testing & Grading:

1. There will be a take-home mid-term test to be given out Oct 6 and returned Oct 13.

2. The final will be in-class, on the lecture notes with some questions regarding the content of the wisdom books.

3. The proverb collection will be graded for completeness, appropriateness, completion on time and neatness.

Each of these three items will be count equally toward your final grade.

Old Testament Wisdom Literature: Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

I. Introduction

A. Purposes of the Course

1. That we may grow in our knowledge of the Bible and in enthusiasm for God and His word.
2. That we may learn more about the so-called "wisdom books" of the Bible, some of which are rather neglected.
3. That we may begin to apply these teachings to our own lives.

B. Course Mechanics: see previous page

1. Why will we study the wisdom books in this order (which is not same as in Bible)?

The Bible order is probably more or less chronological in regard to time of original writing.

We will follow order: Proverbs, Job, Eccl, Song of Solomon, because:

- a. more familiar to less
- b. easier to harder (more or less)
- c. more general to more specific

2. The Books briefly characterized:

- a. Proverbs: collection of teachings on all of life, not just religious aspects; emphasis on basic principles.
- b. Job: more specific, dealing with particular problem where basic principles don't seem to work; regarding suffering of good people, and God's part in this.
- c. Ecclesiastes: more general than Job, but also deals with problem areas: futility in the world; apparent meaninglessness of life.
- d. Song: specific and particular: love relation between man and woman as experienced by Solomon.

C. Introduction to the Wisdom Literature

1. The Word "Wisdom"

- applied to these books, esp Job, Prov, Eccl,
because they contain about 2/3 of times (312x) "wisdom" occurs in Old Testament
- these books also use many synonyms of "wisdom":
e.g., "knowledge," "discernment"
- word "wisdom" is very broad in Hebrew;
covers all of life, not just intellect
includes practical and moral as well, e.g.:
 - skill in working w/ hands
 - shrewdness in dealing w/ people
 - wisdom in making decisions
 - discernment in recognizing good & evil
 - experience in human life

2. The Purpose of the Wisdom Literature

[best seen in the introduction to Proverbs (1:1-6)]

a. To impart wisdom to reader

vv 2-4 use terms: wisdom, understanding, instruction, wise behavior, discretion, prudence

v 3b more specific:

righteousness - right living

justice/judgment - right decisions

equity – fairness

b. To help both beginner & advanced (4-5)

v 4: naive and young

v 5: wise (presumably mature)

c. To train reader in understanding certain types of speech (v 6):

proverb, figure, words of wisdom, riddle

3. Wisdom Literature as Poetry

a. Most is in poetic form:

(1) all of Proverbs, Song

(2) much of Job, Ecclesiastes

b. Poetry little used now in Western culture except in song

(1) partly due to rules of English poetry, making poetry difficult to compose

(2) partly due to technology, emphasis on literal

c. Hebrew poetry compared with English poetry

- (1) Rhyme: lines end with similar sounds; common to English, rare to Hebrew
- (2) Alliteration: words begin with similar sounds; less common in English (except very old English poetry), less common in Hebrew (some acrostics)
- (3) Meter: system of accented and unaccented syllables to give poetry a "beat"; even more common than rhyme in English; Hebrew poetry may have had meter, but if so, scheme not known today
- (4) Parallelism: lines are parallel in meaning; common to Hebrew, rare to English (except as occasional rhetorical device; so more common in English speech-making than poetry)
- (5) Speech Figures: common to both [items (1)-(3) hard to translate; (4)-(5) easy, so Hebrew poetry translates well into other languages]

d. Parallelism: kind of a "rhyme" of meaning

usually involves two lines which are parallel in meaning in some way
traditional categories, illustrated from Psalms:

- (1) Synonymous: repeats idea in different words
Ps 2:1,2a,3:

*Psa 2:1 (NIV) Why do the nations conspire
and the peoples plot in vain?
2 The kings of the earth take their stand
and the rulers gather together
against the LORD
and against his Anointed One.
3 "Let us break their chains," they say,
"and throw off their fetters."*

- (2) Antithetical: two lines contrast
Ps 1:6 (very common in Proverbs)

*Psa 1:6 (NIV) For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.*

- (3) Synthetic: 2nd line builds on first
Ps 1:1,3

*Psa 1:1 (NIV) Blessed is the man
who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked*

*or stand in the way of sinners
or sit in the seat of mockers...
3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither.
Whatever he does prospers.*

these categories don't cover whole field
[better to say 2nd line adds something to 1st, sometimes by way of
emphasis, contrast, further development, etc.]

e. Figures of Speech: make speech/poetry vivid, pictorial, memorable, sometimes
just for beauty

(1) Simile: a comparison in which writer tells you he is making such by
his use of "as, like": Ps 1:3,4 - tree, chaff

*Psa 1:3 (NIV) He is **like** a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither.
Whatever he does prospers.
4 Not so the wicked!
They are **like** chaff
that the wind blows away.*

(2) Metaphor: a comparison in which writer doesn't tell you; just says this
thing "is" that:
Ps 22:6 - worm; Ps 23:1 – shepherd

*Psa 22:6 (NIV) But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by men and despised by the people.*

Psa 23:1 (NIV) The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

(3) Metonymy: change of name; one name is used for another because
they are somehow associated: Ps 24:6 – Jacob (for nation)

*Psa 24:6 (NIV) Such is the generation of those who seek him,
who seek your face, O God of Jacob.*

(4) Synecdoche: like (3), but part for whole or whole for part: Prov 5:5;
6:4; 6:16-18

*Prov 5:5 (NIV) Her feet go down to death;
her steps lead straight to the grave.*

(5) Personification: treating a thing as though it were a person:
Ps 24:7 - gates, doors

*Psa 24:7 (NIV) Lift up your heads, O you gates;
be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.*

(6) Euphemism: using a more pleasant word for something harsh:
Job 2:9 - bless (for curse)

Job 2:9 (NIV) His wife said to him, "Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!"

(7) Hyperbole: exaggeration to produce proper effect (like caricature in cartooning):
Matt 23:24 – camel

Matt 23:24 (NIV) You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

(8) Irony: saying opposite of what is meant (verbally detectable by tone of voice):
Job 12:2

*Job 12:2 (NIV) "Doubtless you are the people,
and wisdom will die with you!"*

II. The Book of Proverbs

A. Definition of "Proverb"

1. English usage:

"A short saying in common use that strikingly expresses some obvious truth or familiar experience."

These are typically not poetic, merely "one-liners"

"A stitch in time saves nine."

"Where there's smoke there's fire."

"Curiosity killed the cat."

"Still waters run deep"

"Empty wagons make the most noise."

A few are poetic in structure:

"Early to bed, early to rise,
Makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise."

Proverbs are often designed to be generalized by extension from a very specific statement (consider first group above).

Often they use figures of speech:

Note how "curiosity" personified, above

2. Hebrew usage:

Hebrew word for proverb is *mashal*" derived from the verb "to compare"
Usage is broader than English, and includes parable, paradox, riddle, and taunt.

There are a few one-line proverbs in OT, e.g., 1 Sam 24:13,

1 Sam 24:13 (NIV) As the old saying goes, 'From evildoers come evil deeds,' so my hand will not touch you.

but there are none of these in Book of Proverbs

B. Types of Proverbs in the Book of Proverbs

1. The Two-Line Proverb (technical name "distich")
simplest, often use standard types of Hebrew parallelism

a. Synonymous: 11:25; 16:11

*Prov 11:25 (NIV) A generous man will prosper;
he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.*

b. Antithetical: 11:1,3,6

*Prov 11:1 (NIV) The LORD abhors dishonest scales,
but accurate weights are his delight.*

c. Synthetic:

(1) Two related ideas: 11:29; 16:17

*Prov 11:29 (NIV) He who brings trouble on his family will inherit only wind,
and the fool will be servant to the wise.*

(2) 2nd line completes 1st w/ reason, proof, consequence:
11:31; 23:9; 24:10

*Prov 11:31 (NIV) If the righteous receive their due on earth,
how much more the ungodly and the sinner!*

d. Parabolic: draws a comparison
10:26; 11:22; frequent in chapter 26

*Prov 10:26 (NIV) As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes,
so is a sluggard to those who send him.*

2. More Complex Forms

a. Even number of lines
four, six and eight-line proverbs common
give more room to develop idea
often cannot be broken down into distichs
4-line: 26:4-5; 24:19-20, 21-22

*Prov 26:4 (NIV) Do not answer a fool according to his folly,
or you will be like him yourself.
5 Answer a fool according to his folly,
or he will be wise in his own eyes.*

6-line: 23:1-3; 24:11-12

*Prov 23:1 (NIV) When you sit to dine with a ruler,
note well what is before you,
2 and put a knife to your throat
if you are given to gluttony.
3 Do not crave his delicacies,
for that food is deceptive.*

8-line: 23:22-25

*Prov 23:22 (NIV) Listen to your father, who gave you life,
and do not despise your mother when she is old.
23 Buy the truth and do not sell it;
get wisdom, discipline and understanding.
24 The father of a righteous man has great joy;
he who has a wise son delights in him.
25 May your father and mother be glad;
may she who gave you birth rejoice!*

- b. Odd number of lines
rarer, usually 3 lines
a distich with one line doubled
22:29; 24:27; 27:10

*Prov 22:29 (NIV) Do you see a man skilled in his work?
He will serve before kings;
he will not serve before obscure men.*

- only a few five-line
23:4-5

*Prov 23:4 (NIV) Do not wear yourself out to get rich;
have the wisdom to show restraint.
5 Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone,
for they will surely sprout wings
and fly off to the sky like an eagle.*

- one seven-line
23:6-8

*Prov 23:6 (NIV) Do not eat the food of a stingy man,
do not crave his delicacies;
7 for he is the kind of man
who is always thinking about the cost.
"Eat and drink," he says to you,
but his heart is not with you.
8 You will vomit up the little you have eaten
and will have wasted your compliments.*

- c. Mashal Songs
longer proverbial poems
a mixture of shorter types developing one subject
samples:
Wisdom's Invitation - chapter 8
Dangers of Drink - 22:29-35
The Excellent Wife - 31:10-31

C. Authorship of Proverbs

Like book of Psalms, largely but not entirely by one author; according to text itself:

1. Solomon (1:1; 10:1; 25:1)

2. Agur the Son of Jakeh (30:1)
3. King Lemuel (31:1)
4. Other wise men (22:17?; 24:23)

Date:

Know nothing about authors 2-4; Solomon reigned about 970-930 BC
 25:1 places complete collection no earlier than time of Hezekiah (c 700 BC)

D. Outline of Proverbs (from Franz Delitzsch)

1. Introduction (1:1-6)
 purpose of Proverbs: moral, intellectual
2. Hortatory (Exhortation) Discourses (1:7-9:18)
 mostly the longer Mashal songs
 presumably by Solomon (not explicit)
 15 discourses:
 12 have father or teacher as speaker
 3 have Wisdom personified as speaker
3. First Collection of Solomon's Proverbs (10:1-22:16)
 almost all are 2-line proverbs
 majority are antithetical
4. Appendix A: Words of the Wise (22:17-24:22)
 includes all types, from 2-line to Mashal songs
 apparently 30 sayings (22:20)
5. Appendix B: More Words of the Wise (24:23-34)
 similar to #4, above
6. Second Collection of Solomon's Proverbs (25:1-29:27)
 collected by men of Hezekiah
 not all 2-line, as in 1st collection
 majority are parabolic proverbs
7. Appendix C: The Words of Agur son of Jakeh (30:1-33)
 various kinds of proverbs
 several numerical (*Middah*) proverbs
8. Appendix D: The Words of King Lemuel (31:1-9)
 advice from his mother
9. Appendix E: Ode to a Virtuous Woman (31:10-31)

an alphabetic acrostic, each verse beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet

E. Some Selected Proverbs

1. Prov 1:7: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge..."
pretty much the theme of the whole book
cp Job 28:28; Ps 111:10; Prov 9:10; 15:33
2. Prov 1:20-33: Wisdom is personified, inviting people to listen;
cp Prov 8-9; note consequences of ignoring her
3. Prov 6:16-19: numerical proverb on things God hates
use of human anatomy in descending order
4. Prov 14:1-16: a miscellany of 2-line proverbs on a variety of subjects
5. Some proverbs on the poor:
14:31; 19:17; 22:2
6. Prov 23:29-35: the dangers of drink
note structure, repetitions
note quotations in v 35
7. Prov 24:30-34: laziness
means of production allowed to decay
8. Prov 27:1-10: more miscellaneous proverbs
9. Prov 30: words of Agur
30:7-9: plea for moderate circumstances
30:24-28: four that are wise yet small

III. The Book of Job

A. Introduction

With Job and Eccl we move into that wisdom literature which deals with special problems.

Proverbs deals with the application of wisdom to everyday affairs, with the prosperity produced (other things being equal) by living in accordance with God's word.

Job deals with the problem of suffering in something of its most extreme form (most righteous man living, series of disasters that few other have ever experienced).

B. Authorship

The Bible does not tell us who wrote Job.

Tradition: author is Job
don't know if tradition based on any real evidence

Other possibilities:

Since Job not an Israelite, question raised how it got in Bible; don't know answer today, but book accepted as Scripture as far back as we have any evidence; perhaps author was Moses or Solomon.

Liberals often suggest multiple authorship with conflicting viewpoints; this reduces message to triviality, doesn't explain how combination has a powerful message and strong unity.

C. Date of Job

1. Date of Writing Book

Don't really know
It has been dated from before time of Moses (perhaps 1700 BC) to after Exile (about 300 BC).

2. Date of Events

Some deny its historicity, but depth of experience pictured surpasses anything else in ancient literature.
Culture of book (esp chs 1-2) and Job's lifespan (42:16) look like patriarchal age (few centuries around 2000 BC), but incident not set in Canaan, so might be later.

Chaldeans as raiders would favor before 1000 BC.
Ezk 14:14,20 mentions Job as outstanding figure of righteousness, so presumably
events before c 600 BC.
Probably 2nd millennium BC (2000-1000 BC)

D. Setting of Book

1. Land of Uz

Mentioned in Jer 25:20 in context w/ Judah, Egypt, Philistia, Edom, Moab,
Ammon, Tyre, Sidon, coastlands, so apparently near Israel.
Lam 4:21 seems to put Edom as part of Uz, tho Jer 25:20-21 makes distinction
between two; Smick suggests term applies to tribes E of Palestine from
Aram to Edom.

2. Geography, Culture

E of Palestine (1:3), edge of desert (1:17 camels, 1:19 wind)
But farming area (1:3 possessions; 1:14 oxen. plowing, donkeys; 1:16 sheep)
Live in houses (1:4; 1:19, rather than tents); near a town (29:7)
Chaldeans (1:17) - located NE of Palestine
Sabaeans (1:15) - located S of Palestine (= Sheba)

E. The Actors of the Book

(8 speakers, not counting messengers)

1. God
2. Satan
3. Job
4. Job's wife
5. Eliphaz of Teman (see Gen 36:11,34), a town in Edom (Ob 9, Ezk 25:13)
6. Bildad of Shuah (Gen 25:2) associated with Midianites
7. Zophar of Naamath (town in S Pal)
8. Elihu the Buzite (Buz, Gen 22:21, a son of Nahor, Abraham's brother)

F. Outline of Job

(following Smick in ZPEB)

1. Prologue (1:1-2:13)
 - a. Job prosperous (1:1-5)
 - b. Job tested (1:6-2:13)
2. Dialogues (3:1-42:6)
 - a. Job curses the day of his birth (3:1-26)
 - b. 1st cycle of speeches (4:1-14:22)

- c. 2nd cycle (15:1-21:34)
- d. 3rd cycle (22:1-31:40)
- e. Elihu's speeches (32:1-37:24)
- f. God's questions (38:1-42:6)

- 3. Epilogue (42:7-17)
 - a. Job vindicated (42:7-9)
 - b. Job restored (42:10-17)

G. Content of Job in Some Detail

- 1. Prologue (chs 1-2)
 - Job most righteous man alive (1:1,8)
 - and one of the most wealthy (1:2-3)
 - (both important to plot)
 - 1st Test (1:6-22)
 - very important to remember none of earthbound actors know this
 - Satan's charge: Job doesn't really care for God but likes the pay; whole of book structured around Satan's claim: take these things away and Job will curse God to His face
 - so Job loses property and children
 - (wife left to play future role)
 - Job passes the test (1:22; 2:3)
 - 2nd Test (2:1-10)
 - Satan's charge: doesn't admit defeat
 - Job cares for self more than for God
 - so Job loses health and support of wife
 - Job still holds firm
 - 3rd, 4th, 5th... Tests (2:11ff)
 - not explicit, but book of Job best understood as continuation of testing, in which Job loses sympathy of old friends, loses argument to young whippersnapper, loses support of God
 - friends come to sympathize and comfort, and start out very well
- 2. Job's Lament (chapter 3)
 - curses the day of his birth (vv 3-10)
 - why didn't he die at birth, at least would have rest (11-19)
 - why does God allow sufferers to continue living? (20-26)
- 3. First Cycle of Debate (chs 4-14)
 - a. Eliphaz (chs 4-5)
 - begins w/ compliment (4:3-4) but quickly becomes rebuke (4:5)
 - simple moral view of suffering (4:7-9)
 - but emphasizes destruction of wicked!

man's sinfulness revealed to him (4:17-21)
advises Job to seek God (5:8ff)
accept God's correction & he will restore (5:17-27)

b. Job (chs 6-7)

not direct answer but continued lament, now turning to God & asking that he might die (6:8-9), but refusing to deny God's word (6:10)
rebukes friends for not comforting him, charging they are afraid to (6:14-23)
challenges them to show him his error (6:24-30)
turns back to God (ch 7), lamenting man's condition and his own (5),
accusing God of tormenting him (11ff)

c. Bildad (ch 8)

Job a windbag (2), God not unjust (3)
Job's children got what they deserved (4)
If you seek God & do right, he will deliver (5-10, 20-22)
fate of the wicked (11-19)

d. Job (chs 9-10)

true, but how can a man be just before God; can't possibly win argument w/ Him (ch 9)
problem of lack of mediator (9:33)
turns to God to plead w/ Him, asking for relief & for reason for suffering (ch 10); let me know (10:2)

e. Zophar (ch 11)

Job a liar; God knows how wicked Job is and Job is getting better than he deserves (1-12)
repent and God will restore you (13-20)

f. Job (chs 12-14)

rebuke to friends for lack of understanding & sympathy (12:2-5)
God controls everything, overthrows men (12:7-25)
warns friends against bias favoring God (13:4-12)
asks to plead own case before God (13:3,14-28, esp 21-22)
man is transitory (14:1-6), cp w/ tree (7-12)
prays for death (14:13-22)

4. Second Cycle of Debate (chs 15-21)

a. Eliphaz (ch 15)

Job shows true colors in speech to God (2-6)
Job is foolish and men are sinful (7-16)
life of wicked even on earth is disastrous (17-39)

- b. Job (chs 16-17)
 - friends not much comfort (16:2)
 - easy to blast (4),
 - should do more comforting (5)
 - Job torn by God's anger (6-16) tho innocent (17)
 - calls on God (18-22)
 - Job describes his desolation (ch 17)
- c. Bildad (ch 18)
 - end of wicked is ruinous
- d. Job (ch 19)
 - why do friends add to persecution? (1-22)
 - God is doing enough without your help!
 - Job will be vindicated, tho it be after his death (23-29)
- e. Zophar (ch 20)
 - what the wicked will inherit from God
 - (w/ hint that Job falls into this class)
- f. Job (ch 21)
 - you are wrong! wicked often prosper (7-26),
 - tho they will finally be paid back (30)

5. Third Cycle of Debate (chs 22-26)

- a. Eliphaz (ch 22)
 - does righteousness earn us anything w/ God? (2-3)
 - but Job is a great (secret) sinner (4-20)
 - turn back to God & you will prosper (21-30)
- b. Job (chs 23-24)
 - appeals to God, confident of vindication (23)
 - why does God allow wickedness to continue, tho no one has security? (24)
- c. Bildad (ch 25, very short)
 - how can man be just before the mighty God?
- d. Job (ch 26)
 - how does this help me? I know God is almighty

6. Job's Summation (chs 27-31)

- a. Toward Friends (chs 27-28)

will not deny own condition and declare friends right (27:1-12)
the wicked will not ultimately prosper (27:13-23, esp 19-20)
men seek treasure in strange places, but cannot find wisdom; God has it &
men can get it only by fearing Him (ch 28)

b. Toward God (chs 29-31)

Job longs for his former prosperous state (29)
note v 18, how he had expected to die

Job's present wretched state (30)

Job protests his innocence (31) and rests his case (31:40)

7. Elihu's Speeches (chs 32-37)

a. Introduction (ch 32)

reason for speaking (2-3): angry w/ Job & friends

source of knowledge (7-9): God

no flattery (21-22) (cp 13:7-10, Job's charge against friends)

b. Answering Job's Charges (chs 33-35)

(1) 1st charge (33)

arrangement basically what Job wanted

charge: "I am innocent, God afflicting me"

cp 10:7; 13;24,27, etc

answer:

God is greater than man, doesn't owe explanation (12-13)

God's revelation is to save from disaster (14-33)

(2) 2nd charge (34)

charge: "I am innocent, God is unjust; what is use of serving

cp 13:18; 27:2; 9:20,22; 21:7,15

answer:

God is just, so men will get what they deserve (10-12)

No one commissioned God, so He is accountable to no one
(13-30)

It is best to respond favorably to God's chastisement
(31-32)

Should God do things the way we like? (33)

God?"

(3) 3rd charge (35)

charge: "(If this is my reward), what advantage to me to do right?"

cp 9:30-31

answer:

What advantage to God if you do good or evil? (6-7)

Of course, your actions affect others & they may call on

God (8-9)
God won't listen to you if you don't acknowledge Him
(10-13)
But He will still judge (14-15)

c. Elihu's Defense of God (chs 36-37)

(1) God's Justice (36:1-23)

He is righteous (3), omniscient (4), despises no one (5)
He raises up the good & puts down wicked (6-7)
Righteous people are afflicted to show them their sin and to
discipline them (8-10)
You, too, will be delivered if you react properly (15-23)

(2) God's Power (35:24-37:24)

Serves to introduce God's appearance in whirlwind (note
increasing allusions to weather)
God is exalted & we don't know Him (36:26)
By weather He judges & gives food (36:31ff)

8. God's Speech from Whirlwind (chs 38-41)

a. First Speech (chs 38-39)

charge (38:2): who darkens counsel by words w/o knowledge?
(supports Elihu's charge, 35:16)
conditions of trial (3): I will ask, you answer
(answering Job's request, 13:3,20-22)
questions:
Job's ignorance & weakness demonstrated in events of creation
(4-11)
in present physical phenomena (12-38)
in present biological phenomena (38:39-39:30)
Job's response (40:3-5): (beginning to see) won't answer

b. Second Speech (chs 40-41)

charge (8): will you condemn Me to justify yourself?
(supports Elihu, 34:5,9)
questions: Job's weakness demonstrated
can you do what is necessary to judge? (8-14)
can you even control Behemoth? (15-24)
hippo? (note v 19)
can you even control Leviathan? (ch 41)
crocodile? (note vv 10-11)
Job's response (42:1-6): repents and acknowledges his own ignorance and
God's power

9. Epilogue (42:7-17)

a. God and Job's Friends (7-9)

angry with 3 friends for not speaking right
(nothing about Elihu)
has them offer sacrifice through Job and get his intercession

b. God and Job's Restoration (10-17)

after repentance and intercession for friends
other friends troop back & family restored
long life and prosperity twice that before

H. Some Lessons for Us

1. A subtle book!

Job's friends say much that is right, but are condemned
Job says much that is wrong but is vindicated
God doesn't tell Job about Satan nor answer his questions
No comment on Elihu
Job's mood changes back & forth during his long speeches

2. Modern ideas of progress are mistaken when used to dismiss the ancients as dumb and unsophisticated.

3. Even the most righteous person on earth may undergo seemingly senseless suffering.

4. This suffering can serve a valuable purpose in giving that person more understanding about God.

5. There is a vast unseen world which produces effects on earth, but its causes and purposes are not visible.

6. Persecution may thus occur when no human persecutor is involved.

7. Behind the wicked, destructive work of Satan there is the righteous work of God, who uses even Satan as a tool for His own higher purposes.

8. The only proper response to suffering is humility and repentance (Ps 138:6; Prov 22:4).

9. We need to avoid the mistakes of Job's friends in comforting and counseling the afflicted (1 Sam 16:7; Job 12:5; 16:2-5).

10. Don't be so quick to defend God that we distort the truth (Job 42:7; 13:4-12).

IV. Ecclesiastes

A. Authorship and Date

1. Authorship - Solomon

Nearly all liberals and many conservatives deny work by Solomon (e.g., conservatives Hengstenberg, Delitzsch, Leupold, Young).

Denial usually based on 1:16: "all in Jerusalem before me";

1:12 "I was king over Israel in Jerus";

plus "non-royal viewpoint" of 4:13; 10:17 and 10:20

But all these are answerable

claims of 1:1 (son of David, king in Jerus)

and 2:9 (greater than all predecessors in Jerus) only fit Solomon

If not Solomon, have to assume writer is impersonating Solomon

2. Date - late in Solomon's life, say 940 BC or later

Conservatives who deny Sol author suggest 5th cen BC

Liberals usually suggest 3rd cen BC, due to parallels with Epicurean philosophy:
eat, drink, be merry

Archer (*Zondervan Pict Encyc of Bible*) suggests linguistic evid closest to
Phoenician materials; Solomon had close ties with Phoenicians (Tyre, etc.)

Comments of book suggest author old, so late in Sol's life, say 940-930 BC

B. Various Approaches to Ecclesiastes

1. Liberal Approaches

a. Unified authorship but uninspired (minority)

b. At least two authors (majority view)

more pious editor tones down book

(like Jerry Falwell editing book by Madeline Murray O'Hare!)

2. Conservative Approaches

a. Inspired record of uninspired ideas

Old Scofield: "Inspiration sets down accurately what passes, but the
conclusions and reasonings are, after all, man's"

New Scofield: "The philosophy which it sets forth, which makes no claim
to revelation, but which inspiration records for our instruction..."

b. Inspired revelation like rest of Scripture

claims of book: 12:9-11
parallel material elsewhere in OT: Ps 90; Ps 39:5
apparently cited in Rom 8:20: creation subjected to *futility*
this gives insight into approach of book:
futility as a result of man's fall into sin

C. Content of Ecclesiastes

1. Chapter 1

- a. Title (1): *Qoheleth* - unusual feminine form, occurs nowhere else but Eccl; presumably derived from *Qahal* - congregation; so means preacher? teacher?
- b. Theme (2): all is vanity
futility, emptiness, occasionally "meaningless"
probably "empty, emptiness" is best translation
- c. Futility of existence (3-11)
what advantage "under sun"?
phrase recurs frequently in Eccl; seems to mean "in this (fallen) world"
brevity of human life, cycles of nature,
dissatisfaction, repetition, being forgotten
- d. Futility of wisdom (12-18)

2. Chapter 2

- a. Futility of pleasure (1-11)
- b. Death a source of futility (12-23)
- c. Conclusion: enjoyment of life is a gift from God (24-26)

3. Chapter 3

- a. Futility of Action (1-11)
or possibly, of understanding, or of time
if all these opposites appropriate at one time or another, how do we understand life or what God is doing?
- b. Conclusion: enjoyment of life a gift of God (12-15)
- c. Moral testing as a source of futility (16-21)
- d. Conclusion: enjoy life (22)

4. Chapter 4

Futility of ambition (1-16) or possibly, of competition, or of striving
oppression (1-3)
labor and competition (4-12)
but laziness no good either (5)

value of cooperation (9-12)
futility of revolution (13-16)

5. Chapter 5

- a. Advice: proper approach to God (1-7)
caution, listening, obeying, avoiding rash vows
- b. Futility of wealth (8-17)
oppression (8-9)
dissatisfaction (10-11)
surfeit (12)
hoarding (13)
loss (14)
death (15-16)
vexation (17)
- c. Conclusion: enjoy life as a gift from God (18-20)

6. Chapter 6

- Futility of long life (1-12)
without satisfaction, short life better (3-6)
better contentment with what we have (9)
limited strength (10)
limited time (12)

7. Chapter 7

- a. Advice: proper approach to life (1-22)
sobriety & honesty in view of death (1-9)
wisdom & humility in view of mystery (10-19)
patience in view of sin (20-22)
- b. Sin as a source of futility (23-29)
cannot attain true wisdom (23-24)
cannot understand wickedness (25-29)
those who please God will be protected (26)
few are trying to understand (28)
God is not source of wickedness, but we humans went own ways (29)

8. Chapter 8

- a. Advice: proper approach to government (1-9)
value of wisdom (1)
obedience to king (2-6)
man's ignorance (7) and weakness (8)
- b. Earthly reward a source of futility (10-14)

- c. Conclusion: enjoy life (15)
- d. Futility in discovering God's activities (16-17)

9. Chapter 9

- a. Futility of death (1-6)
 - comes to all (1-3)
 - ends all activity (4-6)
- b. Conclusion: enjoy life (7-12)
 - this is your reward in life (9)
 - exert all your strength while you have it (10)
 - remember the results are in God's hand (11-12)
- c. Value and limitations of wisdom (13-18)

10. Chapter 10

Wisdom easily cancelled by folly (1-20)

11. Chapter 11

- a. Still, it is wise to be diligent,
foolish to be lazy (1-6)
- b. Conclusion: enjoy life,
but don't forget the judgment (7-10)

12. Chapter 12

- a. Don't forget old age! (1-7)
- b. Epilogue (8-14)
 - Theme (8)
 - Preacher (9-10)
 - Purpose (11-12)
 - goads, nails, study
 - Conclusion (13-14)
 - fear God
 - keep His commandments
 - remember the judgment

V. Song of Solomon

A. Title

1. Song of Songs: Hebrew title
a superlative construction, means something like
"best song" or "most beautiful song"
2. Canticles: Roman Catholic title, taken from Latin translation of Hebrew title:
Canticum Canticorum
3. Song of Solomon: our usual Protestant title
derived from 1st verse: "belonging to Solomon"

B. Authorship and Date

1. "Belonging to Solomon" (1:1) probably indicates authorship;
style is uniform throughout; references to exotic spices,
royalty, etc. fit royal authorship
2. Main alternative in liberal circles is to deny unity of work
usually assigning parts to Solomonic period, rest later
(usually set in N Israel)
3. Date for Solomonic authorship during his youth but after coronation (3:11),
so about 970 BC;
other proposed dates range down to as late as 300 BC

C. Methods of Interpretation

great variety, more than any other book in Bible,
except perhaps Revelation

1. Allegorical: lover and beloved stand for something else
 - a. Jewish: God and Israel (Targums, Midrash Rabbah)
 - b. Christian: Christ and Church (Origen)
 - c. Mystical: God and individual soul (Bernard of Clairveaux)
 - d. Cultic: dying and rising god (Ringgren, Meek)
2. Literal: love between man and woman
 - a. Dramatic A: Solomon and country maiden (Delitzsch)
 - b. Dramatic B: shepherd & maiden vs Solomon (Jacobi)
 - c. Lyrical: collection of love songs (Budde)
3. Suggested Approach
combination of Dramatic A and Lyrical seems best

tho Eph 5:22-23 shows parallel between marriage and relation of God to believers
shepherd-lover theory based on shepherd references 1:7-8
 reading opposition between "king" and "you" in 1:4
 plus night visits 3:1ff; 5:2ff
but 1:12-15 seems to connect king and lover
note royal and military allusions in speeches of lover
 1:9; 4:4; 6:4; 6:8-9; 7:1,5
lover speaks (4:1) just after Solomon arrives
references to Sol's wedding (3:11) and bride
 (4:8,9,10,11; 5:1)
Solomon and vineyard (8:11-12)

D. Speakers in Song of Solomon

Seems to be a sort of dramatic reading (like Ps 2)
with different speakers in various places:
 fellow (lover, groom)
 girl (beloved, bride)
 chorus (women of Jerusalem; once, her brothers)

Speakers not indicated in KJV and RSV, but more recent versions try to indicate these
(NEB, JB, NAB, Amp, LB, NASB, NSRB, NIV)

This division is partly based on information in Hebrew which doesn't show up in English
translation: verbs in Hebrew indicate whether masc or fem for "you" both in
singular and plural

Also some guesswork involved, so versions disagree now and then (e.g., NIV and NASB
disagree in 7 places, totalling about 6 verses)

E. Outline of Song of Solomon

difficult to outline
suggestions below follow Woudstra, *WBC* and Harrison, *ZPEB*

1. The mutual affection of bride and bridegroom (1:1-2:7)
 - a. Title (1:1)
 - b. Bride (1:2-4a): affection for bridegroom
 - c. Chorus (1:4b): bridegroom's attractions
 - d. Bride (1:5-7): dark complexion, seeking bridegroom
 - e. Groom (1:8-11): response to bride (v 11 chorus?)
 - f. Bride (1:12-14): perfume & groom compared
 - g. Groom (1:15): her beauty
 - h. Bride (1:16-2:1): Rose of Sharon ref to bride?
 - i. Groom (2:2): bride like lily
 - j. Bride (2:3-7): ends w/ refrain (spoken by groom?)

2. Their deepening affection (2:8-3:5)
 - a. Bride (2:8-10): coming of her beloved
 - b. Groom (2:10-15): springtime (v 15 may be chorus)
 - c. Bride (2:16-17): springtime
 - d. Bride's Dream (3:1-5): ends w/ refrain (v 5)

3. The Wedding (3:6-5:1)
 - a. Chorus (3:6-11): Solomon's coming
 - b. Groom (4:1-15): Solomon praise of bride & proposal
 - c. Bride (4:16): her acceptance
 - d. Groom (5:1a): his acceptance
 - e. Chorus (5:1b): consummation?

4. The bridegroom's absence (5:2-6:3)
 - a. Bride's 2nd Dream (5:2-8)
 - b. Chorus (5:9): what is groom like?
 - c. Bride (5:10-16): describes groom
 - d. Chorus (6:1): where did he go?
 - e. Bride (6:2-3): pasturing flock in gardens

5. Beauty of the bride (6:4-8:4)
 - a. Groom (6:4-9): various comparisons
 - b. Chorus (6:10): her awesome beauty
 - c. Groom (6:11-12): he goes away
 - d. Chorus (6:13a): she goes away
 - e. Groom (6:13b): response (app b & g go together)
 - f. Groom (7:1-9a): praise of & desire for bride
 - g. Bride (7:9b): her acceptance
 - h. Bride (7:10-8:4): her desire for him; ends with refrain (v 4)

6. The durability of love (8:5-14)
 - a. Chorus (8:5a): pair coming from wilderness
 - b. Groom (8:5b-7): power of love
 - c. Chorus (8:8-9): different chorus, her brothers
 - d. Bride (8:10-12): now mature; love is hers to give
 - e. Groom (8:13): call to her
 - f. Bride (8:14): go away together

F. Some Lessons from Song of Solomon

1. The proper expression of love between man and woman includes the physical and emotional. This is not to be viewed as something unspiritual or lower (cp Prov 5:15-20; Heb 13:4; 1 Tim 4:1-5; 5:14).

2. Love is one of the strongest forces that humans experience (8:6-7). It should not be stirred up prematurely (2:7; 3:5; 8:4).
3. Marriage is a gift of God to provide the only proper setting for sexual relations. It may rightly be preceded by courtship.
4. As human love may help us appreciate the beauties of nature (implied throughout) and vice versa, so human love gives us insight into our relation to God and vice versa (see Eph 5:22-32, etc.).