

# ***ECCLESIASTES***

*Message No. 1*  
**“ALL IS VANITY”**  
*Ecclesiastes 1:1-18*

## ***Introduction:***

**First**, Ecclesiastes was one of the scrolls publicly read at Jewish festivals. In particular, it was read on the third day of the Feast of Tabernacles, a feast of joy (see *Neh. 8:9-12*). We can assume that the Jews would not read a book that is supposedly morbid, pessimistic, and depressing during a time of rejoicing. That tells us something about Ecclesiastes from a Jewish point of view.

**Second**, Jewish writers of the first seven centuries of the Christian era quote at least 122 of the 222 verses of Ecclesiastes in their writings. This shows us that there was little doubt that it belongs in the canon of Scripture.

**Third**, at the time of Herod the Great and in the time of Gamaliel, the book was cited as Holy Scripture, again showing that it was believed canonical.

**Fourth**, at the Synod of Jamnia (90 A.D.), Jewish leaders decided its canonicity against arguments to the contrary by the school of Shammai. They affirmed that Ecclesiastes is a part of God’s Word.

**Fifth**, it seems to have been written for a wider audience than the children of Israel - a sort of “cultural apologetics” for the secular humanist of every generation, as well as for the believer. What the writer deals with in this book are the basic questions of life we face every day. It is not, as some Christians believe, simply a book of “*worldly wisdom*.”

It is a book of God’s wisdom intended for the believer, as well as a book of evangelism intended for the unbeliever. It is designed to tell the secular world who God is, what He has in mind, and what life is all about. It has much to tell us.

That brings us, then, to the two important considerations of this first lesson on Ecclesiastes, beginning with:

### 1A. THE PERSON WHO WROTE THE BOOK

It should be pointed out that some scholars of the past have said Solomon was not the author of Ecclesiastes. People question that Solomon wrote the book because they see things in the book they don’t believe Solomon would have said, or things they don’t think he could have said. Martin Luther said, “Solomon himself did not write the book of Ecclesiastes, but it was produced by Sirach at the time of the

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Maccabees. It is a sort of a Talmud, compiled from many books, probably from the library of King Ptolemy Evergetes II of Egypt."

The word for "*preacher*" simply means "*one addressing an assembly*," and could apply to the king as easily as to a prophet.

In light of that, it would be good at this point to review six things that point to Solomon as the author of Ecclesiastes.

1B. His **TITLE** - 1:1, 12

It is said that he "*was king*," and that he was "*the son of David*." How can we miss that? In addition, "*preacher*" (the one who addresses an assembly) appears seven times (*1:1, 2, 12, 7:27; 12:8, 9, 10*)

2B. His **HOME** - 5:1

We learn that he lives near the temple, "*the house of God*." This assumes that the temple is standing. He is also in Jerusalem" (*1:1, 12, 16; 2:7, 9*).

3B. His **AGE** - 11:9-12:7

It is strongly suggested that he is an old man. He is describing old age as a personal experience, showing that he is no longer a young man. He is elderly.

Early Jewish views state that Solomon wrote it in his old age when weary of life, to expose the emptiness and vanity of all worldly pursuits and carnal gratifications and to show that the happiness of man consists in fearing God and obeying His commands.

The Jewish Midrash says that Solomon wrote it in the "*evening of his days*," the Song of Solomon in his "*youth*," and Proverbs at "*middle age*."

4B. His **MARITAL EXPERIENCES** - 7:26-28

We see a reflection of the many wives Solomon married, whose idolatry led his heart away from God and to worship foreign gods (see also *9:9*). These are the marital experiences of Solomon.

5B. His **WISDOM** - 1:13

We see that his heart was set to seek out wisdom, just as Solomon's was, and he was exceedingly wise (see also *v. 16:12:9*). We cannot help but believe that these verses describe Solomon himself (see also *1 Kings 4:29-34*).

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### 6B. His **WEALTH** - 2:4-9

Shows us the kind of wealth Solomon possessed. This means everything this book has to say about wealth, wisdom, and the meaning of life are going to mean a lot more than if they were addressed by someone who had never experienced them. The description of **2:4-9**, leaves no doubt it is Solomon.

## 2A. THE **PURPOSES** OF THE BOOK

Why was this book written? Until we understand this, we will not be able to emerge with a correct view of Ecclesiastes. What we believe about its purpose will determine how we understand it.

The Book of Ecclesiastes was written essentially for four reasons:

### 1B. To **REVEAL** the futility of all earthly pursuits

If your goal in life is really to achieve and succeed in business, Ecclesiastes is going to trouble you. But in this book we continually encounter the statement that "***all is vanity.***" This literally means "vapor, breath, nothingness." It is used 40 times in this biblical book, yet is used only 40 more times in the balance of the Old Testament.

This was not written by someone who did not know what he was talking about. He had done it all, seen it all, achieved it all! But the main purpose of the book is to reveal the futility of all earthly pursuits. What is interesting is that in it we learn that earthly pursuits and our obsession with them is what keeps us from knowing the eternal God in all of His glory.

### 2B. To **REALIZE** the source of all we enjoy in life

The first purpose strips all of our ideas of why we should be successful and what we should do in life. This purpose, on the other hand, gives back to us the true source of all we enjoy in life.

Ecclesiastes is not against joy! The Hebrew root word (simhah or samah) appears 17 times in Ecclesiastes and means "joy, gladness, pleasure". A good subtitle for this book might be "How to enjoy life from God's point of view."

In each section Solomon concludes with a statement about joy (*see 2:24-26, 3:12-13, 22; 5:18-20; 8:15; 9:7-9; 11:9*). Unfortunately many Christians today believe these are statements of secular wisdom rather than God's wisdom! In reality, this is God's wisdom for every one of us.

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3B. To **REMEMBER** our ultimate accountability to God  
Ultimately we must answer to God for what we have done with our lives. The name of God appears 39 times in this relatively short book, and two concepts are repeated throughout the book:

1C. Fear God (**3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8: 12-13; 12:13**).

The Bible tells us the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge. The fear of God keeps us faithful and committed. Do we understand who He is? Are we awed by His presence?

2C. God will bring you and every work you have done into judgement - **3:15, 17: 11:9; 12:14**

This is not just the conclusion of the book, but it is found throughout the Bible. One of the Great problems of our culture is that there is no consciousness of God. People act as though He does not exist or is not concerned. We are entirely enamored with ourselves. But He continues to tell us that we cannot find joy apart from a proper relationship to Him. To know God is life's highest pursuit.

Noah Webster said that his life was controlled by the belief that he was accountable to God. This is the message of Ecclesiastes: We cannot escape the fact that everything we do will be judged by God. We can thank God that Jesus Christ took on himself the punishment we deserve for our sins. But we are still accountable to God for what we do with the new life He has given us.

God wants to give us more joy than we ever thought possible. But we will never experience it in mad pursuit of earthly gain, which He calls vanity. In **Job 7:16** the word for "vanity" is used in the declaration.

"My days are but a breath." In **Psalms 144:4**, it is the word used in the statement. "Man is like a breath: His days are like a passing shadow. In **Proverbs 21:6**, "Getting treasures by a lying tongue is the fleeting fantasy of those who seek death." And in **Proverbs 31:30**, "Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain."

Interestingly, several phrases and statements are used numerous times throughout the book. "**All is vanity**" is used seven times ( **1:14; 2:11, 17; 3:19; 11:8; 12:8**).

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"*Grasping for the wind*" is also used seven times (1:14; 2:11, 17, 26; 4:4, 16, 6:9). What is presented in this book applies to everything "*under the sun*" (a phrase used 26 times).

The question "*what profit. . .*" is used three times (1:3; 3:9; 5:16). in much the same way as the Lord used it in *Mark 8:36*. And the answer to the question is that there is "*no profit under the sun*" (2:11).

4B. To **RECOGNIZE** the importance of the question: "is life worth living?" In the final analysis, the basic question of Ecclesiastes is, "*Is life worth living*" And, if life is only to make a profit or to acquire greater knowledge; the answer is a resounding "*No!*"

1C. Because what you do does not last forever (1:4).

2C. Because what you do does not satisfy ( 1:5-8), as illustrated by the sun, the wind, and the rivers.

3C. Because what you do is nothing new (1:9-10).

4C. Because what you do is not remembered like you think it will be (1:11).

5C. Because what you learn will not change certain facts of life 1:14).

6C. Because what you learn brings much grief (1:18).

Apart from the lifelong pursuit of God. there is no profit "*under the sun*", and life is not worth living. He is the One who makes life worth living. He is the One that lasts forever.

### Conclusion:

It would be good to conclude this lesson with a statement made by Michael Eaton concerning Ecclesiastes:

"The Preacher wishes to deliver us from a rosy-colored, self-confident godless life, with its inevitable cynicism and bitterness, and from trusting in wisdom, pleasure, wealth, and human justice or integrity. He wishes to drive us to see that God is there, that He is good and generous, and that only such an outlook makes life coherent and fulfilling."

# ***ECCLESIASTES***

*Message No. 2*

## **“LIVING FOR YOUR JOB”**

*Ecclesiastes 2:1-26*

In this book the word “*labor*” is used 10 times, “*work*” is mentioned five times. and “*toil*” is found four times. From that we can assume that Ecclesiastes has much to say about the life’s work we have chosen and what our relationship to it should be.

### 1A. THE **PROBLEMS** WE MUST FACE - 1-23

In this lesson we will deal with three paragraphs that reveal three problems, all dealing with living for your job. Let’s take a look at them.

#### 1B. **Our pursuits do not bring satisfaction** - 1-11

Solomon reviewed the whole history of everything he went after, but all of his pursuits never brought him satisfaction. That’s the first problem you face in life. It is a problem all of us face, yet many of us do not want to admit it because we are dedicated to pursuing these things. But pursuits will not bring us the satisfaction we desire in our lives. The basic principle is that the enjoyment of our pursuits will not come from seeking joy in them. It will come from our relationship with God.

What pursuits are we talking about? Let’s look at what Solomon was talking about.

#### 1C. **Fun** and **laughter** - 2

(See also *7:6, 10:19, Prov. 14:13*). Solomon literally pursued laughter and fun; but his conclusion was that it is “*madness*.” It accomplishes nothing. The same is true today, even for those who live for the weekend, who go to “*happy hour*”, who try to laugh their way through life without discovering their joy in God. Even in laughter, however, there can be great sorrow. And laughter doesn’t last. If it doesn’t come out of a heart that is filled with the joy of God, it accomplishes nothing. It is madness.

#### 2C. **Drinking** - 3

He saw that a great number of people turned to drinking to have fun. Just like our television programs and commercials today - everyone keeps asking for a drink. We are programmed to believe that we need to drink to have fun - it is “the thing to do”. Solomon checked it out and found that it was a colossal waste of time.

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3C. **Achievements** - 4-6

He built beautiful houses, (see *1 Kings 9: 10, 24*). He built cities. He built cities. He built pools in the valley of Artas. If the pools we can see today are the same pools, the lower pool was 582 feet by 207 feet, and 50 feet deep, the middle pool was 423 by 250, and 39 feet deep; and the upper pool was 380 by 236, and 225 feet deep! Everything he did was done on a grand and beautiful scale. But he concluded that this, too, was "**vanity**". There was nothing to it.

4C. **Possessions** - 7

If you compare the wealth that Solomon possessed for his day to the wealthy men of today, you will find there is nobody in the entire world who possesses as great an amount of wealth as did Solomon. But it could not bring him lasting happiness.

5C. **Money** - 8a

Even converted to today's value, Solomon was the wealthiest as well as the wisest monarch of the ancient world. He had it all.

6C. **Music** - 8b

He had at his call the best musicians of the ancient world, any time he wanted them.

7C. **Fame** - 9

Few men in the ancient world had as much testimony to their own success as Solomon. The phrase "**for myself**" is used five times in *verses 4-8*. But it did not profit him in terms of his fulfillment.

8C. **There are three specific implications concerning this**

1D. Our pursuits do not bring satisfaction even if we **excel** in them all  
1-9

A lot of people in our world today believe that if they can only excel in something, then they will be happy.

2D. Our pursuits do not bring satisfaction even if we **explore** everything possible - 10a

It's not that you haven't found the right thing or the right combination - those things cannot bring you satisfaction!

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- 3D. Our pursuits do not bring satisfaction even if we **enjoy** what we have done - 10b  
See also *1 Kings 4:20, 22-23, 27*). Even if you find a measure of enjoyment in what you have accomplished, it will not bring lasting satisfaction. There is nothing to it.

It was Charles Bridges (1860) who said, "*The crumbs of the gospel are infinitely richer than the dainties of the world.*"

2B. **Death is no respecter of persons** - 12-17

It is impartial and it is inevitable. No matter what you have achieved, everybody is going to die. Death is the great equalizer. and there are several things that are always true about it.

1C. Death does not **Recognize** the excellence of wisdom - 12-14

Wisdom does nothing to prolong your life. Being wise is better than being a fool obviously. But death does not recognize the excellence of wisdom.

2C. Death does not **Respect** the desire for wisdom - 15

A person's desire to seek wisdom does nothing to forestall his death. Death is not impressed.

3C. Death does not **Remember** the work of wisdom - 16

The wise man dies the same way a fool dies, and little time passes before both are forgotten.

4C. Death does not **Relieve** the burden of wisdom - 17

His wisdom caused him to understand that death was coming, and that he couldn't do anything about it. And that produced a burden.

3B. **Others will inherit what we have done** - 18-23

No matter what we are building toward or what we think we are going to accomplish, after we are dead, others are going to take over what we have done. He gave three principles, with the same conclusion: "*this also is vanity*". The principles concerning those who will inherit what we have done are:

1C. **We don't know what they will be like** - 18-19

Remember that one of Solomon's sons was Rehoboam, son of Naamah, the Ammonite. In *2 Chronicles 12:14* we learn, "*And he did evil, because he did not prepare his heart to seek the LORD.*" Because every

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child is a unique individual with a propensity for sin, we never know what he or she will become. This is one of the griefs we must bear. Here in *Ecclesiastes 2:19* tells us, "*This also is vanity*".

2C. **They have not labored for what we have done** - 20-21

They did not lay a hand to anything we have done, yet we have left it to them. Solomon says that it "is *vanity*", and "*a great evil*".

3C. **Our struggles and sorrows make no difference** - 22-23

You might think, "*I worked hard for that*". It doesn't matter - someone else will get it after you're gone. This, too, is "*vanity*".

How are these things a positive message to us? Hopefully they will smash the props out from under our lives so that we are left with nowhere to turn but to God almighty. The great trouble of our culture is that we have ceased to rely on God and to see all things as coming from Him.

This brings us, then to some answers:

2A. THE PRINCIPLES WE MUST APPLY - 24-26

1B. Satisfaction (enjoyment) is based on the RESOURCES of God alone - 24

We read that "*this...was from the hand of God.*" Where does lasting satisfaction or joy come from? From the hand of God alone. See *Psa. 104:14-15; Matt. 6:11; 1 Tim. 4:1-5*). The Word of God and prayer will guide my heart concerning how to enjoy that which my hand does. If you are trying to live your life apart from trusting God and His resources, you are on the wrong track.

2B. Satisfaction (enjoyment) is based on our RELATIONSHIP to God - 25

The phrase translated "*more than I*" should actually read "*apart from Him*". In eight Hebrew manuscripts of this passage all choose the reading "*apart from Him*". Satisfaction is based on being rightly related to God (see also *Deut. 16:10-11, 13-17*).

3B. Satisfaction (enjoyment) is based on our RESPONSE to God - 26

This is not saying good works will get you to heaven. We're not even discussing how a person becomes a Christian. We are dealing with the conduct of a person's life. The truth is that Christians who do not look to God to sustain them will find no lasting satisfaction! Many of the pursuits of this world are

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designed to get you away from the real key to joy - walking with the Lord. Are you rightly related to God? Do you have joy and lasting satisfaction?

**Lord Chesterfield** once said, "I have run the silly rounds of business and pleasure and have done with them all. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and consequently know their futility, and I do not regret their loss. I appraise them at their real value, which is in truth very low; whereas they that have not experienced always overrate them. They only see their gay outside, and are dazzled with the glare. I have been behind the scenes; I have seen all the coarse pulleys and dirty ropes which exhibit and move the gaudy machine; and I have seen and smelt the tallow candles which illuminate the whole decoration, to the astonishment and admiration of an ignorant audience".

"When I reflect back upon what I have seen, what I have heard, and what I have done, I can hardly persuade myself that all that frivolous hurry, and bustle, and pleasure of the world, had any reality. But I look upon all that has passed as one of those romantic dreams which opium commonly occasions, and I by no means desire to repeat the nauseous dose for the sake of the fugitive dream. Shall I tell you that I bear this melancholy situation with that meritorious constancy and resignation which most people boast of? No; for I really cannot help it. I bear it, because I must bear it, whether I will or no. I think of nothing but killing time the best I can, now that time is become mine enemy. It is my resolution to sleep in the carriage during the remainder of the journey".

**William Cowper** - a believer - took those hopeless words and then wrote the words of one of the most beautiful songs of hope in history. The song begins: "There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins. And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains." The only answer to the futility of life's pleasures and pursuits is to find joy and satisfaction in the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

# ***ECCLESIASTES***

*Message No. 03*

**“A TIME FOR EVERYTHING”**

*Ecclesiastes 3:1-15*

Introduction:

God is referred to nine times in this passage of 15 verses. God isn't subject to time; God is in control of time. God has set everything in its proper time, and He has a purpose and an exact season for everything that is happening. Yet man continues to deny that truth, and to act as though he is the master of his own destiny.

The great conclusion drawn in this passage is that man cannot control the events and circumstances of his life. He is the victim, not the master!

In this passage, we will observe five things about God and His relationship to time.

## 1A. WE MUST **ACKNOWLEDGE** THAT GOD HAS A REASON FOR ALL THAT HAPPENS IN OUR LIVES - 1-8

We all have things happen to us that cause us to ask, “Why me? Why now?” But God has a purpose for everything that happens in our lives.

In this section, there are 28 activities listed, in 14 couplets or poetic stanzas, 2 in each verse. When they are examined, it is apparent that there are 14 positives, 14 negatives. Most important, this passage suggests three things.

### 1B. It suggests the **PROVIDENCE** of God

God really controls the affairs of people's lives (see *Ps. 115:3, 135:5-6; 139:16, Dan. 4:35*). In *Psalm 31:15*, David said, “My times are in Your hand.”

The great theologian Augustine said, “If the providence of God does not preside over the affairs of men. there is no need to bother about religion.”

Would you want to have anything to do with a God who was not able to control every event in the universe”?

### 2B. It suggests the **PURPOSE** of God

God has a specific purpose behind all that happens (see *Gen. 50:20; Esther 4:14b; Acts 16:6-10; 17:26-27; 2 Pet. 3:9*). Some people will try to get out of this truth by suggesting that God has “an overall purpose, but not specific purposes”, but that is not what the Scriptures teach.

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His purpose is behind everything. *Psalm 37:23* tells us, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD." The life of Joseph confirmed that in a startling way (*Gen. 50:20*). God is not limited by anything or anybody in accomplishing His purpose. We should not categorically determine that circumstances in our lives are "bad", when God has a time and a purpose for everything in our lives.

3B. It suggests the **POWER** of God

God can cause things to happen whenever He wants. to whomever He wants. Cf. *Gen. 18:13-14; Job 42:2; Isa. 40:28; Jer. 32:17; Dan. 2:21; Matt. 9:26*). Can God really cause anything to happen, at any time, to anybody"? Absolutely. He is intimately involved in the affairs of our lives. We may not fully understand it. but the Bible definitely teaches it.

1A. *WE MUST ACKNOWLEDGE THAT GOD HAS A REASON FOR ALL THAT HAPPENS IN OUR LIVES - 1-8*

2A. *WE MUST ACCEPT GOD'S PURPOSE AND CONTROL OVER ALL THAT HAPPENS - 9-11*

After covering these 28 activities of man. Solomon asked. "What profit has the worker from that in which he labors?" If God is in control, what advantage is it to think that we are going to change anything? Solomon's answer is that God is behind everything that happens: therefore we must accept it. Our questions are not always answered (*John 21:20-22*). But when we adjust our thinking in this direction, it affects the way we think.

1B. It affects our **EVALUATIONS** - 9-10

Notice the statement, "He has made everything beautiful in its time" (see also *Rom. 8:28*). Is this how we evaluate things? This is the perspective of someone who views things as God does, a "*Romans 8:28*" Christian. Bear in mind that we may not always see God's reasons, but we view what happens to us. confident that He is exercising His purpose and control.

2B. It affects our **EXPECTATIONS** - 11

The text tells us that "He has put eternity in their hearts." Everyone, at some time or another. has the future in his conscious perspective. The older we get, the more we think about. The closer we get to the inevitable fact that we will die, the more eternity is a great question. But when we think ahead in light of the fact that God is in control, we no longer need to be worried. Does it affect your expectations to know that God is in absolute control of everything"? It should!

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1A. WE MUST ACKNOWLEDGE THAT GOD HAS A REASON FOR ALL THAT HAPPENS IN OUR LIVES - 1-8

2A. WE MUST ACCEPT GOD'S PURPOSE AND CONTROL OVER ALL THAT HAPPENS - 9-11

3A. WE MUST APPRECIATE THE TIME WE HAVE AS A GIFT FROM GOD  
12-13

If God is in control, if He knows all the days of my life, what should my reaction be? To enjoy it as a gift from God! This is also the point of **2:24**. This adjustment in our thinking also has its effects on us.

1B. It affects our ATTITUDES

Once the issue of our eternal destiny is settled, we can relax, and we can enjoy life as a gift from Him.

2B. It affects our ACTIONS

We should do good because this is the only time we have (see **1 Tim. 6:17-18**).

We need to have the joy of God with each of our passing moments, but we should also seek to do good to the glory of God.

4A. WE MUST APPLY THESE FACTS TO OUR OWN ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD  
14

If we really believe what has been discussed so far in this lesson, it will drastically affect our attitudes toward God - "that men should fear before Him" (see **Rev. 15:3-4**). Be afraid of Him? No! Reverence, worship, and adore Him (compare **5:7, 7:18; 8:12-13; 12:13**). Realizing that God is the master of your fate should result in personally acknowledging His control.

5A. WE MUST ANSWER TO GOD FOR HOW WE HAVE USED OUR TIME - 15

"God requires an account of what is past." We need to enjoy it, and do good in it, but we need to remember, too, that God will hold us accountable for what we do in our lives (see also **Matt. 12:36-37; Rom. 14:12; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10**).

In **Ecclesiastes 11:9** Solomon's advice was, "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth, walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment."

We will answer to God for how we have spent the great gift of life He has entrusted to us.

# ***ECCLESIASTES***

*Message No. 4*

**“A TIME FOR JUDGEMENT”**

*Ecclesiastes 3:16-22*

Introduction:

A review of **3:1-15** reminds us that:

- (1) We must **acknowledge** that God has a reason for everything that happens (**3:1-8**).
- (2) We must **accept** the fact of His control and purpose (**3:9-11**).
- (3) We must **appreciate** the time God has given to us (**3:12-13**).
- (4) We must **apply** these facts in our attitudes toward God (**3:14**).
- (5) We must **answer** to God for how we have used our time (**3:15**).

This leads us to our message. Evolutionists love to argue that Ecclesiastes 3 proves man is just an animal: but that’s not what the passage teaches. The keys to understanding this passage are the author’s statements:

*v. 16* - “saw”

*v. 17* - “said in my heart”

*v. 18* - “said in my heart”

*v. 22* - “perceived”

So we begin with:

## 1A. THE **PROBLEM** HE OBSERVED - 16

Remember he just finished making the point that whatever we do with our lives, God will require an account. But his next statement in verse 16 is that “***I saw under the sun . . . wickedness***” (iniquity) was there. The judgement and righteousness he knew as God’s character was not evident in the affairs of man “***under the sun.***” He didn’t find justice and people doing right. He found exactly the opposite, and it was frustrating.

He saw people getting away with anything they wanted to do. And he wondered where the judgement of God was. David saw the same thing, and asked the same questions (see *Psa. 37:7, 12-15, 21, 32, 73:1-9; 82:1-8*). God’s answer through them was ***to “rest in the Lord and be patient.”*** The day of judgment and accountability is coming. Even though it appears the victims are not vindicated, God’s justice and judgment will one day come.

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1A. THE PROBLEM HE OBSERVED - 16

2A. THE PRINCIPLES HE UNDERSTOOD - 17-18

These are introduced by the statements "*I said in my heart.*"

He observed the problem that instead of justice, there was trouble. As a result, he resolved two principles in his heart.

1B. He understood our ACCOUNTABILITY before God - 17

*Gen. 18:25; Prov. 24:12; John 5:24-29; Acts 17:30-31; Rom. 14:10-12. 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:11-15.*

Because he believes there is a time for everything, the believer's trust can be in the Lord. God is in absolute control, and He will judge the righteous and the wicked. Why? Because God is a God of justice. Does that mean believers are going to be judged for their sins? No. He has judged your sin in Jesus Christ. But there is a time coming when the Lord will ask us to give an account for what we have done with our lives. This is different from the judgment of unbelievers - but all will be evaluated by God.

He is a God of justice and judgment. Because of that, we can leave matters with Him as we go through life, make decisions concerning how we live, and even face the injustices that are inevitable. It should radically affect the way we live!

2B. He understood the ADVANTAGES of men when faced with death - 18-21

The reason he brought up death was to show that in the face of death, all the little games of life are meaningless (see *Ps. 49:20*).

1C. As to the Purpose of God - 18

"*God tests them.*" This literally means "*to purify,*" or "*to cleanse.*" This verse does not teach that humans and animals are alike.

It does mean however, that they are alike in one sense; they both die. And God uses that information to "*test*" or purify man's heart.

2C. As to the Preeminence of man - 19

He has "*no advantage over beasts*" in regard to death. Though it can be said that humans and animals alike die, they do not die alike.

3C. As to the Place we go when we die - 20-21

Two aspects:

*"A TIME FOR JUDGEMENT"*  
*Message No. 4 - Ecclesiastes 3:16-22*

1D. **Physically** - 20

He goes back to the dust (see *Job 10:9, 34:15; Ps. 104:29; 146:4*). It is the same thing that happens to an animal. Solomon is not expressing uncertainty about life after death. He is showing that most people lack understanding about death and their accountability to God.

2D. **Spiritually** - 21

After his body goes down to the dust, man is quite different from animals. Each person must face his or her accountability before God (see *Ecc. 1-17; Ps. 16:8-11; 73:21-28; Acts 7:59; Heb. 12:9, 22-23*). For the believer, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

3A. THE **PERSPECTIVE** HE ACCEPTED - 22

This is introduced by the statement. "*So I perceived...*" In light of what he saw, Solomon concluded that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his heritage. Cf. *2:24; 3:12*.

1B. As to the **RESPONSE** we should have

We should "*rejoice*". There is "*nothing better*" than that we should have the joy of God, not bitterness, disappointment, and fear! Knowing that God has promised wonderful things for us, we can enjoy what we are doing as we seek to obey Him. He is going to reward believers for what we have done. Jesus told us we can lay up treasures in heaven; and in that sense we can "send it on ahead." The joy of God can be there if we understand what the hope of the believer is.

2B. As to the **REASON** for this response

The question is posed, "*Who can bring him to see what will happen after him?*" In reality, we know nothing about what tomorrow will bring us (see *1 Cor. 15:32; Ps. 30:9; 88:10-12; Isa. 38:18*). Only God knows what the future holds. *Deuteronomy 29:29* tells us, "*The secret things belong to the LORD.*" In *Psalms 1:6* we read, "*For the LORD knows the way of the righteous.*"

And in *Job 23: 10* we find the statement, "*But He knows the way that I take.*" Unless we take time to realize He holds everything in His hand, and that what ultimately will happen rests beyond our ability to change it, we will kill ourselves with worry from day to day. Once we learn to trust in His perfect purpose, however, we can enjoy what He has given us to do today.

# ***ECCLESIASTES***

*Message No. 5*

## **“THE TRAGEDIES OF LIFE”**

*Ecclesiastes 4:1-8*

Introduction:

There are a lot of frustrations in life as well as many tragedies and grave misfortunes. Three are mentioned in this passage, and there are three that are common to all of us.

### 1A. A LACK OF **COMFORT** - 1-3

#### 1B. Concerning the **EXTENT** of the problem

He showed it is not only among oppressed people, but also among those who do the oppressing.

The end result is the same: there's no comfort for either one of them (see *Lam. 1:1-2, 9, 16-17, 21*). Whether it is those who shed “*tears*” or those who possess “*power*”, the experience is the same. (see *Job 35:9-12; Psa. 69:20; Prov. 28:16*). Even when people offer what they think is comfort, if it is done poorly, it can actually add to the tragedy. Most often there is no one to comfort the soul.

#### 2B. Concerning the **EVALUATION** of the problem

Solomon proposed that it is better to die or never exist than to live in a world where there is no comfort for the soul. The longer you live the more you realize it is more important to have comfort for the soul than to achieve great things and accumulate all this world has to give you. Thank God there is a Solution, which we will look at a little later on. (see *Isa. 25:8; Rev. 7:1617; 21:4*)

### 2A. A LACK OF **CONTENTMENT** - 4-6

#### 1B. Solomon pointed to the **SOURCE** of the problem - 4a

The real root of the problem is envy or competition. It's what we might call “*the law of the jungle*”, or “*the rat race*”. It is envy, competition, rivalry. *Proverbs 14:30*, however, tells us that “*envy is rottenness to the bones.*”

#### 2B. Solomon pointed to the **SUMMARY** of the problem - 4b

He called it “*vanity and grasping for the wind*”. We continue to go on and on, driven by envy, jealousy, and competition - wanting more than we have, because someone else has it. But it is all emptiness and vanity.

*“THE TRAGEDIES OF LIFE”*  
*Message No. 5 - Ecclesiastes 4:1-8*

3B. Solomon pointed to the **SOLUTIONS** to the problem – 5-6

1C. The **Apathy** of the fool - 5

This results in doing nothing. He just folds his hands and, ending up with nothing, wastes away. Aim for nothing, it is said, and you’re sure to hit it. (see *Prov. 6:9-11 24:30-34*). God says a lot about work and would not have us assume the apathy of the fool.

2C. The **Attitude** of the wise - 6

This is one of contentment. The wise person is someone who knows how to have a “*handful with quietness*” (*Prov. 15:16-17; 16:8; 17:1; 1 Tim. 6:6*. rather than “*grasping for the wind*” and experiencing the turmoil of an overachiever. A lack of contentment has become the norm in our world; but we do not have to be enslaved to it.

3A. A LACK OF **COMPANIONSHIP** - 7-8

1B. **ADDRESSED** in the **PROBLEMS** to face

1C. **Loneliness**

It is no fun to be alone. There are differences between being alone and being lonely. But sad the person who later in life faces all the hassles and pressures of life without anyone to care (*Prov. 18:1, 27:10*). That’s why it’s important to build Christian friendships throughout our lives. Sure, it involves burdens and responsibilities. But friendship is far better than being alone, or being lonely.

2C. **Restlessness**

Or dissatisfaction that a lack of companionship brings with it. “There is no end to all his labors, nor is his eye satisfied with riches” (v. 8). He is alone, but he keeps going, driven by his own godless independence. Isolation is empty, according to God’s Word.

3C. **Meaninglessness**

The person who drives himself on alone wonders, “*who am I doing this for?*” and “*why am I doing it?*” *Psalm 39:6* tells us, “Surely every man walks about like a shadow; surely they busy themselves in vain; he heaps up riches, and does not know who will gather them.” Too many of us are living life in the fast lane in a rat race world, and we don’t know why we are doing it.

*“THE TRAGEDIES OF LIFE”*  
*Message No. 5 - Ecclesiastes 4:1-8*

3A. A LACK OF COMPANIONSHIP - 7-8

1B. ADDRESSED in the PROBLEMS to face

2B. ANSWERED in the POINT to learn

1C. He says such a life lacks Meaning

It is “*vanity*” – emptiness, grasping for the wind. What are we trying to achieve?

2C. He says such a life brings Misery

It is “*a grave misfortune*”.

So what is the answer? As Jerome said, “*What is missing is Jesus*”. The lack of comfort is provided for in Him who is the Comforter, who is always with us and will never leave us.

The lack of contentment is taken care of in a perfectly continuing relationship with Him (*Psa. 23:1*).

And the lack of a companion is met in Him who is the friend of sinners; Someone who loves you even though He knows what you are like (*Prov. 18:24; John 14:18*). He is the Friend of all friends.

# **ECCLESIASTES**

*Message No. 6*

## **“THE IMPORTANCE OF FRIENDSHIP”**

*Ecclesiastes 4:9-16*

There are two paragraphs ending chapter 4 that continue the early thought of the tragedy of not having a friend. There is a certain emptiness and meaninglessness to life when we look around us and realize we have no friends.

And the older we get, the more important it becomes to us. How tragic is the person who builds his whole life around himself!

Of course it is important to understand that Jesus can cure that isolation. But it is also important to realize that if we understand His relationship to us, we also will understand our relationship to other people.

In this section of Ecclesiastes, we will be able to examine two thoughts we all can identify with.

### 1A. FRIENDSHIP IS BETTER THAN SELFISH PURSUIITS - 9-12

The text tells us very simply, “*Two are better than one.*” Friendship is much preferred over going it alone. In this, several areas come to our attention.

#### 1B. The first area deals with SUCCESS - 9

Put two people together and (get them working, they will have “*a good reward for their labor.*” Two people are more likely to be successful than one.

D. L. Moody once said, “*I would rather have ten men doing the work than one man doing the work of ten.*” We need to understand our need for friendship simply from the standpoint of success.

#### 2B. The second area deals with SUPPORT - 10-11

Friendship is important for support from a number of crucial aspects.

#### 1C. It is important to Enable one who fails to start over again (see *Prov. 17:9, 17; 27:9; Gal. 6:1-2*).

If the time comes in our lives when we fall, we need friends there to pick us up and get us started again.

None of us want to think that it is going to happen to us - but it could, and if it does, we need a friend whom we can trust to help us up.

## "THE IMPORTANCE OF FRIENDSHIP"

Message No. 6 - Ecclesiastes 4:9-16

Of course, if someone says he is your friend but he is not there to help you when you fall, he was never a friend to begin with.

Friendship means you are always there, no matter what. And the one who has not fallen remembers that he could just as easily be in the other person's place.

Of course, the greatest Friend of all is the Lord Jesus Christ, who knows us better than anyone, and who loves us no matter what. His grace is always sufficient for us. *Gal. 6:1; Heb. 5:1*

2C. It is important to **Encourage** one who faces the pressures of his environment - (see *Prov. 27:5-6, 9, 17*).

The "*lying down together*" here alludes to the ancient Near Eastern practice of the members of a wilderness caravan lying down together in a group in order to keep warm, especially on cold desert nights.

This is a beautiful picture of what we as Christians need to be doing for each other. Friends can relieve that cold pressure of the environment around us or other traumatic experiences.

*1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 10:24-25*

It is the kind of practical, heartfelt ministry believers should have in each other's lives.

3B. The third area deals with **STRENGTH** - 12  
What kind of strength?

1C. It is the strength to **Avoid Possible Defeat**

Which here may refer to physical confrontation, but could also refer to verbal confrontation.

A friend may be just the support you need to get you through an episode that brings you close to defeat. God teaches in His Word that His people are to minister to one another!

2C. It is also the strength to **Accept Potential Difficulties**

Which we might call "*stress*" in our lives. In life, we need something that will withstand pressure and not break under stress. That is what friendship can provide for us. Two are definitely better than one.

## "THE IMPORTANCE OF FRIENDSHIP"

Message No. 6 - Ecclesiastes 4:9-16

1A. *FRIENDSHIP IS BETTER THAN SELFISH PURSUITS* - 9-12

2A. FRIENDSHIP IS BETTER THAN MERE **POPULARITY** - 13-16

Don't mix these up! Often someone will have a lot of people around, and a lot of popularity - but he will be short on real friends. Solomon, of all people, was uniquely qualified to comment on this.

1B. This truth is **RECOGNIZED** in the common experience of political leaders  
Solomon recognized it from his experience.

1C. It was demonstrated in the **Attitude** of an old, foolish king - 13-14  
Cf. *Job 12:20; 32:412; Prov. 25:15; 27:5-6*),

2C. It was demonstrated in the **Acceptance** of the people - 15-16  
Cf. *Prov. 18:24*

Solomon clearly teaches there is danger in numbers. Friendship is more than mere popularity. Remember that the same crowd that shouted "*Hosannah!*" to Jesus later cried "*Crucify Him!*"

We should be careful not to "*collect*" people who are not real friends, and instead develop genuine, sincere friendships.

2B. This truth is **REVEALED** in his concluding evaluation

Popularity apart from friendships is "*vanity and grasping for the wind.*" It is vain, and it is futile.

Only in our friendship with the Lord Jesus Christ and, through Him, with others, will we have lasting and meaningful relationships.

# ***ECCLESIASTES***

*Message No. 7*

## **“WHAT HAPPENED TO INTEGRITY”**

*Ecclesiastes 5:1-7*

Introduction:

In today's passage we will examine five characteristics of integrity and what it means to have integrity in your life.

We begin with:

- 1A. INTEGRITY INVOLVES A **CAUTIOUS RESPONSE** IN COMING TO GOD - 1  
Integrity is not flying into the presence of God and demanding what you want. Integrity is not coming to God in familiar terms, though we have that right because of the work of Jesus Christ.

It means that I am not pushy with God; I do not take advantage of my relationship with God, and I do not try to manipulate God. Our culture has lost a sense of who God really is.

Of course, there is a danger of making God seem unapproachable: but there also is a danger of making Him something less than what He really is (see *Isa. 56:7*).

Because we are so relational today, we have lost some of our sense of accountability and integrity before God.

In this passage, we come to the first exhortations in the entire Book of Ecclesiastes, and it is to “guard your steps” (NIV), or “walk prudently” (NKJB), when you “go to the house of God.” This kind of cautious response toward God shows us two things.

- 1B. It **RECOGNIZES** the need for worship  
Richard DeHaan has said, “Regular and sincere worship of the Lord is the best way the believer can keep his priorities properly aligned.” *2 Tim. 4:3-4*.

In the Old Testament, the temple was one place where God localized His presence, and it was where the Jews came to worship God. When His glory would fill the temple, it was as a sign that the worship was pleasing to Him.

Today, we have lost the sense of coming to worship God in one place, and we often treat it too lightly. We need to be careful as we come together in one place to worship the God of the universe (see *Psa. 73:16-17*).

"WHAT HAPPENED TO INTEGRITY?"

Message No. 7 - Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

2B. It **REALIZES** the nature of worship

Notice that it was to draw near to "hear" rather than to "give the sacrifice (the kind you eat) of fools." The fool is somebody without integrity who has made commitments to God without keeping them. *Prov. 15:8*.

The sacrifice referred to should be one of fellowship with God, but for the fool it is thoughtless festivity. There is no real worship there. The person who responds to God realizes the nature of real worship and is attentive to God, not just to listen, but to obey (see *Hos. 14:2; Luke 8:18; John 4:23-24; Heb. 13:15*).

Today we are too lax and too chummy in our worship. We need to understand our intimacy with Him; but we also need to realize the nature of worship. We need to listen to God, not just talk to God.

The Father is continually seeking those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. If you do not do that as a Christian, He will begin to seem more distant and farther away from you. All of integrity flows out of a cautious response to God.

2A. INTEGRITY IS A **CONTROLLED RELUCTANCE** IN SPEAKING BEFORE GOD - 2-3

1B. It **REFRAINS** from being too quick to speak - 2

This is almost the opposite of what you might think. Everyone seems quick to tell you what they think, or quick to talk about their relationship to God.

But *James 1:19* tells us, "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak," *Proverbs 18:13* says, "He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him" (see also *Prov. 25:8; 29:20*). Integrity is never too quick to speak.

2B. It **REMEMBERS** the position of God and man

"For God is in heaven," wrote Solomon, "and you on earth." That is what controls our tongue, both in public and in prayer. In *Matthew 6:5-6* Jesus warned against wordy, repetitious, public prayers like the hypocrites.

There is no biblical support for long public prayers - though there is great support for long private prayers! In your private place, you recognize your proper place before God.

“WHAT HAPPENED TO INTEGRITY?”

Message No. 7 - Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

3B. It **RESULTS** in few words - 2

“Let your words be few,” warned Solomon (see *Matt. 6:7-8*). Integrity doesn't extend the words, but uses as few as possible.

3A. INTEGRITY IS A **CLEAR RESOLVE** TO FULFILL YOUR COMMITMENTS - 4-5

Whatever you have committed yourself to do, integrity will drive you to do it. We notice three things in this regard.

1B. It **REFUSES** to delay doing what you promised - 4

*Deut. 23:21-23*

2B. It **REAFFIRMS** your obligation to pay - 5a

This not only applies to financial matters, but also to promises we make verbally. *Psalm 76:11* shows us that the reason we pay our vows is because we are accountable to God, not just to men (see *James 5:12*).

You do what you are supposed to do because you know you are accountable to God.

3B. It **REVEALS** the importance of making a vow in the first place - 5b

“It is better not to vow than to vow and not pay” (v. 5; see *Prov. 20:25*).

4A. INTEGRITY IS A **CONTINUAL RESISTANCE** TO SIN - 6

There are two reasons for this:

1B. It **RESPECTS** the attitude of God and our accountability to Him - *Psa. 15:4*

*James 4:17* “Angel” – messenger – cf. *Mal. 2:7*

2B. It **REINFORCES** the danger of our fantasies and foolish words - 7

5A. INTEGRITY IS A **CONSTANT REVERENCE** FOR GOD - 7

“But fear God.” is the advice he gives. The NIV reads, “Therefore stand in awe of God.”

*Psalm 5:7* says, “But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; in fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple” (see *also Psa. 89:6-8*).

# **ECCLESIASTES**

*Message No. 8*

## **“THE PROBLEM WITH WEALTH”**

*Ecclesiastes 5:8-20*

The problem with wealth is not your lack of it! We all think we need more of it, but even for those who have more of it than they will ever need, there are four major problems, according to Solomon in today’s passage.

### 1A. WEALTH CAN CAUSE MORAL **DEFILEMENT** - 8-9

Wealth can actually corrupt your life, or even ruin you! Even though the Bible is very clear that money is not evil in itself, the love of money - and lots of it - is the root of all kinds of evil. How can it cause moral defilement?

### 1B. By **PUNISHING** the poor

We Americans enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world, and we seldom want to hear about the poor. Yet God is very concerned about the needy (see *Ps. 12:5; 72:12-14; Prov. 19:17; 22:22-23*). The New Testament warns Christians against looking at someone who needs food and clothing and merely saying to them, “*Be warmed and filled*” (*James 2:15-16*).

But many times simply the possession of wealth causes us to have a lack of concern for people who don’t have it. That is opposite the Bible’s standards. The Bible teaches that believers who have wealth and are walking with the Lord have a great concern about those who don’t have it.

The Bible even teaches that we labor with our hands in order to give to those who have need (*Eph. 4:28*). But private enterprise in our culture can easily lead us away from God’s way of doing things. God cares about the poor and when we ignore the poor among us, we are oppressing the poor in God’s eyes. We are to use our money for the glory of God and to help people (*Prov. 19:17*). You can never out give the Lord.

### 2B. By **PERVERTING** justice and righteousness

Perversion of justice and righteousness exists all over the world, with everyone from airport guards to bureaucrats wanting a piece of the action. And God hates it.

In *Psalm 10:11* we read of the dishonest person, “He has said in his heart, God has forgotten; He hides His face; He will never see it” (see *vv. 12-15*). According to our Lord Jesus, how we use our money reveals what we really are inside.

"THE PROBLEM OF WEALTH"  
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3B. By **PROFITING** from your position

How many people profit off the needs of others? The higher up you get, the more you profit off the basic needs of people. Solomon had seen the system from top to bottom, and he said it was corrupt! He knew money could cause moral defilement (see *Prov. 11:24-26*).

2A. WEALTH CAN CAUSE GREAT **DISAPPOINTMENT** - 10-12

1B. Through a lack of **SATISFACTION** - 10-11

Do you think making big money is going to bring you satisfaction? You haven't lived long enough to know better!

1C. In the **Attraction** of money - 10

We find that "he who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver" (see also *1 Tim. 6:10*). Walter Kaiser has commented, "Human desire outruns acquisitions, no matter how large the acquisitions may be."

The more we have, the more we want! But the world wants us to love money, to see it as the answer to all our problems. How foolish!

Some of the most unhappy people in the world are the wealthiest. According to the Bible wealth can very easily take your heart away from the Lord.

2C. In the **Abundance** of money - 11

Solomon makes it clear that the one who loves the increase of money is chasing "*vanity*," emptiness. There's nothing there.

1C. In the **Advantage** of money

This passage shows that increased wealth brings increased burdens, taxation, payroll, etc. An increase in wealth demands a corresponding increase in staff to manage it along with the growing business. Wealth can cause disappointment.

2B. Through a lack of **SLEEP** - 12

The insomnia problem in America, particularly among the wealthy, is widely publicized. But Solomon put his finger on the problem long ago.

Wealth can rob you of your peace of mind. Of course, the problem is not the money itself, but the battle in our hearts. *Prov. 30:7-8*.

"THE PROBLEM OF WEALTH"  
Message No. 8 - Ecclesiastes 5:8-20

3A. WEALTH CAN CAUSE EMOTIONAL **DAMAGE** - 13-17

Solomon said, "There is a severe evil which I have seen under the sun; riches kept for their owner to his hurt."

The possession of money or the lack of it literally tears some people up inside and it can devastate a marriage or a family.

1B. It can cause damage when we **RELY** on our riches - 14  
see *1 Tim. 6:17*). What happens to our emotional well-being when suddenly that wealth is gone? To rely on riches is to set ourselves up for a fall.

2B. It can cause damage when we **REFUSE** to accept the temporary nature of our wealth - 15-16  
There is no way we can take it with us when we die (*Job 1:21; 1 Tim. 6:7*). Emotional damage can happen the moment we forget this principle.

3B. It can cause damage when we **REALIZE** the suffering wealth can bring - 17  
Look at the words used here: "*darkness*," "*sorrow*," "*sickness*," and "*anger*." These are all the result of trusting in wealth rather than trusting in the Lord.

Unfortunately, God's people today are letting the world so influence their thinking that they measure each other in terms of wealth and status.

4A. WEALTH CAN CAUSE SPIRITUAL **DEFEAT** - 18-20

1B. It can cause spiritual defeat when we do not **REJOICE** in what God has given to us - 18  
A lot of people do not enjoy what they have, because they are too worried about what they will have next month, or next year but if you are walking with the Lord, you can enjoy what God has given you.

2B. It can cause spiritual defeat when we do not **RECOGNIZE** its true source - 19  
All we have we got from God, whether we realize it or not (*1 Cor. 4:7. 1 Tim. 6:17*). A Christian can become very defeated by not recognizing that God is the source of all things he or she possesses.

3B. It can cause spiritual defeat when we do not **REALIZE** our future is in the hands of God - 20  
Today is the greatest day to serve Him, and anything beyond today is in His hands! No matter how things look, He is in control of it all! *Psa. 90:12*.

# ***ECCLESIASTES***

*Message No. 9*

**“EVIL UNDER THE SUN”**

*Ecclesiastes 6:1-12*

As we finished up Ecclesiastes 5, we saw that the capacity to possess wealth, as well as the capacity to enjoy it, can come only from God. Cf. **5:18-20**.

There is nothing we received that we did not get from the hand of God.

Now as we come to Ecclesiastes 6, we find Solomon talking about “an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men.”

What is this great evil?

It is the fact that, in spite of any amount of accumulation, the soul remains unsatisfied. It is frequent among men, and it involves three things.

- 1A. *IT INVOLVES THE **FRUSTRATION** OF HAVING EVERYTHING YOU WANT, BUT NOT BEING ABLE TO ENJOY IT - 2*
- 2A. *IT INVOLVES THE **FUTILITY** OF LIFE WHEN THERE IS NO INWARD SATISFACTION - 3-9*
- 3A. *IT INVOLVES THE **FAILURE** OF MAN TO IMPROVE HIS SITUATION - 10-12*

1A. IT INVOLVES THE **FRUSTRATION** OF HAVING EVERYTHING YOU WANT, BUT NOT BEING ABLE TO ENJOY IT - 2

This is something that is frequently found among us. We get everything in life we think we want, but it doesn't bring inward satisfaction.

1B. The **REASON** is found in his failure to recognize who gave it all to him - 2  
Cf. **5:18-20**.

What is interesting is that initially we have no problem seeing something good as coming from the hand of God; but as time goes on, our hearts drift away from that acknowledgment.

As soon as we begin to see things as the product of our own accomplishment rather than a gift from the hand of God, we are moving toward trouble.

2B. The **RESULT** is caused by God even though a foreigner consumes it - **Ps. 39:6**  
God keeps us in a place of total dependence on Him. We cannot generate this joy ourselves - it comes from God alone.

The ability to enjoy ourselves in this life is from the hand of God. It is a by-product of our relationship with the Lord.

*"EVIL UNDER THE SUN"*  
*Message No. 9 - Ecclesiastes 6:1-12*

2A. IT INVOLVES THE **FUTILITY** OF LIFE WHEN THERE IS NO INWARD SATISFACTION - 3-9

Twice we read "the soul is not satisfied." This inward emptiness is seen in several ways.

1B. It is seen in the **COMPARISON** with a stillborn child - 3-5

This is a little confusing until you see the great contrast that is being presented here, between the father of 100 children and a child who was never born. The child is much better and certainly has more peace and rest.

Today's Christian "*climbers*" who think they have the world by the tail will discover that until they find peace with the Lord, they will find no inward satisfaction.

2B. It is seen in the **COMMENT** about the fate of both - 6

Solomon continually makes us face death, because death is an inevitable fact. To a believer it is no threat at all. But death itself is the great equalizer, and it is a threat to the person who is trusting in wealth for satisfaction and meaning.

3B. It is seen in the **CONTRAST** with a poor man - 7-9

Solomon is blunt in showing that "all the labor of man is for his mouth, and yet the soul (appetite) is not satisfied" (see *Prov. 16:26; 30:15*).

1C. The **Problem** is that "the soul is not satisfied."

2C. The **Principle** is "Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire."

The wandering of desire is that law of diminishing returns that often prevents us from enjoying what we see and being content with what we have.

3A. IT INVOLVES THE **FAILURE** OF MAN TO IMPROVE HIS SITUATION - 10-12

We will try anything to improve our situation. We will read books, go to seminars, do anything to try to solve the dissatisfaction in our hearts. But the sad truth is man cannot improve his situation. Why not?

1B. He cannot **CHANGE** what he is - 10a; see also *7:1*)

You can try - but you can't change your basic character. Only God can.

*"EVIL UNDER THE SUN"*  
*Message No. 9 - Ecclesiastes 6:1-12*

2B. He cannot **CONTEND** with God about who He is - 10b; see *Rom. 9:20*.  
You might not like what God has done in creating you; but you need to learn to accept how He has made you, and rejoice in the circumstances He has ordered for you.

3B. He cannot **COMPREHEND** what is good for him - 12a  
*Rom. 8:28; Psa. 84:10-12*

We think we know what is good for us, but the bottom line is we don't! Only God knows what is best for us - man cannot comprehend what is good for himself.

4B. He cannot **CONTROL** his future - 12b cf. *Jer. 10:23*  
There is nothing we can do to control it - so why worry about it?

Walter Kaiser has written:

"A man may possess wealth, honor, numerous children, long life, and virtually every outward good that anyone could possibly imagine; yet he can still be a very broken, dissatisfied, and unhappy person. Because prosperity without the divine gift of enjoyment is nothing. God given wealth without the God-given power to enjoy it is a great evil."

That is exactly what Solomon is saying.

# **ECCLESIASTES**

*Message No. 10*

## **“THE VALUE OF WISDOM”**

*Ecclesiastes 7:1-14*

Seeing things from God’s perspective is something we all need. In **6:12** Solomon asked, “*Who knows what is good for man in life?*” That is the key that takes him on to the next section.

He answers with the word “*better*” eight times: in verses **1, 2, 3, 5, 8, and 10**. Out of this, it appears there are seven proverbs in verses **1-14** concerning what is “*better*”.

- (1) A good name (**v. 1a**)
- (2) The day of death (**v. 1b**)
- (3) House of mourning (**v. 2**)
- (4) Sorrow (**v. 3**)
- (5) Rebuke of the wise (**v. 5**)
- (6) The end of a thing (**v. 8a**)
- (7) To be patient in spirit (**v. 8b**).

Through these, Solomon is describing who knows what is better in life. The truth is, some things are better than others, but to understand why, we have to see them from God’s perspective.

What is the value of having God’s wisdom in our lives? In this text we will see things concerning the value of wisdom.

### **1A. WISDOM EVALUATES THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE FROM GOD’S POINT OF VIEW - 1-10**

As it does that, it helps us to do four things.

#### **1B. It helps us RECOGNIZE what is really important in life - 1a**

What do you believe is really important in life? The text tells us “a good name is better than precious ointment” (see *Prov. 22:1; Song of Sol. 1:3*).

“A *good name*” refers not to the letters in a name, but to the character behind the name. Inner character is much more important than outer fragrance!

*Proverbs 10:7* advises, “The memory of the righteous is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot” (also see *Ps. 112:6*).

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- 2B. It helps us **REALIZE** the value of things like sorrow and death - 1b-4  
No one likes to be hurt, but the Bible teaches there is more benefit from hurt than there is from laughter. But we are into laughter and want to run away from death and sorrow. Charles Bridges wrote, "Is not the day that will deliver us from sin and sorrow far better than the day that brought us into them?"

It is better to face the joys of heaven than the sorrows of earth. But most of us live under a misunderstanding of life. In our society, we are bent on getting rid of death and mourning. But death is still death, and sorrow is still sorrow. Why? Because it teaches us more than joy and laughter ever can. It is more beneficial:

1C. In terms of **Instruction**

2C. In terms of **Consolation**

3C. In terms of **Anticipation**

When we acquire God's wisdom, we will begin to think differently and more seriously (see *1 Pet. 1:6-7*). All that we suffer in this life is not worthy to be compared with our future glory!

- 3B. It helps us **RESPOND** to others as God would desire - 5-7  
*Verse 5* tells us, "It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise than for a man to hear the song of fools." Of course, a "*fool*" in the Old Testament is an unbeliever.

The music of unbelievers is foolish, even when it pumps us up or soothes us on the inside. We listen to it to try to escape the realities of life. It is all empty and meaningless (see *vv. 6, 7*).

The rebuke of God through a wise man is far better, though it does not give us the quick, temporary escape we might be looking for. We will grow in understanding when we listen to the rebuke that comes from God's wisdom - no matter how it might hurt for the moment.

Sometimes we turn to those who will give us "*strokes*," rather than listening to a person who really loves us (See *Ps. 141:5; Prov. 15:32; 25:12; 27:5-6*). As many sweet things are poison, so many bitter things are medicine.

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- 4B. It helps us **REACT** properly to present difficulties and disappointments - 8-10  
Life is filled with many disappointments and difficulties.

If the end is better than the beginning, we need the kind of patience that can see a thing through, patience will allow you to wait on the Lord.

Remember that **Job 42:12** says,

“The LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning” (see also **Isa. 28:16**). Patience is the child of faith.

Confidence in God is going to lead to patience. We need to wait on the Lord and be patient (**Prov. 14:17, 29; 15:18; 16:32**).

God has a plan and He knows what He is doing.

1A. *WISDOM EVALUATES THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE FROM GOD'S POINT OF VIEW - 1-10*

2A. WISDOM **EXCEEDS** THE ADVANTAGES OF WORLDLY POSSESSIONS AND SECURITY - 11-12

It is easy to get confused on this point. We begin to look at the things we are acquiring and think they are bringing us happiness.

The tragedy is that most of us have to get those things and find out they do not bring us happiness before we really believe it. The material world is not what solves the problem of the heart.

Solomon is very honest about this. In *verse 11* we find that “**wisdom is good with an inheritance**,” meaning that an inheritance can be good like wisdom is good.

But the excellence of wisdom is that it gives life, while money cannot.

We find that wisdom “**gives life to those who have it**,” with the obvious contrast that money does not!

Wisdom preserves life, but money cannot (see **Prov. 8:35**)! In fact, wisdom exceeds all the advantages of worldly possessions.

God's wisdom is God's Word. The more we know of it, the more we will know how to relate properly to life and the world around us. We need God's wisdom desperately!

*"THE VALUE OF WISDOM"*  
*Message No. 10 - Ecclesiastes 7:1-14*

- 1A. *WISDOM EVALUATES THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF LIFE FROM GOD'S POINT OF VIEW - 1-10*
- 2A. *WISDOM EXCEEDS THE ADVANTAGES OF WORLDLY POSSESSIONS AND SECURITY - 11-12*
- 3A. **WISDOM ENCOURAGES** OUR DEPENDENCY UPON GOD AND HIS PLANS FOR US - 13-14

How often do you take time to “*consider the work of God*”? You may see things quite differently if you do. The wisdom we may gain will cause us to depend more on God and His plan. There are three reasons for this:

1B. Because we cannot **CHANGE** what God has done  
The question is posed, “*Who can make straight what He has made crooked?*” This is similar to the questions asked in *Job 33:12-13*. There are some things God has done that we cannot change. And that will cause us to depend on Him.

2B. Second, because we cannot **CONTROL** our circumstances  
We may think we can, but we can't. Our days may never go like we plan them; but they always go as God has known they will.

“When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other”, is the way the NIV translates it.

If things are going well, you should rejoice. If things are going poorly - you should rejoice as well! God has made one as well as the other.

3B. Because we cannot **COMPREHEND** our future  
Again, the NIV translates it well: “A man cannot discover anything about his future.” We don't know what is going to happen tomorrow; but God does. God is in control of all things.

We need to rest in that.

# **ECCLESIASTES**

*Message No. 11*

## **“THE SEARCH FOR WISDOM”**

*Ecclesiastes 7:15-8:1*

In the previous lesson we looked at the value of wisdom; now we move on in the search for wisdom. Solomon’s thoughts continue as he compares the value of wisdom with the facts of life.

The NASB translates *verse 15*, “I have seen everything during my lifetime of futility”. In the NIV it reads, “In this meaningless life of mine I have seen. And in the New King James we read, “I have seen all things in my days of vanity.

The outline in the previous lesson included: 1. Wisdom evaluates life’s circumstances from God’s point of view. 2. Wisdom exceeds the advantages of worldly possessions and security. 3. Wisdom encourages our dependency upon God and His plans for us.

As Solomon goes on, he gives us some reasons why we should seek the wisdom of God. Along these lines, we will continue that outline and share with you four more things about wisdom, beginning with:

1A. WISDOM EXHORTS US TO AVOID EXTREMES BY REMEMBERING OUR ACCOUNTABILITY TO GOD - 15-18

1B. There are two PROBLEMS to face

1C. There is the problem of the Pride of the righteous - 16

This is the pride of the self-righteous, not the righteousness of God. *Proverbs 16:18* tells us that pride goes before destruction (see *also Prov. 3:7; Rom. 12:3*). Self-righteousness actually destroys what you are all about on the inside.

Legalism may be a cover, but it is also destructive to the inner spirit. It will make you bitter, critical, judgmental of others, and proud in regard to spiritual matters.

Whenever you think you understand the ways of God so well you no longer need to trust Him, you are headed for destruction. Inward character is damaged greatly by outward legalism. Wisdom can prevent that. Wisdom exhorts us to avoid that extreme.

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2C. There is the problem of the **Presumption** of the wicked - 17  
The issue here is moral indifference that leads to moral indulgence. In **Psalm 55:23** the psalmist declared, "Deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in You."

Presuming upon the grace of God can be lethal. Moral indifference - presuming on God's grace and forgiveness so that you can keep some secret sin on the side - almost always leads to moral indulgence. Wisdom teaches us otherwise.

2B. There is a basic **PRINCIPLE** to follow  
That principle is, "He who fears God will escape them all." This is the same word used in **1 Samuel 14:41**, where "Saul and Jonathan were taken, but the people escaped."

The NIV translates this to say, "will avoid all extremes." This captures somewhat the sense of it. Wisdom will be balanced because of trust in the Lord.

We need to know how to escape the extremes of becoming either self-righteous or morally indifferent. To escape both problems, we need to trust God and remember our accountability to Him.

2A. WISDOM **EXCELS** THE ADVICE OF OTHERS - 19-22

We don't want to misunderstand. There is much safety in "a multitude of counselors." It is a wise thing to get good advice before making a decision - unless in seeking the advice of others you have ignored or neglected the wisdom of God.

"Wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten rulers of the city," says **verse 19**. According to Josephus, 10 people were on a city council. Solomon is saying the wisdom of God will strengthen you more than even the "top 10" people in your town!

There are two reasons this is true.

1B. The **ABILITY** of others is affected by sin - 20

God's wisdom is not influenced by sin. We and our counselors are affected by sin, so we are naturally prone to error.

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- 2B. The **ATTITUDE** of others is not always right - 21-22  
In other words, we should not take to heart everything people say (see *Ps. 38:12-15*). Are people talking about you? The Bible says, "Don't listen to it!" The question to ask ourselves is not, "What will people say?" but, "What is right?" (see *I Sam. 24:9*).

It is foolish to be overly concerned about and troubled by what others think and say about us in their unguarded, unkind, and foolish moments. Wisdom is the art of listening to God first. If we fear God more than we fear man, we will do what is right no matter what.

3A. WISDOM **ENABLES** US TO ESCAPES THE TRAPS OF SIN AND OUR INABILITY TO UNDERSTAND THINGS BY OURSELVES - 23-26

There are a lot of things in life we don't understand. The world often offers things to us that we think will bring pleasure or momentary satisfaction. But it is a trap. Only God's wisdom can escape that trap.

We notice several things here.

- 1B. There is the **PROBLEM** with human understanding.  
Often we are led into things we don't want to be led into, because we are trapped by limited human understanding. Look at the problem:

- 1C. It **Discovers** its own limitations - 23-24  
"Reality is beyond my grasp," said one commentator (see *Ps. 139:6*). Too often we try to solve or understand things on our own rather than falling on our knees before Him!

- 2C. It **Desires** to know the wrong things - 25  
It's because of the way we are made, and we want to know things we were not intended to know just like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

God does not intend for us to go find out about sin by experiencing it! All that we need to know about sin is already in God's Word.

- 3C. It **Disappoints** us with what it learns  
The problem with human understanding is that once we find out about something, we are completely disappointed with it, no matter how attractive it was in the beginning (see *Prov. 5:3-5*).

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2B. There is the **PRIORITY** of godly wisdom - 26  
“He who pleases God shall escape from her.” The knowledge of God is the moral check in our lives (see *Prov. 9:10*).

4A. WISDOM **ENABLES** US TO DISCOVER AND EXPERIENCE WHAT GOD CAN DO - 7:27-8:1

So very few really see their need of God. But what can we discover and experience as we seek the Lord?

1B. The **REALIZATION** that some things are hard to explain - 27-28  
Without God’s wisdom, he could not find one virtuous woman (*Prov. 31*).

2B. The **RECOGNITION** of God’s work and man’s problem - 29  
“God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.” Very few are seeking out God and His wisdom.

3B. The **RESULTS** of having God’s wisdom - 8:1  
The NIV reads, “Wisdom brightens a man’s face and changes its hard appearance.”

Why do some people have a certain softness and sweetness in their lives? Solomon said those are the people who know God’s wisdom.

# **ECCLESIASTES**

*Message No. 12*

## **“THE PROBLEM OF AUTHORITY”**

*Ecclesiastes 8:2-9*

In this section of Ecclesiastes, Solomon is talking not about God’s authority, but earthly authority. This is something we face every day, whether it is a policeman, a schoolteacher, a boss, a politician, laws, rules, regulations - we all have to face them, adapt and understand.

Solomon does not try to hide the problem. The problem of human authority is a huge problem, but there is no basis for authority apart from God. Who has a right to say who is right?

Ultimately, all authority must begin with God. In today’s passage, Solomon is not trying to hide anything about authority.

From him we learn three things about authority.

### 1A. ITS **DEMANDS** ARE TO BE OBEYED - 2-4

There are two basic reasons for this, according to Solomon.

#### 1B. Because of our **SUBMISSION** to God - 2

Literally, the reader is to keep the king’s commandment “for the sake of your oath to God.”

This referred to an oath of allegiance to an earthly king, which Solomon saw as being ultimately given to God.

Why should we submit to authority? Because of our commitment to God! This is a theme consistent throughout Scripture (see *Rom. 13:1-7. Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13-17*).

Our “*politics*” are not in this world. The demands of earthly authority are to be obeyed because of our submission to God.

In our generation, we have forgotten what authority is all about, and have forgotten our responsibility to God.

There is even a complete breakdown of parental authority in the home. How many problems in our lives are actually related to a lack of submission early in life?

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- 2B. Because of the **SOVEREIGNTY** of the king - 3-4  
The text says "*for he does whatever pleases him*" (see *Ps. 115:3; 135:5-6*).  
The principle of authority of the king is that he does whatever makes him happy.

That is not always going to be pleasing! But God indicates the fact of his position demands that we respect it, and acknowledge his sovereignty.

Sovereignty means that we:

- 1C. **Respect** his presence as well as his position - 3  
*1 Pet. 2:17*

In an ancient society, it was a rare honor to go into the presence of a monarch.

This verse indicates that a person should be careful in the king's presence and not depart without his leave. In other words, he should be honored and respected.

- 2C. **Refuse** to do evil - 3b  
If the ruler says you should do something and it does not oppose God's Word, you should submit to it.

We are rebellious in our hearts, but God's Word says holiness is demanded (see *Isa. 6:1-8*).

The amount of influence and authority anyone exercises in his life is in direct proportion to his ability to submit to authority.

- 3C. **Realize** his authority - 4  
What makes us think we have the right to question the person who has been placed in authority (see *Job 9:12; Isa. 45:9; Dan. 4:35*)?

Authority is authority because God established it, and believers who say they are submissive to God have no right to question authority.

We are to submit to it! But what if the authorities over you ask you to do something that is in direct violation of God's Word?

## "THE PROBLEM WITH AUTHORITY"

Message No. 12 - Ecclesiastes 8:2-9

### 2A. ITS **DECISIONS** ARE TO BE EVALUATED - 5-8

This is the point at which we need to be "*sweetly firm*" (see *Acts 4:18-19; 5:22-42*). If there is something that the Bible clearly says is wrong, then it is wrong no matter who in society says it is right.

If a law is made forcing me to do something that the Bible says is wrong, then I must refuse to do it - sweetly, of course! Authorities must be obeyed but decisions are to be evaluated.

There are two reasons for this.

### 1B. Because our **LIVES** are affected by their decisions - 5a-6

But we learn:

#### 1C. In terms of **Protection** - 5

*"he who keeps his command will experience nothing harmful"*  
(see *Prov. 20:12; Rom. 13:3*).

The laws of the government are supposedly to protect the individual, and most of the time our lives are deeply affected when we decide not to obey the government.

#### 2C. In terms of God's **Purpose** and plan - 6

*"for every matter there is a time and judgment"* (see *3:1*). The NIV translates the word "judgment" into "procedure." Can you fight city hall?

There is a time when proper procedure can voice a protest, and the king's heart can be changed. In *1 Samuel 19:1, 4-7*, Jonathan pleaded David's case before Saul, and Saul changed his mind. But remember we should always follow proper procedure when voicing a protest.

#### 3C. In terms of our **Problems**

*"the misery of man increases greatly."*

The NIV reads, "a man's misery weighs heavily upon him." This probably refers to all the futility and frustrations of life about which Solomon has been continually speaking in this book.

Make sure that what you decide to do is what you ought to do.

## "THE PROBLEM WITH AUTHORITY"

Message No. 12 - Ecclesiastes 8:2-9

- 2A. ITS DECISIONS ARE TO BE EVALUATED - 5-8  
1B. *Because our LIVES are affected by their decisions - 5a-6*  
2B. Because the LIMITATIONS of authority are evident - 7-8

There are certain things authority cannot do.

- 1C. It (authority) cannot Comprehend what is to come - 7  
See *Matt. 24:42-43*). Authority cannot see into the future.
- 2C. It cannot Contain the spirit - 8  
Authority has no power over the spirit or the wind.
- 3C. It cannot Control the day of death  
Authority cannot do anything in the day of death.
- 4C. It cannot Conquer the bondage of sin  
In the NIV we read, "*As no one is discharged in time of war, so wickedness will not release those who practice it.*"

Human authorities can never help one out of bondage to sin.

- 3A. ITS DANGERS ARE TO BE UNDERSTOOD - 9  
Government can hurt us. The Bible tells us that "*one man rules over another to his own hurt.*" Human authority does not always do what is right.

But Solomon's ultimate conclusion is to remember our accountability to God.

Have I submitted everything to Him? Have I bowed my knee to the Lord?

# ***ECCLESIASTES***

*Message No. 13*

## **“HOW TO ENJOY WHAT YOU DO”**

*Ecclesiastes 8:10-17*

It is interesting how frequently we hear and read today that people simply don't enjoy what they do. Something is wrong in the human heart. The problems we face every day cause us to wonder, “How can I enjoy anything today?”

How can we live today in light of the joy of God? It is interesting that Solomon, all the way through the book of Ecclesiastes, has one general message, one fundamental law: To fear God. But how do I do that?

### 1. **REMEMBER** YOUR ACCOUNTABILITY TO GOD - 10-13

The first way I can live with the joy of God in my heart is to remember my accountability before God. This is the fundamental law of life.

It controls all we say, think and do. Real joy is not releasing myself from who God is and what He thinks of what I am doing; real joy and real peace is not put into my heart until I recognize I am accountable to God.

But there are really four issues involved in that.

#### 1B. There is the **PROBLEM** of how the wicked are treated in life - 10

Some people appear to be out there blowing it all off and having a ball. So we argue, “Look at the wicked! They're having a great time, and the righteous are having a tough time.”

*“This also is vanity”* or meaninglessness. The issue here is not the judgment of the wicked (forgotten) for that is not vanity. Rather it is the praise of the wicked. People who should be condemned for what they have done are instead praised.

**This is** a serious injustice! But we can still experience joy by remembering our accountability before God. Things are not always what they appear to be in the lives of the wicked. It is vanity; it is meaninglessness.

#### 2B. There is the **PRESUMPTION** that you can sin without being judged - 11

People say this continually. In light of this, several presumptions are often made:

1C. God is indifferent

*“HOW TO ENJOY WHAT YOU DO”*  
*Message No. 13 - Ecclesiastes 8:10-17*

2C. God is helpless to do anything

3C. God shows favoritism; He judges some but not others

Of course, none of these is true. Delays in justice simply bring on more evil.

3B. There is the **POSITION** of the believer - 12

No matter what the sinner does, God has promised much to us: - It will be well with those who fear God” (see *Mark 10:24-30*). Even if the wicked got away with it all, let’s not forget that God has promised good to us (see *Rom. 8:28-29*). God has said it will always be well for those that truly fear Him. If we think we would be better off by getting what someone else has, we are sadly mistaken.

4B. There is the **PUNISHMENT** of the wicked - 13

Many times believers get involved in harmful, devastating sin because we forget that God will punish the wicked. No one will escape God’s judgment! The Bible tells us the days of the wicked “are as a shadow.”

This is talking about the insecurity of human life. Life without God has no more substance than a shadow. *Psalm 102:11* reads, “*My days are like a shadow that lengthens, and I wither away like grass.*”

In *Psalm 109:23* we find, “*I am gone like a shadow when it lengthens; I am shaken off like a locust.*”

*Psalm 1:4-6* tells us, “The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.”

It will be payday someday! So, then, how can we enjoy what God has given us to do today?

2A. **REALIZE** THE IMPORTANCE OF TODAY - 14-15

1B. By **EVALUATING** carefully what happens to both the righteous and the wicked - 14

God makes rain fall on the just and the unjust alike (see *2:2 1; 3:16; 4: 1; 5:8; 6:1-2; 7:15*). We need to recognize that and live with it.

*“HOW TO ENJOY WHAT YOU DO”*

*Message No. 13 - Ecclesiastes 8:10-17*

- 2B. By **ENJOYING** the common experiences of each day - 15  
“Eat, drink, and be merry” refers to our lives on this earth and extracting enjoyment from what God has given us.

This is not Epicurean philosophy; it refers to sitting down to a meal and enjoying it! This is my Father’s world, and all my life should pour out in praise to Him for some of the most simple things.

- 3B. Third, by **EXALTING** God who makes it all possible - 15b  
The days are those “which God gives him under the sun.” This speaks of exalting God who makes everything possible (see **2:24; 3:10, 13; 5:18-19**).

**1 Chronicles 29:12** tells us, “Both riches and honor come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.” Later, in **29:14** we read, “For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You.”

We read in **1 Corinthians 4:7**, “And what do you have that you did not receive?” **Romans 11:36** reads, “For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.”

- 3A. **RECOGNIZE** THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR YOU TO KNOW THE WORK OF GOD - 16-17

We spend an awful lot of time trying to understand what is happening, yet God tells us in this book that the way to have joy and be at peace is to understand that we don’t know what is happening! It is impossible for us to know.

- 1B. It is impossible no matter how much **TIME** we have - 16  
*“Even though one sees no sleep day or night.”*
- 2B. It is impossible no matter how much **EFFORT** we put into it - 17a  
*“though a man labors to discover it.”*
- 3B. It is impossible no matter how much **WISDOM** we have - 17  
*“Though a wise man attempts to know it.”*

So relax! It should not be frustrating - God is in control. Rest in the Lord (**Ps. 37:3-7; Prov. 3:5-6; Phil. 4:6-7; Jas. 4:13-17**). We need submission. We need to rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him.

# **ECCLESIASTES**

Message No. 14

**“ONE EVENT FOR ALL”**

*Ecclesiastes 9:1-12*

Death is the great equalizer. It is described as the “*last enemy*” of man that will one day be destroyed (*1 Cor. 15:26*). *Hebrews 9:27* says, “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.”

*Romans 5:12* tells us that death entered the human race through one man’s sin, and spread to all men. *Romans 6:23* says that “the wages of sin is death.” *Hebrews 2:14-15* tells us that the devil had the power of death until Christ died and rendered that power ineffectual, thus releasing “*those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*”

In *2 Timothy 1:10* we read that Christ “has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” *Revelation 21:4* says that one day there will be “*no more death.*”

In this lesson Solomon evaluates our lives on earth in light of the inevitable fact that all men must die. It is the one thing we do not want to face. Yet it is that which the wisest of the ancient monarchs brings before us to teach us how to live.

What does death teach us? In this lesson we will learn at least four facts about this one event we call death.

1A. DEATH **ESTABLISHES** THE FACT OF GOD’S CONTROL AND OUR ACCOUNTABILITY TO HIM - 1-3

1B. Death **REMINDS** the believer of his dependence upon God - 1

This is one marvelous thing we cannot change (see *Job 1:20-22; John 10:27-29*). It is a positive fact that we are in His hands (*Deut. 33:3, 27*). This is wonderful security (*Isa. 62:3*). To a Christian, this is a tremendous truth.

2B. Death **REINFORCES** the truth that God is no respecter of persons - 2

*Romans 2:11* tells us that “*there is no partiality with God.*” The same events happen to the righteous and the wicked.

3B. Death **REVEALS** that we cannot escape God’s judgment for our sin - 3

We may want to, but we can’t. *Jeremiah 17:9* tells us “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (see *Gen. 6:5*). Facing death squarely can really cause us to clean up our act!

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1A. DEATH ESTABLISHES THE FACT OF GOD'S CONTROL AND OUR ACCOUNTABILITY TO HIM - 1-3

2A. DEATH EXPLAINS THE MEANING OF HOPE - 4-6

How does death explain the meaning of hope? Hope is still alive because we are alive; but when death comes, hope is gone. What we have done, we have done, nothing more can be added.

1B. Death ELIMINATES any advantage you may think you have

In *Ecclesiastes 4:1-3* we saw that it is better to be dead in terms of oppression; but here we learn that it is better to be alive in terms of hope.

Whatever hope we are going to have we have to have while we are alive. A lion may seem better off than a dog - but it isn't if it is dead!

2B. Death EXTINGUISHES any opportunity we now have - 5-6

What we do we do now (see *Ecc. 12:7*). We do not know if tomorrow will be here. It will be here only if the Lord wills it to be here. What we can do now, we must do now.

3A. DEATH ENCOURAGES US TO ENJOY WHAT GOD GIVES TO US - 7-10

1B. It is REALIZED in our response to daily activities - 7

It will be a response of **contentment**. If I have settled my relationship with God, there will be contentment and joy even in daily activities. Why be miserable?

2B. It is REFLECTED in our appearance - 8

Their "*garments*" were "*white*," which was a sign of festivity and celebration (see *Isa. 61:1-3*). It is an appearance of **celebration**.

Why? Because we know who God is and what He is doing in the world. It is the devil's ploy to get us to focus on our hassles and tough circumstances rather than on the joy of the Lord.

3B. It is REVEALED in our marriage - 9

*Proverbs 5:18* admonishes, "*Rejoice with the wife of your youth.*" It is a marriage of **companionship**.

It isn't going to last long: when death comes, it is all over. Marriage is a wonderful, temporal institution to make our lives more joyful. It should not be a hassle - it should be fun!

"ONE EVENT FOR ALL"  
Message No. 14 - Ecclesiastes 9:1-12

- 4B. It is **RECOGNIZED** in how we work - 10  
Whatever we do, we should do with our "**might**" (see *Col. 3:23-25*). It is work oriented to a **career**, because there is no work in the grave where we are going.

Financial assets are no substitute for work.

If God has given us something to do, we should continue doing it until He calls us home. We should never give up too early.

- 1A. *DEATH ESTABLISHES THE FACT OF GOD'S CONTROL AND OUR ACCOUNTABILITY TO HIM - 1-3*
- 2A. *DEATH EXPLAINS THE MEANING OF HOPE - 4-6*
- 3A. *DEATH ENCOURAGES US TO ENJOY WHAT GOD GIVES TO US - 7-10*
- 4A. **DEATH ELIMINATES ANY PRIDE OR SELF-CONFIDENCE - 11-12**

- 1B. This is true because our abilities cannot affect the outcome - 11  
Your abilities don't mean a thing the day we die.

- 2B. This is true because we do not know when death will happen - 12  
Death is rarely ever expected. God made it that way so we would walk in humility, with a sensitivity to our accountability to Him. We need to ask, "**Lord, what would you have me do?**" Because tomorrow may be our last day on earth.

# ***ECCLESIASTES***

*Message No. 15*

**“WISDOM IS BETTER”**

***Ecclesiastes 9:13-10:10***

In our previous lesson we learned in *Ecclesiastes 9:11-12* that human ability cannot guarantee success. In fact, more frequently than not those who trust most in their own abilities are the very people who are caught unsuspectingly and suddenly by their own devices.

In today's passage, we are told that:

**9:16** - Wisdom is better than strength

**9:18** - Wisdom is better than weapons of war

**10:10** - Wisdom brings success

It is obviously much better to have wisdom from God than to trust in one's own abilities and ingenuity. We need to see that wisdom is better in just two simple ways.

1A. WE SEE IT IN THE **PARABLE** OF A BESIEGED CITY - 9:13-19

1B. Notice the **IMPACT** of such wisdom on Solomon - 13  
*“it seemed great to me.”*

This is a phrase he has not used before. The NASB translates it, *“It impressed me,”* while the NIV renders it, *“[It] greatly impressed me.”* Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived said that wisdom under the sun impressed him.

2B. Notice the **INFLUENCE** of one man's wisdom - 14-15  
He *“delivered the city.”*

You may wonder what influence you can have as one person in the world. This should show us what kind of influence we can really have. When you have God's wisdom, you are a powerful person before God.

Though the person in the parable was insignificant in the eyes of the world, he was very significant in God's sight. It isn't one's past, one's background, one's bank account - it is whether or not one has the wisdom of God.

3B. Notice the **INDIFFERENCE** of people  
The text says *“yet no one remembered that same poor man.”* The world is not going to be highly impressed with our influence.

" WISDOM IS BETTER"  
Message No. 15 - Ecclesiastes 9:13-10:10

The world by one sinner, one person who is against you, can undo much good that we have done. We will not necessarily achieve world acclaim. But we should seek God's wisdom just the same. God will not forget (**Heb. 6:10**).

4B. Notice the **INSIGHTS** gained from this parable - 16-18

1C. The **Superiority** of wisdom - 16

Proverbs is filled with the wisdom of God. Wisdom is always what God wants us to have, even though it is many times in direct conflict with what the world would want us to do.

2C. The **Failure** to hear what wisdom has to say

Not many people are listening. Wisdom is spoken quietly in contrast to the shouts of the king. The world is not listening.

3C. The **Damage** one sinner can do toward the wisdom of God - 18

The general world will not remember what the wise man has accomplished, and one "***rotten apple***" can destroy the whole barrel. Folly is so dangerous because it destroys the work of God's wisdom.

2A. WE SEE IT IN THE **PROVERBS** ABOUT FOLLY - 10:1-10

Foolishness and folly do not refer to telling jokes or being humorous. Folly in the Bible deals with wickedness and the opposite of God's wisdom.

It involves sin. It literally means "***thick-headed***." The Hebrew word "***sekel***", used in Ecclesiastes, denotes any deviation of the mind from what is true, good, right and wise. And it is condemned in no uncertain terms in Scripture.

Here, four things are said about folly:

1B. It **DAMAGES** your reputation - 10:1-3

A "***fly in the ointment***" stinks! A little folly is not okay. It is like putrefying ointment, and it is a good way to destroy a Christian's witness. As to the **presence** of folly, it is already in our hearts (**v. 2**). As to the **practice** of folly, it is easily recognized and produces immediate effects on our testimony (**v.3**).

**Proverbs 12:16** tells us, "A fool's wrath is known at once, but a prudent man covers shame." In **Proverbs 13:16** we read, "Every prudent man acts with knowledge, but a fool lays open his folly." And in **Proverbs 29:11** we learn, "A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back."

" WISDOM IS BETTER"  
Message No. 15 - Ecclesiastes 9:13-10:10

2B. It **DEMANDS** your patience - 10:4-7

It demands your patience when the **attitude** of the ruler is set against you (v. 4). When a superior has folly in his life, don't get mad and run off! Any fool can start a quarrel! But God tells us to hold our post because thinking it through will pacify very great offenses (see *Prov. 20:2-3; 26:4, 27:3*).

And it demands your patience when the **actions** of the ruler do not make good sense (vv. 5-7). This is *the "error proceeding from the ruler."* But we need to meet foolish actions with God's wisdom and prudence (*Prov. 12:16; 26:1, 8*).

3B. It **DESERVES** God's judgment - 10:8-9

Don't think you can get away with a little foolishness in your life! *Proverbs 26:10* tells us, "The Great God who formed all things gives the fool his hire and the transgressor his wages."

1C. We see a **Principle** of judgment - 8

This is offered through two illustrations: "*He who digs a pit*" so that somebody will fall into it (see *Prov. 28:10*); and "*whoever breaks through a wall*" in disregard for another's private property (see *Amos 2:4-8, 13-16; 3:2-8*). In both cases God will render what is appropriate.

2C. We see a **Possibility** of consequences - 9

The idea is that the possibility of consequences is always there whether we are righteous or wicked. Even good people get hurt; therefore how much more will the fool be punished!

4B. It **DULLS** the ax - 10:10

This means a person cannot achieve objectives or accomplish success. Sharpening the ax is getting wisdom, while folly dulls the edge. "*Wisdom brings success.*" *Proverbs 12:15* tell us, "The way of a fool (dull ax) is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel (sharpens the ax) is wise."

*1 Corinthians 1:18* says that the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but for us who are being saved it is the wisdom of God (see *1:18-2:8*). God demonstrated wisdom to us when Christ died on the cross.

Through our "*foolishness*" of preaching the gospel, God can draw men to Himself.

# **ECCLESIASTES**

Message No. 16

## **“THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A FOOL”**

*Ecclesiastes 10:11-20*

Chapter 10 began with a series of proverbs about fools and folly. We learned that folly damages our reputation, demands our patience, deserves God’s judgment, and dulls the ax. There’s plenty in the book of Proverbs about that topic, in verses like *1:7, 22, 32; 3:35; 10: 18, 21, 11:29; 12:15; 13:19; 14:9*.

Now, in today’s lesson we learn more about the fool himself, and about three major issues.

1A. A FOOL IS NOT **CONTROLLED** IN WHAT HE SAYS - 11-15

1B. He is not controlled in the **NATURE** of his words - 11-13

(see *Ps. 52:14*). The character of one’s talk is the acid test of wisdom. The fool fails that test in at least three ways.

1C. He **Reacts** like a snake - 11

He reacts to people just like a snake. If you “*charm*” him, he’s okay. If you don’t, he will “bite” you. In other words, he is **critical** and cares little about the damage he will do (see *Ps. 58:3-5; 64:24; Prov. 12:18; James 3:8-10*).

*Proverbs 18:21* tells us, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.” We need to be more conscious of what we say, and how we say it.

2C. He **Responds** without kindness - 12

Here he is **unkind**. If we would really talk to each other with the sweetness of Jesus, many things would change - including our ability to affect people for Jesus Christ (see *Ps. 45:1-2; 64; Luke 4:22, Eph. 4:29-32; Col. 4:6*).

Never are we told to tear people down - only to edify them or build them up.

*Proverbs 22:11* says, “He who loves purity of heart and has grace on his lips, the king will be his friend.” Grace in our speech means that we give people verbally what they don’t deserve, because of the Lord’s love in our hearts.

## "THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A FOOL"

Message No. 16 - Ecclesiastes 10:11-20

In **Proverbs 15:23** we learn, "A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is!" And in **Proverbs 25:11** we read, "A *word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.*"

3C. He **Raves** like a madman - 13

This shows him as **angry**. (see **James 3:5-8**). We learn from **Proverbs 14:16** that "*a fool rages and is self-confident*". **Proverbs 15:2** tells us "the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness." When there is a broken spirit in our hearts, however, we are able to speak with the kindness and forgiveness of Christ.

2B. He is not controlled in the **NUMBER** of his words - 14-15

The "*also*" in **v. 14** indicates there is an additional way in which he shows he is a fool (compare **5:2-3**).

1C. His words **Reveal** nothing - 14

This shows that he is **arrogant**. **Proverbs 10:19** warns, "*In the multitude of words sin is not lacking.*" The more you talk, the greater the chance you will sin in what you say. Do not try to play God! The more you try to convince someone to think the way you are thinking, the greater the chance you will say nothing.

2C. His words **Result** in weariness and a lack of direction - 15

The more you talk, the less we know! This development shows that the fool is **incompetent**. Basically, the fool does not know enough to come in out of the rain!

2A. A FOOL IS NOT **CONCERNED** ABOUT PRIORITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES - 16-19

1B. It is seen in his **ACTIVITIES** - 16-17

1C. His activities are characterized by **Immaturity** - 16

He is **immature**, childish. Today, we have lost the language of duty and altruism, it has been replaced by the language of personal rights and materialism.

2C. His activities are characterized by **Indulgence** - 17

As shown by his "*drunkenness*." He is indulgent, excessive. (**Prov. 31:4-5**).

## "THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A FOOL"

Message No. 16 - Ecclesiastes 10:11-20

2B. It is seen in his **APATHY** - 18

He is generally **apathetic**. (see *Eccles. 4:5; Prov. 24:30; 26:13-16*). *Proverbs 23:21* reveals, "For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags."

3B. It is seen in his **ATTITUDES** - 19

He is **materialistic**. (see *Phil. 3:17-21*). Luther once said of similar fools, "*Money must procure everything for them.*"

3A. A FOOL IS NOT **CAREFUL** ABOUT POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES FOR HIS THOUGHTS, WORDS, OR DEEDS - 20

A fool is careless (see *Matt. 12:34-37*). In *Proverbs 26:2* we find that "Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow, so a curse without cause shall not alight." It will just keep going, doing more and more damage.

And in *Proverbs 5:22-23* we read, "His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, and he is caught in the cords of his sin. He shall die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray."

What do we learn from all of this? In *Matthew 12:34*, we learn that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks," and that men will give an account for every idle word they speak.

We need to understand that God is very concerned with the words we speak. We must all learn to speak with the sweetness of Christ.

# **ECCLESIASTES**

Message No. 17

## **“WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW”**

*Ecclesiastes 11:1-10*

It may come as a surprise, but what we don't know acts as a great motivation in our lives. *1 Corinthians 2:11* tells us that “no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.”

*Deuteronomy 29:29* reveals, “The secret things belong to the LORD.” Someone has quipped, “*The little I know I owe to my ignorance.*”

When it comes to the things of God, we might agree that “*The person who knows everything has a lot to learn.*” Or we might even agree that “the only thing I know for sure is that I don't know anything for sure.”

In this chapter we find that:

In *verses 1-6*, faith is the key, because a life of faith is needed.

In *verses 7-10*, joy is the key, because a life of joy is desirable.

But what about these things we don't know? Can they hurt us, or help us?

Let's make six observations.

1A. IT MOTIVATES US TO **RELY** ON GOD FOR THE RESULTS AND REWARDS OF OUR LABOR - 1-2

1B. We see the **EXTENT** of such dependence - 1-2a

1C. In terms of **Faith**, there is risk involved

In the statement, “Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days,” we see *decision* (“cast”), *commitment* (“your bread”), *reward* (“you will find it”), and *patience* (“after many days”).

Interestingly, this was a common statement of faith and risk in ancient times.

It is not unique to the Bible. As believers, there are certain things we don't know and don't understand; we are “*forced*” to rely on Him. It may involve risk, but He will reward it as He sees fit, if not now, then when we see Him.

*"WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW"*  
*Message No. 17 - Ecclesiastes 11:1-10*

2C. In terms of **Enthusiasm**, the point is that we should be generous to as many as we can, and then some!

***Proverbs 19:17*** tells us, "He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, and He will pay back what he has given" (also see ***Luke 14:12-14; 16:9***)

The Bible teaches that we should be generous to as many as we can, regardless of what tomorrow may bring.

It is God's responsibility to take care of tomorrow, and to repay. Don't worry about what you won't have after you are generous!

In light of what we don't know, we should rely on God, with faith and enthusiasm in our lives.

2B. We see the **EXPLANATION** behind such dependence - 2b  
We find that "You do not know what evil (calamity) will be on the earth."

We can't run away from what God has determined for us, and we don't need to worry about tomorrow.

We can leave that with the One who has promised to take care of all our needs.

2A. IT MOTIVATES US TO **RESIST** THE TENDENCY TO DO NOTHING  
BECAUSE OF WHAT WE FEAR MAY HAPPEN - 3-4

1B. We cannot **CONTROL** some things - 3  
We do not know what is going to happen; and even if we did, we could not change it.

But too many people, because of their fear of what they cannot control, will do nothing. That, my friends, is folly.

2B. We cannot **CONCERN** ourselves with what we think may happen  
Just because we see some ominous signs does not mean we know what is going to happen.

In spite of all of our knowledge, there are many major issues of life that keep us in the dark.

"WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW"  
Message No. 17 - Ecclesiastes 11:1-10

1A. IT MOTIVATES US TO RELY ON GOD FOR THE RESULTS AND REWARDS OF OUR LABOR

2A. IT MOTIVATES US TO RESIST THE TENDENCY TO DO NOTHING BECAUSE OF WHAT WE FEAR MAY HAPPEN

3A. IT MOTIVATES US TO **RESPOND** TO THE OPPORTUNITIES GOD GIVES  
US - 5-6

Today is our day of opportunity, and what we don't know can motivate us to avoid that terrible word "*procrastination*." Why?

1B. Because we don't know how God works - 5

Too often we think we know how God works, when in fact we don't (*Ps. 139:13-16, Isa. 44:24-25*). He does so many things every day that are surprising!

We simply do not know how He will choose to work His will. We know He is in control of everything, but we cannot assume we know exactly how He is going to work.

2B. Because we don't know what God may prosper - 6

We do not know which endeavor He will choose to bless.

*Psalm 104:23* says, "Man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening."

We should not "*let down*" our hands in discouragement. We do not know what He will prosper and what He won't.

God may choose to prosper something in your life that you never even dreamed He would bless!

4A. IT MOTIVATES US TO REMEMBER THAT MANY DAYS WILL BE  
DIFFICULT - 7-8).

Now we switch to the key of joy in our lives. Because we face a life that includes many difficult days, a life of joy is desirable, and it reminds us to do two things.

1B. It reminds us to **ENJOY** the time we do have - 7-8a

God has a plan and a purpose for us, and it benefits us to rejoice in that.

2B. It reminds us to **EVALUATE** the future carefully - 8b

"All that is coming is vanity. Days of darkness will be many; our real identity, therefore, cannot be wrapped up in what is ultimately "vanity."

"WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW"  
Message No. 17 - Ecclesiastes 11:1-10

5A. IT MOTIVATES US TO **REJOICE** WHILE WE CAN BUT WITH A SENSE OF ACCOUNTABILITY TO GOD - 9

This is the underlying theme of Ecclesiastes. The great tragedy is that we are trying to enjoy life without a sense of accountability to God.

But He is going to hold us accountable.

Yes, He wants us to rejoice. But as Walter Kaiser warns, "*Verse 9* is no *carte blanche* or open season in which anything goes."

The fear of the Lord is what checks our lives and keeps us in line. Without it we will be robbed of the deep joy and zest God wants us to have in our lives.

6A. IT MOTIVATES US TO **REMOVE** ANYTHING IN OUR LIVES THAT WOULD HINDER OUR JOY AND WALK WITH THE LORD - 10

He names two things in particular:

1B. That includes emotional **DISAPPOINTMENTS**

You are to remove "*sorrow from your heart*" - bitterness, anger, resentment are all meaningless. They are temporary and transitory.

There is so much we don't know; we don't know why God allows things that might cause us emotional disappointment. But why go on living with anything but the joy of the Lord? We need to get it out of our lives.

2B. That includes moral **DEFILEMENT**

You are to remove "*evil from your flesh*." We must be free from those injuries to the inner man that so quickly cripple the joy of life.

The subtle insinuation of the adversary that has led to a momentary indulgence in moral defilement leaves believers with no joy.

I may not know what God is going to do tomorrow, but today I am going to live for the Lord.

# **ECCLESIASTES**

*Message No. 18*

## **“WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED”**

*Ecclesiastes 12:1-14*

When we look back over the Book of Ecclesiastes, we see that we have learned at least four important things.

### 1A. TO **REMEMBER** OUR **RELATIONSHIP** TO GOD - 1-8

It will help us to understand the meaning of “*remember*.”

The Hebrew word used here is used 235 times in the Old Testament. In *Genesis 30:22*, “God remembered Rachael . . . and opened her womb.” In *Exodus 2:24* we read, “So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.”

In *1 Samuel 1:19*, the Lord “*remembered*” Hannah concerning the birth of Samuel. *Jonah 2:7* records, “When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD: and my prayer went up to You.”

And in *Deuteronomy 8:18* it is commanded. “And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth.”

This text shows us there are four reasons we should remember our relationship to God.

#### 1B. Because He is our Creator - 1a

There is no more fundamental reason that we should remember God than the fact that He has made us. We should never lose sight of that. We owe Him our best; He made us to glorify Him (see *Ps. 95:6-7; 100:1-5; Rev. 4:11*).

We owe Him everything! *Nehemiah 4:14* says, “Remember the Lord, great and awesome.” Our response to God should be that we relate everything we do to our personal relationship with Him.

#### 2B. Because difficult times will come - 1b-6

These will limit our ability to serve Him if we do not remember Him and our relationship with Him. When God is ignored or neglected, the capacity for joy will be lost in old age. *Psa. 147:10*

Remember your Creator now, so that joy will not be gone when you are old. Age is a depressing prospect apart from a vital relationship with the Lord.

"WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED"  
Message No. 18 - Ecclesiastes 12:1-14

- 3B. Because death will end our opportunities - 7  
Death is going to come; you can count on it (see *Gen. 2:7; 3:19; Job 34:14-15; Ps. 103:14*). No matter how good or excellent life may seem, it will come to an end.

The Psalmist acknowledged in *Psalms 104:9*, "You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust."

We cannot run away from it. We cannot escape death or our accountability to God. But we can use today to remember Him and live for Him!

- 4B. Because all earthly pursuits are meaningless apart from God - 8  
Literally, "*all is vanity*." This is repeated seven times ( *1:2, 14; 2:11, 17; 3:19; 11:8; 12:8*).

Concerning all those vanities he says, "*vanity of vanities*." All life has to offer us is empty, meaningless, worthless!

But when things are going well, we are quick to forget the Lord. We need to remember Him by putting Him first in our lives.

2A. TO **REALIZE** OUR **RELIANCE** UPON GOD AND HIS WISDOM - 9-12

- 1B. It is seen in the **INTENSITY** of his teaching - 9  
The word "*pondered*" shows careful evaluation.

"*Sought out*" shows he invested diligent study and research.

And "*set in order*" is a phrase that shows skillful presentation.  
(like the Book of Proverbs).

Though Solomon had everything life had to offer, he used all his energy to go after wisdom. He was dedicated to God's wisdom.

- 2B. It is seen in the **IMPACT** of his words - 10  
"*Acceptable words*" indicate words that are a delight or are pleasing. Words that are "*upright*" are words of truth.

Michael Eaton has said, "To be upright but unpleasant is to be a fool; to be pleasant but not upright is to be a charlatan." (See *Prov. 15:23, 26; 16:24*.)

"WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED"  
Message No. 18 - Ecclesiastes 12:1-14

3B. It is seen in the **IMPORTANCE** of his words - 11-12

1C. In terms of **Response**, "*like goads.*"

God's Word is to be like a goad that will get us going when we need to get moving for God.

2C. In terms of **Stability**, like "*nails.*"

This shows the stability it can give us. We need the Word of God to make us stable in life.

3C. In terms of **Authority**, they are given "*by one Shepherd.*"

We need to understand the Lord's authority in our lives.

4C. In terms of **Comparison** or priority, we are to be "*admonished*" by God's Word.

Other books are endless and wearisome; they cannot compare to God's wisdom. We need to let the Word of God admonish us.

We should study other books; but we should study the Word of God more than we study any other book in life. It is the most important book in our lives!

3A. TO **RECOGNIZE** OUR **RESPONSIBILITY** BEFORE GOD - 13-14

1B. It gives meaning to our lives - 13

"*This is the whole duty of man.*" The NASB translates it, "*This applies to every person.*"

Conduct that is pleasing to God must always flow out of worship and our knowledge of God. That is what gives meaning to life. Everything is different when I am committed to the Lord.

2B. It prepares you to meet God - 14

*Psalms 147:11* tells us, "*the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him.*"

Everyone will give an account to God. Only those who know Jesus Christ as personal Savior are prepared to meet Him. They are prepared to live life in light of the wisdom Solomon has given us in this book.