

POETICAL BOOKS: God is Good, but Life is Tough Job through Ecclesiastes

Not only was the Teacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true.

The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails – given by one Shepherd. Ecclesiastes 12.9-11

Job – 1.8-9; 2.3, 10; 19.25-26; 27.5-6; 31.1-39; 42.1-17

The book of Job reveals the truth that believers should continue trusting in God even when undeserved suffering occurs in their lives. Believers often suffer like Job, without knowing why. They need to learn to admit that God has better control of their lives as the Creator than they do themselves. Also, there are some things about nature and suffering that believers are just not meant to know. Most important, if what believers know about the person of God is not motivation enough to keep them worshipping him, then maybe they have forgotten that they are only finite mortals. The book of Job probes the hearts of believers, uncovering the reasons why they follow God. Do believers follow God because of the benefits he gives or out of a deep love and sacrificial reverence for God?

Psalms – 1, 23, 47, 51, 73, 98, 100, 113-118, 119, 120-134, 146-150

The book of Psalms was designed to aid in the worship of God by supplying poetic examples of life's ups and downs. Each event or struggle represented in the psalms is punctuated with the triumph and peace that can only be found through heartfelt praise to God.

The book of Psalms is the Bible's own hymnal. The contents are psalms that were used to praise God for personal and national wonders of redemption. Sometimes psalms grew out of a psalmist's private experience of despair, and sometimes from Israel's national suffering as a result of military defeat. Temple priests composed some psalms and professional musicians and the kings of Israel wrote others. But in the collection of psalms as it now exists, the psalms center around the temple of God in Jerusalem.

Proverbs – 1-31

The book of Proverbs was designed to help believers deepen their healthy fear of God and to apply that fear to the varied events of daily life. The proverbs graphically described these events as opportunities for making wise or foolish choices that could bring either blessing or disaster. But the book of Proverbs was not collected and compiled simply to give a long checklist of various items for successful living. Its purpose was to strengthen the confidence of believers in God's ultimate control over the world to help them take responsibility for their actions and accept the consequences of wrongdoing.

The book probes deeply into how people's thoughts affect their actions. The book divides thoughts and acts into two major categories, each one based on either true or false understandings of God's involvement in the world. The fool acts as if God does not exist. The wise conduct themselves in the full realization that God exists and that actions have unavoidable consequences, good or bad. Thus, the book's main purpose is to correct the worldviews of readers—to turn them away from foolish fantasies (see, for example, 12.11; 28.19) and back to the fear of God (1.7). Then the various wise actions described in the book will result from that inner awe and respect for God.

In summary, the purpose of the book of Proverbs is to save people from the realm of darkness and death caused by error and ignorance. It is also to save them in order that they might enter the realm of life as God originally intended.

Ecclesiastes – 1.2; 2.24-26; 3.1-14; 5.1, 10, 18-20; 7.1-6, 15-20; 8.12; 11.7-12.14

The book of Ecclesiastes was designed to make people wise and happy. It makes them wise by showing the futility of building their hopes on the material and social goods of this world. It makes them happy by showing how, within the context of fearing God; they can fully enjoy the goods of this world.