

ECCLESIASTICUS, The Wisdom of Jesus ben (son of) Sirach

This Book is so called from a Greek word that signifies a preacher: because, like an excellent preacher, it gives admirable lessons of all virtues. The author was Jesus the son of Sirach of Jerusalem, who flourished about two hundred years before Christ. As it was written after the time of Esdras, it is not in the Jewish canon; but is received as canonical and divine by the Catholic Church, instructed by apostolical tradition, and directed by the spirit of God. It was first written in the Hebrew, but afterwards translated into Greek by another Jesus, the grandson of the author, whose prologue to this book is the following:

THE PROLOGUE.

The knowledge of many and great things hath been shewn us by the law, and the prophets, and others that have followed them: for which things Israel is to be commended for doctrine and wisdom, because not only they that speak must needs be skilful, but strangers also, both speaking and writing, may by their means become most learned. My grandfather Jesus, after he had much given himself to a diligent reading of the law, and the prophets, and other books, that were delivered to us from our fathers, had a mind also to write something himself, pertaining to doctrine and wisdom: that such as are desirous to learn, and are made knowing in these things, may be more and more attentive in mind, and be strengthened to live according to the law. I entreat you therefore to come with benevolence, and to read with attention, and to pardon us for those things wherein we may seem, while we follow the image of wisdom, to come short in the composition of words; for the Hebrew words have not the same force in them when translated into another tongue. And not only these, but the law also itself, and the prophets, and the rest of the books, have no small difference, when they are spoken in their own language. For in the eight and thirtieth year coming into Egypt, when Ptolemy Evergetes was king, and continuing there a long time, I found there books left, of no small nor contemptible learning. Therefore I thought it good, and necessary for me to bestow some diligence and labour to interpret this book; and with much watching and study in some space of time, I brought the book to an end, and set it forth for the service of them that are willing to apply their mind, and to learn how they ought to conduct themselves, who purpose to lead their life according to the law of the Lord.

CHAPTER 1.

1 All wisdom is from the Lord God, and hath been always with him, and is before all time.

2 Who hath numbered the sand of the sea, and the drops of rain, and the days of the world? Who hath measured the height of heaven, and the breadth of the earth, and the depth of the abyss?

3 Who hath searched out the wisdom of God that goeth before all things?

4 Wisdom hath been created before all things, and the understanding of prudence from everlasting.

5 The word of God on high is the fountain of wisdom, and her ways are everlasting commandments.

6 To whom hath the root of wisdom been revealed, and who hath known her wise counsels?

7 To whom hath the discipline of wisdom been revealed and made manifest? and who hath understood the multiplicity of her steps?

8 There is one most high Creator Almighty, and a powerful king, and greatly to be feared, who sitteth upon his throne, and is the God of dominion.

9 He created her (Wisdom) in the Holy Ghost, and saw her, and numbered her, and measured her.

10 And he poured her out upon all his works, and upon all flesh according to his gift, and hath given her to them that love him.

11 The fear of the Lord is honour, and glory, and gladness, and a crown of joy.

12 The fear of the Lord shall delight the heart, and shall give joy, and gladness, and length of days.

13 With him that feareth the Lord, it shall go well in the latter end, and in the day of his death he shall be blessed.

14 The love of God is honourable wisdom.

15 And they to whom she shall shew herself love her by the sight, and by the knowledge of her great works.

16 The fear of the Lord Is the beginning of wisdom, and was created with the faithful in the womb, it walketh with chosen women, and is known with the just and faithful.

17 The fear of the Lord is the religiousness of knowledge.

18 Religiousness shall keep and justify the heart, it shall give joy and gladness.

19 It shall go well with him that feareth the Lord, and in the days of his end he shall be blessed.

20 To fear God is the fulness of wisdom, and fulness is from the fruits thereof.

21 She shall fill all her house with her increase, and the storehouses with her treasures.

22 The fear of the Lord is a crown of wisdom, filling up peace and the fruit of salvation:

23 And it hath seen, and numbered her: but both are the gifts of God.

24 Wisdom shall distribute knowledge, and understanding of prudence: and exalteth the glory of them that hold her.

25 The root of wisdom is to fear the Lord: and the branches thereof are longlived.

26 In the treasures of wisdom is understanding, and religiousness of knowledge: but to sinners wisdom is an abomination.

27 The fear of the Lord driveth out sin:

28 For he that is without fear, cannot be justified: for the wrath of his high spirits is his ruin.

29 A patient man shall bear for a time, and afterwards joy shall be restored to him.

30 A good understanding will hide his words for a time, and the lips of many shall declare his wisdom.

31 In the treasures of wisdom is the signification of discipline:

32 But the worship of God is an abomination to a sinner.

33 Son, if thou desire wisdom, keep justice, and God will give her to thee.

34 For the fear of the Lord is wisdom and discipline: and that which is agreeable to him,

35 Is faith, and meekness: and he will fill up his treasures.

36 Be not incredulous to the fear of the Lord: and come not to him with a double heart.

37 Be not a hypocrite in the sight of men, and let not thy lips be a stumblingblock to thee.

38 Watch over them, lest thou fall, and bring dishonour upon thy soul,

39 And God discover thy secrets, and cast thee down in the midst of the congregation.

40 Because thou camest to the Lord wickedly, and thy heart is full of guile and deceit.

CHAPTER 2.

1 Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation.

2 Humble thy heart, and endure: incline thy ear, and receive the words of understanding: and make not haste in the time of clouds.

3 Wait on God with patience: join thyself to God, and endure, that thy life may be increased in the latter end.

4 Take all that shall be brought upon thee: and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience.

5 For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation.

6 Believe God, and he will recover thee: and direct thy way, and trust in him. Keep his fear, and grow old therein.

7 Ye that fear the Lord, wait for his mercy: and go not aside from him, lest ye fall.

8 Ye that fear the Lord, believe him: and your reward shall not be made void.

9 Ye that fear the Lord, hope in him: and mercy shall come to you for your delight.

10 Ye that fear the Lord, love him, and your hearts shall be enlightened.

11 My children behold the generations of men: and know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded.

12 For who hath continued in his commandment, and hath been forsaken? or who hath called upon him, and he despised him?

13 For God is compassionate and merciful, and will forgive sins in the day of tribulation: and he is a protector to all that seek him in truth.

14 Woe to them that are of a double heart and to wicked lips, and to the hands that do evil, and to the sinner that goeth on the earth two ways.

15 Woe to them that are fainthearted, who believe not God: and therefore they shall not be protected by him.

16 Woe to them that have lost patience, and that have forsaken the right ways, and have gone aside into crooked ways.

17 And what will they do, when the Lord shall begin to examine?

18 They that fear the Lord, will not be incredulous to his word: and they that love him, will keep his way.
19 They that fear the Lord, will seek after the things that are well pleasing to him: and they that love him, shall be filled with his law.

20 They that fear the Lord, will prepare their hearts, and in his sight will sanctify their souls.

21 They that fear the Lord, keep his Commandments, and will have patience even until his visitation,

22 Saying: If we do not penance, we shall fall into the hands of the Lord, and not into the hands of men.

23 For according to his greatness, so also is his mercy with him.

CHAPTER 3.

1 The sons of wisdom are the church of the just: and their generation, obedience and love.

2 Children, hear the judgment of your father, and so do that you may be saved.

3 For God hath made the father honourable to the children: and seeking the judgment of the mothers, hath confirmed it upon the children.

4 He that loveth God, shall obtain pardon for his sins by prayer, and shall refrain himself from them, and shall be heard in the prayer of days.

5 And he that honoureth his mother is as one that layeth up a treasure.

6 He that honoureth his father shall have joy in his own children, and in the day of his prayer he shall be heard.

7 He that honoureth his father shall enjoy a long life: and he that obeyeth the father, shall be a comfort to his mother.

8 He that feareth the Lord, honoureth his parents, and will serve them as his masters that brought him into the world.

9 Honour thy father, in work and word, and all patience,

10 That a blessing may come upon thee from him, and his blessing may remain in the latter end.

11 The father's blessing establisheth the houses of the children: but the mother's curse rooteth up the foundation.

12 Glory not in the dishonour of thy father: for his shame is no glory to thee.

13 For the glory of a man is from the honour of his father, and a father without honour is the disgrace of the son.

14 Son, support the old age of thy father, and grieve him not in his life;

15 And if his understanding fail, have patience with him, and despise him not when thou art in thy strength: for the relieving of the father shall not be forgotten.

16 For good shall be repaid to thee for the sin of thy mother.

17 And in justice thou shalt be built up, and in the day of affliction thou shalt be remembered: and thy sins shall melt away as the ice in the fair warm weather.

18 Of what an evil fame is he that forsaketh his father: and he is cursed of God that angereth his mother.

19 My son, do thy works in meekness, and thou shalt be beloved above the glory of men.

20 The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God:

21 For great is the power of God alone, and he is honoured by the humble.

22 Seek not the things that are too high for thee, and search not into things above thy ability: but the things that God hath commanded thee, think on them always, and in many of his works be not curious.

23 For it is not necessary for thee to see with thy eyes those things that are hid.

24 In unnecessary matters be not over curious, and in many of his works thou shalt not be inquisitive.

25 For many things are shewn to thee above the understanding of men.

26 And the suspicion of them hath deceived many, and hath detained their minds in vanity.

27 A hard heart shall fear evil at the last: and he that loveth danger shall perish in it.

28 A heart that goeth two ways shall not have success, and the perverse of heart shall be scandalized therein.

29 A wicked heart shall be laden with sorrows, and the sinner will add sin to sin.

30 The congregation of the proud shall not be healed: for the plant of wickedness shall take root in them, and it shall not be perceived.

31 The heart of the wise is understood in wisdom, and a good ear will hear wisdom with all desire.

32 A wise heart, and which hath understanding, will abstain from sin, and in the works of justice shall have success.

33 Water quenqueth a flaming fire, and alms resisteth sins:

34 And God provideth for him that sheweth favour: he remembereth him afterwards, and in the time of his fall he shall find a sure stay.

CHAPTER 4. *Do good to the poor*

- 1 Son, defraud not the poor of alms, and turn not away thy eyes from the poor.
- 2 Despise not the hungry soul: and provoke not the poor in his want.
- 3 Afflict not the heart of the needy, and defer not to give to him that is in distress.
- 4 Reject not the petition of the afflicted: and turn not away thy face from the needy.
- 5 Turn not away thy eyes from the poor for fear of anger: and leave not to them that ask of thee to curse thee behind thy back.
- 6 For the prayer of him that curseth thee in the bitterness of his soul, shall be heard, for he that made him will hear him.
- 7 Make thyself affable to the congregation of the poor, and humble thy soul to the ancient, and bow thy head to a great man.
- 8 Bow down thy ear cheerfully to the poor, and pay what thou owest, and answer him peaceable words with mildness.
- 9 Deliver him that suffereth wrong out of the hand of the proud: and be not fainthearted in thy soul.
- 10 In judging be merciful to the fatherless as a father, and as a husband to their mother.
- 11 And thou shalt be as the obedient son of the most High, and he will have mercy on thee more than a mother.
- 12 Wisdom inspireth life into her children, and protecteth them that seek after her, and will go before them in the way of justice.
- 13 And he that loveth her, loveth life: and they that watch for her, shall embrace her sweetness.
- 14 They that hold her fast, shall inherit life: and whithersoever she entereth, God will give a blessing.
- 15 They that serve her, shall be servants to the holy one: and God loveth them that love her.
- 16 He that hearkeneth to her, shall judge nations: and he that looketh upon her, shall remain secure.
- 17 If he trust to her, he shall inherit her, and his generation shall be in assurance.
- 18 For she walketh with him in temptation, and at the first she chooseth him.
- 19 She will bring upon him fear and dread and trial: and she will scourge him with the affliction of her discipline, till she try him by her laws, and trust his soul.
- 20 Then she will strengthen him, and make a straight way to him, and give him joy,
- 21 And will disclose her secrets to him, and will heap upon him treasures of knowledge and understanding of justice.
- 22 But if he go astray, she will forsake him, and deliver him into the hands of his enemy.
- 23 Son, observe the time, and fly from evil.
- 24 For thy soul be not ashamed to say the truth.
- 25 For there is a shame that bringeth sin, and there is a shame that bringeth glory and grace.
- 26 Accept no person against thy own person, nor against thy soul a lie.
- 27 Reverence not thy neighbour in his fall:
- 28 And refrain not to speak in the time of salvation. Hide not thy wisdom in her beauty.
- 29 For by the tongue wisdom is discerned: and understanding, and knowledge, and learning by the word of the wise, and steadfastness in the works of justice.
- 30 In no wise speak against the truth, but be ashamed of the lie of thy ignorance.
- 31 Be not ashamed to confess thy sins, but submit not thyself to every man for sin.
- 32 Resist not against the face of the mighty, and do not strive against the stream of the river.
- 33 Strive for justice for thy soul, and even unto death fight for justice, and God will overthrow thy enemies for thee.
- 34 Be not hasty in thy tongue: and slack and remiss in thy works.
- 35 Be not as a lion in thy house, terrifying them of thy household, and oppressing them that are under thee.
- 36 Let not thy hand be stretched out to receive, and shut when thou shouldst give.