

## PSALM 49

*The Folly of Trusting in Riches.*

### INTRODUCTION.

- A. From Roy H. Enoch (8-3-94).
- B. To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.
- C. "The Folly of Riches."
- D. This psalm is usually classified as "didactic", Greek for "teaching" or instruction. He is going to teach why it is foolish to seek or to trust in riches. It is of world-wide importance because it affects everyone.
- E. Coffman offers the divisions of the psalm suggested by Addis:
  1. The announcement that a great mystery is about to be revealed (49:1-4).
  2. The haughty boastfulness of wicked men trusting in riches (49:5-8).
  3. There are other things that riches cannot do (49:9-12).
  4. Trust in riches is foolish and the godly have reason to hope (49:13-15).
  5. Fate of the wicked contrasted with the righteous (49:16-20).

### THE TEXT.

- 49:1** Hear this, all peoples;  
Give ear, all inhabitants of the world,  
**2** Both low and high,  
Rich and poor together.  
**3** My mouth will speak wisdom,  
And the meditation of my heart *will be* understanding.  
**4** I will incline my ear to a proverb;  
I will express my riddle on the harp.  
**5** Why should I fear in days of adversity,  
When the iniquity of my foes surrounds me,  
**6** Even those who trust in their wealth  
And boast in the abundance of their riches?  
**7** No man can by any means redeem *his* brother  
Or give to God a ransom for him--  
**8** For the redemption of his soul is costly,  
And he should cease *trying* forever--  
**9** That he should live on eternally,  
That he should not undergo decay.  
**10** For he sees *that even* wise men die;  
The stupid and the senseless alike perish  
And leave their wealth to others.  
**11** Their inner thought is *that* their houses are forever  
And their dwelling places to all generations;  
They have called their lands after their own names.  
**12** But man in *his* pomp will not endure;  
He is like the beasts that perish.  
**13** This is the way of those who are foolish,  
And of those after them who approve their words. Selah.  
**14** As sheep they are appointed for Sheol;  
Death shall be their shepherd;  
And the upright shall rule over them in the morning,  
And their form shall be for Sheol to consume  
So that they have no habitation.  
**15** But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol,  
For He will receive me. Selah.  
**16** Do not be afraid when a man becomes rich,  
When the glory of his house is increased;  
**17** For when he dies he will carry nothing away;  
His glory will not descend after him.

- 18 Though while he lives he congratulates himself--  
 And though *men* praise you when you do well for yourself--
- 19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers;  
 They will never see the light.
- 20 Man in *his* pomp, yet without understanding,  
 Is like the beasts that perish.

## COMMENTS.

- A. The Announcement that a Great Mystery is to be Revealed.  
 [v1] "Hear this, all peoples..." What he is to reveal will affect every person. Desire for possessions and physical death happens to all, "both low and high, rich and poor together."  
 [v4] "...proverb...dark sayings..." He will be able to make known this mystery of life.
- B. The Haughty Boastfulness of Men Trusting in Riches.  
 [5,6] "...days of evil...iniquity at my heels....Those who trust in their wealth..." He identifies the source of the trouble that surrounds him as from those who trust and boast in riches. They seem to be using their wealth to afflict the poor. This does not condemn all who have possessions, as some rich men were righteous like Abraham, Lot, and Job. These are condemned as those who "trust in their wealth" and "boast in the multitude of their riches."  
 [v7,8] These verses mention some things that money cannot buy:  
 1. It cannot "redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him."  
 2. It cannot redeem their souls.  
 3. It cannot do other things:  
 a. Wealth cannot bring happiness.  
 b. It cannot cure a fatal illness.  
 c. Riches cannot guarantee that they will not be lost.
- C. There are Other Things that Riches Cannot Do.  
 [v9] Riches cannot prevent death.  
 [v11] Their houses/dwelling places will not continue through all generations as they wish.  
 [v12] Man is no better than the beasts as far as physical life: all will die.
- D. Trust in Riches is Foolish--Only the Godly have Hope.  
 [v13,14] The foolishness of trusting in material riches is that all will die and leave them. Riches can give no eternal hope.  
 [v15] "But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave..." In the NT, the word "soul" often refers to the eternal spirit that we have received from God. But in the OT, it generally refers to physical life in the body, as here. To "redeem the soul from the power of the grave" is to raise the dead or restore life. The word here for "receive" is the same that described God "translating" Enoch and "taking" Elijah in the chariot of fire. It is one of the rare OT statements of confidence in the resurrection and life after death.
- E. Fate of the Wicked Contrasted with the Righteous.  
 [v16] "Do not be afraid when one becomes rich..." The rich may seem to prosper and be a power for a while, but it will end. A number of cliques have well illustrated this truth: "A hearse never has a trailer," or when asked how much the rich man left, "all of it." Paul speaks of this in 1Tim. 6:7.  
 [v17-19] "...his glory shall not descend after him....he shall never see light." The glory or brightness of his riches here is contrasted with his not seeing light where he is going. Two of the most common figures to describe the punishment of the wicked after death are fire and darkness.  
 [v20] "A man who is in honor, yet does not understand, is like the beasts that perish." This is a fitting conclusion. A man without understanding of eternal matters is little better than the beast without the ability to understand.