

506. The fact that one will be bitten by a serpent or fall into a pit suggests the activity described in verse eight is good or evil? Explain.
507. Why do the accidents recorded in verse nine happen?
508. If the axe represents all implements, what lesson is taught by the fact that it is not properly sharpened?
509. If one were wise, he would have done what with the serpent?

E. THOSE WHO WORK CONTRARY TO WISDOM
ARE REPREHENSIBLE. 10:12-20

1. Talkers and workers 10:12-15

TEXT 10:12-15

- 12 Words from the mouth of a wise man are gracious, while the lips of a fool consume him;
- 13 the beginning of his talking is folly, and the end of it is wicked madness.
- 14 Yet the fool multiplies words. No man knows what will happen, and who can tell him what will come after him?
- 15 The toil of a fool so wearies him that he does not even know how to go to the city.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 10:12-15

384. How dangerous are the lips of a fool?
385. The fool's words start out as folly and end up as what?
386. What effect does this have on the fool?
387. What effect does a fool's work have on his direction?

PARAPHRASE 10:12-15

The words of a wise man bring him honor and respect while a fool is actually consumed by his own words. The fool begins

his conversation with light-hearted and foolish nonsense, but before he is finished he is caught up in wicked and perverse madness. The fool may brag about his future plans but no man knows for sure what the future holds or what will happen after he is gone. The activities of a fool are so exhausting to him that he loses his orientation and can't even find his way to town.

COMMENT 10:12-15

v. 12 The same word used for *charming* the snake is used for *prayer* (lachash) in Isaiah 26:16. So in contrast to wrong speech, the verse begins with the idea that words from a wise man are gracious. Such gracious words of praise or encouragement of one's fellowman are considered "sacrifices" (Hebrews 13:15-16) as they proceed from the mouths of those who possess the true wisdom. On the other hand, the poison in the mouth of fools is reprehensible. This is true not only because it destroys others, but because it consumes the fool himself. A close parallel is found in "the tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, but the mouth of fools spouts folly" (Proverbs 15:2). On the matter of gracious words, read Proverbs 22:11; Psalms 45:2; Luke 2:52; 4:22. On the matter of the self-destruction of the fool, read Psalms 5:10 and Proverbs 18:7.

v. 13 "As the proverb of the ancients says: 'Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness' " (I Samuel 24:13). The very beginning of the fool's conversation is foolishness. (Cf. James 3:8-13) While it is true that the beginning of the conversation of fools is found in jest and folly, before it is ended the element of evil characterizes their words. Here it is called "wicked madness." (Cf. COMMENT 7:25)

v. 14 The multiplying of the fool's words implies his boasting about tomorrow, his promised accomplishments, his own greatness, and his importance to his society. Yet, when he boasts of tomorrow, he is speaking of that which he knows the least. (Cf. James 4:13; Luke 12:18-20) The word used for

“fool” in this verse (sakal) means one who is a “dense, confused thinker.” In verse twelve the word for “fool” (kesil) means one who is possessed of an unwarranted self-confidence. There is undoubtedly a mixture of both as there would be in most fools. The words “what will happen,” and “what will be after him,” speak to the immediate future as well as the distant future—even after death. No man can predict the events of *tomorrow* with any certainty, how foolish to go about boasting of what one will do in the distant future.

v. 15 Two additional indicators of the fool are noted: (1) The toil or labor in which he engages is apart from God’s approval. It is of such a nature that he toils for nothing and is wearied by it. Habakkuk described nations who toil and grow weary for nothing—showing no profit (Habakkuk 2:13). (2) The second mark of the fool is the total absence of common sense. He is so void of understanding that he doesn’t know his way home. Current American proverbs which parallel this are: “He doesn’t know enough to come in when it rains”; “He is so ignorant that he can’t tie his own shoe strings.” He is indeed a fool because he brags endlessly of his future success, and yet his labor isn’t productive. If he cannot find his way over clearly marked roads, one could not expect him to succeed in his plans. The way to the city is the way most traveled and thus the easiest road to follow. Such facts heighten the ignorance of the fool.

FACT QUESTIONS 10:12-15

510. *Poison* in the mouth of fools will destroy whom? (Cf. verse 12)
511. The conversation of fools starts with jest but ends with what?
512. What characteristics mark the fools of verse fourteen?
513. Identify both ways one is proven to be a fool according to verse fifteen.
514. What is the significance of the statement: “He does not even know how to go to the city”?

2. Rulers 10:16-17

TEXT 10:16-17

- 16 Woe to you, O land, whose king is a lad and whose princes feast in the morning.
- 17 Blessed are you, O land, whose king is of nobility and whose princes eat at the appropriate time—for strength and not for drunkenness.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 10:16-17

388. Why is it a dangerous thing to have rulers who feast in the morning?
389. Why were they eating at this time (verse 17)?
390. A land is blessed when a king eats for what purpose?

PARAPHRASE 10:16-17

A country is in great trouble when the king behaves as a youth, and the princes frolic and feast in the morning hours! A country is rich whose king is concerned more with justice than he is with jesting, and eats to gain strength in order to carry out his labors rather than participating in drunkenness.

COMMENT 10:16-17

v. 16 The land is impoverished when the ruler behaves as a child. It does not mean that a young king would be a curse to a land. Josiah proved a blessing to Israel and became king when he was but eight years of age. Rehoboam is an illustration of the intent of the verse, when at forty-one years, he behaved with childish thoughts and in childish ways (II Chronicles 13:7). Compare with this Isaiah 3:12 where corrupted rulers are

described as women and children. (Cf. I Corinthians 14:20) The irresponsible behavior of childish kings carries over to the princes who start the day frolicking in intoxication and sensual enjoyment. They should have attended to honest work and important matters of state (Jeremiah 21:12). Isaiah also spoke of similar circumstances in 5:11-12: "Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may pursue strong drink; who stay up late in the evening that wine may inflame them! And their banquets are accompanied by lyre and harp, by tambourine and flute, and by wine; but they do not pay attention to the deeds of the Lord. Nor do they consider the work of His hands." The lesson is clear: When wisdom is disregarded by the rulers of the land, the people will have to endure injustices and uncommon trials. The "woe" that comes upon them is the inescapable sorrow which results from the land being controlled by fools.

v. 17 In this verse the opposite picture is presented. The king is not only mature in his behavior, he is also of *noble* birth. Noble not only in blood, but also in virtuous behavior. No longer is the true prince walking upon the ground while the fool triumphs on horseback. Wisdom reigns. The Jews assign to the word "noble" the idea of "freeborn." This suggests a greater opportunity for one to enjoy learning and the employment of wisdom. Such men would be a blessing rather than a curse to the land. Such wise men will eat for strength and not for sensual enjoyment. They will judge wisely in the morning hours rather than selfishly pursue the pleasures of the flesh. Instead of harsh judgments and sorrow falling upon the land, the land is blessed and happy. (Cf. Isaiah 32:8; 31:4)

FACT QUESTIONS 10:16-17

515. How do irresponsible, childish kings start their days?
 516. What is the "woe" experienced by such a country?
 517. Describe the conditions in the land where wisdom reigns.

3. Warnings 10:18-20

TEXT 10:18-20

- 18 Through indolence the rafters sag, and through slackness the house leaks.
- 19 Men prepare a meal for enjoyment, and wine makes life merry, and money is the answer to everything.
- 20 Furthermore, in your bedchamber do not curse a king, and in your sleeping room do not curse a rich man, for a bird of the heavens will carry the sound, and the winged creature will make the matter known.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 10:18-20

391. What two things are said to happen to a house when a lazy man lives within?
392. Instead of repairing the house, the lazy man plans for what?
393. The indolent man looks upon what as an answer to everything?
394. Explain how the truth which states, "Be sure your sins will find you out!" is illustrated in verse twenty.

PARAPHRASE 10:18-20

Because a man is lazy and concerned only with merriment, the rafters of his house sag and soon he will have a leaky house. His whole attitude toward life is colored by his slackness. He makes a feast for enjoyment, pours wine for enjoyment, and believes every problem he has can be resolved with money. Do not revile a king, not even in the privacy of your own mind. Do not revile a rich man, not even in the privacy of your own bedroom. You can be sure they will learn of your thoughts and your words—a winged creature, like a bird, will carry your voice and disclose to others what you say.

COMMENT 10:18-20

A demonstration of the supreme value of wisdom over folly continues in the closing three verses of this chapter. It is illustrated, however, through three negative warnings. The subject of the discussion turns from the examples of noble and honorable men to the foolish rulers and the blight cast upon the land as a result of the attitudes and actions. Since the rulers or king serves as the subject, the use of "rafters" and "house" should be taken figuratively for the nation's state of affairs. Solomon was bordering upon the brink of rebellion. Both Rehoboam and Jeroboam were setting their sights on the throne. Although the picture is applicable to the later Persian period and well represents the conditions of that day, it also vividly describes the conditions in the day of Solomon. As a matter of fact, the principles which are interwoven throughout the narrative are applicable in any generation where the leaders are given to wine, merriment and money, and where a segment of godly souls long for the restoration of justice, righteousness and honor.

v. 18 "Indolence" is an intensive word and in the original language, it carries the idea of *much* slothfulness. Not just one idle hand, but both are meant. A vivid picture of such laziness is presented in Proverbs 26:14-16: "As the door turns on its hinges, so does the sluggard on his bed. The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he is weary of bringing it to his mouth again. The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can give a discreet answer." Since those who are in control have little welfare for their subjects, the judicial matters go unattended. The picture of a house is introduced to convey a common illustration which would be understood by all, and actually experienced by some. First the rafters sag and through inattentiveness the house leaks. When those in authority are more concerned with their own personal pleasure (Cf. 1:2-10) than the welfare of the state, even the innocent suffer. (Cf. Amos 6:6) How different the admonition toward industry found in chapter nine verse ten! *Diligent work is the way*

of wisdom.

v. 19 It is because of the three erroneous attitudes expressed in this verse that the condition discussed in verse eighteen existed. Instead of repairing the breaches, the officials seek a feast, wine and money. They spend their time and energy in revelry rather than looking after the affairs of the state. A Jewish tradition puts the following words in the mouth of Solomon's mother as she scolds him for just such irresponsible behavior for a king: "Do not give your strength to women, or your ways to that which destroys kings. It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, or for rulers to desire strong drink. Lest they drink and forget what is decreed, and pervert the rights of all the afflicted. Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to him whose life is bitter. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his trouble no more. Open your mouth for the dumb, for the rights of all the unfortunate. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and defend the rights of the afflicted and needy."

"Money answers all." How did Solomon acquire the money to carry out his outlandish experiments, and pursue his luxurious personal pleasures? *The Amplified Bible* says that he "depends on (tax) money to answer for all of it" (10:19c). Solomon taxed the people heavily and survived the criticism of the people. However, upon his death excessive taxation proved to be the undoing of Rehoboam and occasioned the loss of the ten tribes. In troubled times, when justice is perverted, money is secured from many illegitimate sources. Extortion, exorbitant taxation, bribes, and numerous opportunities for graft are only a few examples. Thus, money grants all that *such* people want. It is of course a perversion that money answers all. Truly it is more than just perversion, it is *idolatry*. Meander says: "Silver and gold,—these are according to my opinion, the most useful gods; if these have a place in the house, wish what you wilt, all will be thine." Such is the obsession which conquers the fool. The Preacher is already on record concerning the superiority of wisdom over money. Not only is wisdom greater than money, it has the

inherent quality of preserving "the lives of its possessors" (7:11-12). Of course the philosophy that money will resolve every problem and supply the answer to every desire is the expression of the sinner, not the godly of Israel.

v. 20 In the concluding verse, wise counsel is offered to those who must suffer through the abuse of leaders whose character has been identified in the preceding verses. It is dangerous to react in an unwise way to the behavior of leaders who work contrary to the will of God. Thus the warning, "Curse not the king." The motive of prudence is sufficient for one to refrain from lifting a voice against the king—one should have regard for his own personal safety. The idea of cursing either God or the ruler is prohibited (Exodus 22:28). Here the word "curse" means "speaking lightly of." The "bird of the heavens," and "the winged creatures" simply means, in almost every culture, that secrets have wings. Words spoken in confidence often find wings and fly to the ears of those spoken about. Today one would say, "a little bird told me." Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Luke 6:45). One must guard against entertaining evil thoughts in the heart, for in some unguarded moment the words will find their way through the lips to the ears of others.

FACT QUESTIONS 10:18-20

518. What is meant by "rafters" and "houses" if they are taken figuratively?
519. In what way is such a picture applicable to Solomon's latter reign?
520. How intense is the laziness mentioned in verse eighteen?
521. What will take care of *all* the problems according to unwise rulers?
522. How did Solomon acquire his riches?
523. In what sense does the statement "money answers all" suggest idolatry?
524. Why is wisdom greater than money? (Cf. verse 19; 7:11-12)

525. Explain what is meant by the statement: "*Prudence* is sufficient for one to refrain from lifting a voice against the king."
526. Why refer to a "bird" and "winged creatures" when speaking of words spoken in private?

F. EXHORTATIONS TO WORK IN HARMONY WITH WISDOM 11:1—12:8

1. Trust God and be cheerful in all of your activities. 11:1-8

TEXT 11:1-8

- 1 Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days.
- 2 Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth.
- 3 If the clouds are full, they pour out rain upon the earth; and whether a tree falls toward the south or toward the north, wherever the tree falls, there it lies.
- 4 He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap.
- 5 Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things.
- 6 Sow your seed in the morning, and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good.
- 7 The light is pleasant, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun.
- 8 Indeed, if a man should live many years, let him rejoice in them all, and let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many. Everything that is to come will be futility.