

Walk Through The Bible

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Introduction to The Wisdom of Solomon

Introduction

The Wisdom of Solomon is considered one of the most important books that make up the Apocrypha. This book differs from the “Wisdom Literature” of The Old Testament Period. In the Old Testament Books such as Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, these were written in a stable environment to train young men to operate in a stable culture of that period. The Book of Wisdom on the other hand was written to Jews in Diaspora (outside of Palestine) during the period at the end of the Greek Empire and the beginning of the Roman. Its style is different than the Books of the Old Testament with its arguments taking the form of an essay. The purpose of the Book of Solomon was to encourage those living in gentile areas to remain faithful to the concepts and principles of their faith while facing a hostile environment. Some felt that those in the Diaspora ran the risk of losing their identity because of the rivalry of Greek culture and Roman domination especially with their relaxed immorality.

The Book of Solomon was written in Greek and its author was acquainted with Greek culture and philosophy as well as their style of writing and argumentation.

Content of the Book

In most theological commentaries the Book is divided into three:

1. 1-6 which describe the fate of the righteous and the wicked;
2. 7-10 which celebrate the Divine Wisdom (Sophia) which finds its greatest expression in the wisdom of the God of the Israelites;
3. 11-19 which provide a survey of God’s direction of Israel’s history.

Place and Date of Composition

Some scholars believed that the Book of Solomon was composed around 180 B.C. in Alexandria in Egypt where the tension between Judaism and Greek culture was at its highest and forced the

Jews to produce the excellent work found in this book. There are others who argue for a later date about 50 B.C.

Author's Purpose

From the outset the author's intention was to defend the orthodox faith of his people. While he used Greek ideas and terms, he remains faithful to the faith that we find in the Old Testament. There are three doctrines that stand out:

1. The natural immortality of the soul in contrast to the Hebrew resurrection of the Body (1:15-16; 3:1-4)
2. Death and all evil is considered the work of the devil, who through jealousy tempted man in the garden (2:24)
3. Wisdom in a metaphysical sense is an agent of God in creation and provides a bond between God and the created order.

1. Wisdom of Solomon 1:1-16 Seek God, Wisdom and Life

- a. 1-9 While the passage is addressed to the "rulers of the world" the actual audience in the author's mind are the wealthy, the educated, and the Jews in Alexandria who run the risk of losing their faith. Righteousness is important; it prepares the way for wisdom so they had better sit up and learn this important lesson.
- b. 10-11 The grumbling here refers to Jews who are complaining against God. This gives root to all kinds of evil and it will end in disaster.
- c. 12-16 The unrighteous will face death; God, however is not the author of death, all that is made to conform to His will experience life and immortality.

2. Wisdom of Solomon 2:1-24 Death comes from Sin

- a. 1-20 The author is trying to deal with the philosophy that has caused so many to go astray. The argument is as follows: That life is short and meaningless (1-5); and one might as well seek all the pleasure right here and now (6-9). One might as well take advantage of the helpless and the disadvantaged (10-11) and declare war on the righteous (12-20) who trust in God. Let us see if God can do anything for those who claim Him as their Father.
- b. 21-24 The argument is built on a faulty premise. They have forgotten that there is a life hereafter where the righteous will be rewarded. The mere fact that man was made in the image of God means that He made him for immortality. For the first time in Jewish history, the serpent in the garden is considered Satan.

3. **Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-19 The Fate of the Righteous**

- a. 1-9 The death of the righteous is but an illusion. In reality they will possess everlasting life, joy and felicity. They will share in governing God's Kingdom and enjoy God's love.
- b. 10-13 The wicked, however, will have nothing to look forward to in this life and the one to come.
- c. 14-19 Even the barren widow and the childless eunuch (who would never be considered as a part of God's people!!!) their fate will be one of glory compared to the wicked and their numerous offsprings whose days will end in dishonor and who have nothing to look forward to in the future life.