

# Ecclesiastes

## Introduction

- A. Title: Qoheleth: Hebrew; Ecclesiastes: Greek Septuagint=Preacher: one who gives a discourse before Qahal (assembly), one who calls, gathers people for instruction
- B. Purpose: Eccl. 12:9-14—Didactic: teaching—wisdom: fear God, follow God
- C. Genre: Poetic prose
- D. Message: Warn particularly young people not to walk through life on the path of human wisdom but by the revealed wisdom of God.

### ECCLESIASTES OUTLINE

Ecclesiastes by William D. Barrick

- I. From Experience, the Preacher Learned that Man is Powerless: A Disappointing Discovery (1:1-2:26)
  - A. The Content of the Ecclesiastes (1:1)
  - B. The Theme of the Ecclesiastes (1:2)
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  - D. Solomon's Assessment of the Pursuit of Wisdom (1:12-18)
  - E. Solomon's Assessment of the Pursuit of Pleasure (2:1-11)
  - F. Solomon's Assessment of Life Under the Sun (2:12-17)
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  - A. Imperatives for Wise Living (9:1-18)
  - B. Final Reflection about Folly (10:1-20)
  - C. Sowing in the Morning, Sowing in the Evening (11:1-10)
  - D. Life Under a Setting Sun (12:1-14)

## Survey of Ecclesiastes

- I. **From Experience, the Preacher Learned that Man is Powerless: A Disappointing Discovery 1:1-2:26**
  - A. **Content and author (1:1)**
    1. "Words of the Preacher"
    2. Author: "the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem"
  - B. **Theme: "vanity of vanities, all is vanity" (1:2)—futile attempt to be satisfied apart from God, the effects of the curse of sin**
  - C. **Solomon's observation of life under the sun (1:3-11)**
    1. **A Question: "What advantage does man have in all his works which he does under the sun" (1:3)**
    2. **Cycles of existence (1:4-7)**
      - a. human life—"a generation goes and a generation comes"
      - b. course of the sun—rises, sets, rises
      - c. pattern of wind
      - d. rivers and hydrology
    3. **Conclusion (1:8-11)**
      - a. "All things are wearisome".
      - b. "Man is not able to tell it".
      - c. "Eye is not satisfied with seeing"
      - d. "Nor is ear filled with
      - e. "Nothing new under the sun"
        - 1.) "That which has been is that which will be"
        - 2.) "That which has been done is that which will be done"
        - 3.) "Is there anything ... see this it is new"
        - 4.) "It has existed for ages which were before us"
        - 5.) Don't learn from history
  - D. **Solomon's Assessment of the Pursuit of Wisdom (1:12-18)**

**1:12-2:23 deals with Solomon's personal testimony, his confession to his inability to resolve life's most important issues without God.**

- 1. Solomon's appointment: "I, the Preacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem". (1:12)**
- 2. Solomon's ambition: "I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom concerning all that has been done under heaven". (1:13)**
  - a. "It was a grievous task God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with".
  - b. "I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun and behold all is vanity, striving after wind". (1:14)
  - c. Proverb: "What is crooked cannot be straightened, what is lacking cannot be counted". (1:15)
- 3. Solomon's achievement: "I have magnified and increased in wisdom more than all who were over Jerusalem" (1:16)**
- 4. Solomon's assessment: "I set my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly" (1:17)**
  - a. Realization: This was striving after wind (1:17)
  - b. Reason: (1:18)
    - 1.) "In much wisdom is much grief"
    - 2.) "Increasing knowledge increasing pain"

#### **E. Solomon's assessment of the Pursuit of Pleasure (2:1-11)**

- 1. Pleasure in Play/Entertainment (2:1-3)**
  - a. "Laughter: it is madness, Pleasure: what does it accomplish" (2:2)
  - b. "stimulate my body with wine" (2:3)
  - c. "my mind guiding me with wisdom, how to take a hold of folly" (2:3)
- 2. Property & Parks/Edifices (2:4-6)**
  - a. Houses and vineyards
  - b. Gardens and Parks with trees, Ponds with water
- 3. Possessions/Earnings (2:7-8)**
  - a. Slaves
  - b. Flocks and herds
  - c. Silver and gold and treasures
  - d. Singers
  - e. Concubines
- 4. Pondering/Evaluation (2:9-11)**
  - a. Position (9) "Then I became great and increased"
  - b. Pleasure (10) "I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure"
  - c. Profit (11) "all my activities...labor...all was vanity"

#### **F. Solomon's Assessment of Life under the Sun (2:12-17)**

- 1. Solomon "turned to consider wisdom, madness, and folly" (2:12a)**
- 2. Can anyone after Solomon come up with a better assessment? (2:12b)**
- 3. "Wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness" (2:13-17)**
  - a. Reasoning

- 1.) The wise man is better off than a fool, yet both will die (14)
- 2.) Solomon will die as a fool will die (15a)
- 3.) “Why... be extremely wise?” “This too is vanity” (15b)
- b. Remembrance (16)
  - 1.) “There is no lasting remembrance of the wise man as a fool”—“all will be forgotten”
  - 2.) “The wise man and the fool alike will die”
- c. Result: “I hated life” (17a)
- d. Rationale
  - 1.) “For the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me.” (17b)
  - 2.) “Because everything is futility and striving after wind” (17c)

## **G. Solomon’s Assessment of Labor under the Sun (2:18-23)**

### **1. Solomon’s Attitude toward his Labor under the Sun. (18-19)**

- a. His Response: “I hated all the fruit of my labor which I labored under the sun” (18a)
- b. His Reasoning: (18b-19)
  - 1.) “I must leave it to the man who will come after me.” (2:18b)
  - 2.) “Who know whether he will be a wise man or a fool?” (2:19a)
  - 3.) “Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I labored by acting wisely under the sun.” (19b)
- c. The Result: “This too is vanity” (19c)

### **2. Solomon’s Action toward all his labor under the sun (20-21)**

- a. His Response: “I completely despaired of all of the fruit of my labor for which I labored under the sun.” (20)
- b. His Reasoning: “When there is a man who has labored with wisdom, knowledge, and skill, then he gives his legacy to the one who has not labored with them.” (21a-b)
- c. The Result: (21c)
  - 1.) “This too is vanity”
  - 2.) “A great evil” (calamity or ruin)

### **3. Solomon’s accounting of all his labor under the sun (22-23)**

- a. His response: “What does a man get in all his labor and in his striving with which he labors under the sun?” (22)
- b. His reasoning: (23a, b)
  - 1.) “Because all his days his task is painful and grievous”
  - 2.) “Even at night his mind does not rest”
- c. The Result: “This too is vanity” (23c)

## **H. Solomon’s conclusion of his search for the meaning of life under the sun (2:24-26)**

### **1. His Response: (24)**

- a. “There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good.”
- b. “This also I have seen that is from the hand of God.”

## 2. His Reasoning: (25-26b)

- a. "For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?" (2:25)
- b. "For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom, and knowledge, and joy" (2:26a)
- c. 'While to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give it to one who is good in God's sight.'" (2:26b)

## 3. The Result: (26c)

- a. "This too is vanity"
- b. "And striving after striving after wind."

# II. From Observation the Preacher learned that God has a Design for all things (3:1-5:20)

## A. The Hours, Days, and Years of our Lives (3:1-22)

### 1. The Poem's Theme: Time for every event (3:1)

- a. For everything
  - b. an appointed time
  - b' a time
- a'. for every event

### 2. The Poem on Time

vs. 2 + giving birth - dying  
+ planting - uprooting

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vs. 3 -killing + healing  
-tearing down + building up

vs. 4 -weeping + laughing  
-mourning + dancing

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vs. 5 + throwing stones -gathering stones  
+ embracing -refraining from embracing

vs. 6 + searching -giving up searching  
+ keeping -throwing away

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vs. 7 -tearing apart +sowing together  
-being silent +speaking

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vs. 8 +loving -hating  
-making war +making peace

### 3. The Poem's message (3:9-22)

- a. God's sovereignty/providence (9-11)
  - 1.) Concerning man's toil (9)
  - 2.) Concerning circumstances (10)
  - 3.) Concerning man's desire for eternity (11a)
  - 4.) Concerning man's knowledge of God's works (11b)

- b. Man's purpose (12-15)
  - 1.) "to rejoice" (12a)
  - 2.) "to do good" (12)
  - 3.) "to eat and drink and see good in all his labor" (13)
  - 4.) "to fear God" (14-15)
    - a.) "Everything He does remains forever"
    - b.) "There is nothing to add to it"
    - c.) "There is nothing to take from it"
    - d.) God is sovereign
- c. Justice (16-22)
  - 1.) Man's justice (16)
    - a.) "In the place of justice is wickedness"
    - b.) "In the place of righteousness is wickedness"
  - 2.) God's justice (17-21)
    - a.) "God will judge the righteous man" (17a)
    - b.) "God will judge the wicked man" (17b)
    - c.) "God has tested man" (18-21)
      - (1.) "The fate of men and beasts is the same: they die" (19)
      - (2.) "No advantage of man over beast, for all is vanity" (19)
      - (3.) "By observation no one knows if man's breathe ascends upward and the beasts descend downward" (21)
  - d. Conclusion: "Man should be happy in his activities" (22)
    - 1.) "For this is his lot"
    - 2.) "For who will bring him to see what will occur after him"

## **B. Two by Two (4:1-16)**

### **1. By Observation Solomon Saw the Existence of Unrelieved Oppression (4:1-3) No Comforter**

- a. The Condition: "acts of oppression" (1)
  - 1.) Sorrow: "And behold (I saw) the tears of the oppressed"
  - 2.) No Solace: "and they had no one to comfort them"
  - 3.) No Support: "and on the side of their oppressors was power"
  - 4.) No Solace: "but they had no one to comfort them"
- b. The Congratulations: "I congratulated the dead who were already dead" (2)
- c. The Conclusion: "But better off than both of them is the one who has never existed" (3)

Application: We have the Triune God and other believers to comfort us.

### **2. By Observation Solomon Saw: Unsatisfied jealousy (4:4-6) No rest**

- a. Competition/Rivalry (4)
- b. Laziness (5) "the fool folds his hands and consumes his own flesh"
- c. Balance/Contentment (6a) "1 hand full of rest is better than"
- d. Workaholic (6b) "two fists full of labor"

Application: We should work with proper motivation—glorify God, keeping a balance of work and rest so as not to become lazy or workaholics.

### **3. By Observation Solomon Saw Unmitigated Loneliness (4:7-12) No Companion**

#### a. Absence of an heir (7-8)

- 1.) The Conclusion: “vanity” (7)
- 2.) The Condition: “man without a dependent” (8)
  - a.) “man without a dependent having neither son nor brother”
  - b.) “yet there was no end to all his labor”
  - c.) “his eyes are not satisfied with riches”
- 3.) The Question: “and for whom am I laboring and depriving myself of pleasure” (8)
- 4.) The Conclusion: “this too is vanity and a grievous task.” (8)

Application: We should not isolate ourselves, driving family and people away in order to gain material riches.

#### b. Absence of a companion (9-12)

- 1.) Labor: “two have a better return on their labor than one.” (9)
- 2.) Assistance: “if either of them fall the one will lift up his companion, woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.” (10)
- 3.) Warmth: “if two lay down together they may keep warm, but how can one be warm (alone)?” (11)
- 4.) Defense: “if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three (strands) is not quickly torn apart.” (12)

Application: We should seek companions in life to mutually help each other.

### **4. By Observation Solomon Saw the Uncertainty of Political Power and Popularity (4:13-16) No Certainty**

- a. “Poor yet wise lad better than old and foolish king who no longer knows how to receive instruction” (13-14)
- b. Instability: “people throng to the side of a second lad who replaces him.” (15)
- c. People before and later will not be happy with the second lad. (16a, b)
- d. Conclusion: “Vanity and striving Wind” (16c)

Application: We should recognize political power and popularity is uncertain; there will be the rise and fall of many leaders

## **C. Beyond the Sun (5:1-20)**

### **1. Approaching the Presence of God (5:1-3)**

- a. Prepare for Public Worship: Requirement: “We must guard our steps.” (1a)
- b. Proceed to listen in Public Worship (1b)
  - 1.) Requirements:
    - a.) “Draw near to listen”
    - b.) “Rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools”
  - 2.) Reason: “for they do not know they are doing evil”

- c. Prevent hastiness in Public Worship (2)
  - 1.) Requirements
    - a.) "Do not be hasty in word"
    - b.) Do not be "impulsive in thought"
  - 2.) Reason: God's Position—"He is in heaven and you are on earth"
- d. Prohibit our words in Public Worship (2d,3)
  - 1.) Requirement: "Therefore, let your words be few" (2d)
  - 2.) Reasons
    - a.) "For the dream must come through much effort"
    - b.) "And the voice of a fool through many words"

## **2. Apprehending our promises to God (5:4-7)**

- a. Fulfilling to God—"When you make a vow to God" (4-5)
  - 1.) Requirements:
    - a.) "Do not be late in paying it" (4b)
    - b.) "Pay what you vow." (4d)
  - 2.) Reasons:
    - a.) "He takes no pleasure in fools" (4c)
    - b.) "It is better that you should not vow than vow and not pay" (5)
- b. Failing speech before God (6)
  - 1.) Requirements
    - a.) "Do not let your speech cause you to sin"
    - b.) "Do not say to the messenger it is a mistake"
  - 2.) Reasons
    - a.) "Why should God be angry with your voice"
    - b.) "And (why should God) destroy the work of your hands"
- c. Fearing our God (7)
  - 1.) Forsake dreams and words
  - 2.) "Fear God"

## **3. Accepting the role of rulers (5:8-9)**

- a. Requirement: do not be shocked at the sight (8c)
  - 1.) "If you see oppression of the poor" (8a)
  - 2.) And (if you see) denial of justice and righteousness in the province (8b)
- b. Reasons (8d-9)
  - 1.) "For one official watches over another official and there are higher officials over them" (8d)
  - 2.) After all a king who cultivates the field is an advantage to the land. (9)

## **4. Accounting of the pursuit of wealth (5:10-17)**

- a. Wealth will not bring satisfaction (10)
  - 1.) "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money"
  - 2.) "Nor he who loves abundance with its income"
  - 3.) "This too is vanity"



- b. Increase in wealth brings increase in dependents to consume them, so “what advantage is it to their owners except to look on?” (11)
- c. Wealth does not bring peace (12)
  - 1.) “The sleep of a working man is pleasant, whether he eats little or much
  - 2.) “But the full stomach of the rich man does not allow him to sleep”
- d. Hoarding is a grievous evil which hurts the owner (13)
- e. Wealth can be lost causing a lack provision for the family (14)
- f. Wealth cannot be taken with a person at death (15-16a)
  - 1.) “As he had come naked from his mother’s womb, so will he return as he came” (15a)
  - 2.) “He will take nothing from the fruit of his labor that he can carry in his hand” (15b)
  - 3.) “Grievous evil, exactly as a man is born, thus he will die” (16a)
- g. Wealth has no real advantage (16b-17)
  - 1.) “So, what is the advantage to him who toils for the wind” 16b)
  - 2.) Throughout his life he also eats in darkness with (17)
    - a.) “great vexation”
    - b.) “sickness”
    - c.) “anger”

## **5. Assessing life beyond the Sun (5:18-20)**

- a. Observation of what is “good and fitting: to eat, drink, and enjoy oneself in all one’s labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life” (18a)
- b. Reasons (18b)
  - 1.) God’s gift of life
  - 2.) God’s reward in life: eat, drink, enjoy oneself
- c. God’s gift (19)
  - 1.) “riches and wealth”
  - 2.) “empowerment”
    - a.) “to eat from them”
    - b.) “receive his reward”
    - c.) “rejoice in his labor
- d. Result: “he will not consider often the years of his life” (20a)
- e. Reason: “because God keeps him occupied with the gladness of his heart” (20b)

### Applications

We should realize there will be corruption in government, which is better than anarchy, because it is established by God.

We should realize satisfaction is not found in material possessions, therefore do not love material wealth but use material things wisely, not hoarding or being wasteful, you cannot take it with you.

We should enjoy life—it is a gift of God and appreciate all God provides materially.

We can be content with what we have when we realize with God, we have everything we need.

### **III. By Application, the Preacher Found the explanation for apparent inequities in Divine Providence (6:1-8:15)**

#### **A. Possessing everything, but enjoying nothing—Evaluation for man’s outward fortune (6:1-12)**

##### **1. Financial Blessings (1-2)**

- a. Condition: an evil under the sun—inability to enjoy the blessings of God (1-2c)
  - 1.) Observable: “which I have seen”
  - 2.) Common: “and it is prevalent among men”
  - 3.) Description:
    - a.) “a man to whom God has given riches, wealth, honor, so that his soul lacks nothing of all that he desires”
    - b.) “yet God has not empowered him to eat from them”
    - c.) Reason: “for a foreigner enjoys them”
- b. Conclusion (2d)
  - 1.) “This is a vanity”
  - 2.) “and a severe affliction”

##### **2. Family blessing and long life (2-5)**

- a. Condition—blessing (3a)
  - 1.) “man fathers 100 (children)”
  - 2.) “lives many years however many they may be”
- b. Contrast (3b)
  - 1.) “his soul is not satisfied with good things”
  - 2.) “he does not have a proper burial”
- c. Conclusion: “Better the miscarriage than he” (3c-5)
  - 1.) “for it comes in futility and goes into obscurity”
  - 2.) “and its name is covered on obscurity”
  - 3.) “it never sees the sun”
  - 4.) “it never knows (anything)”
  - 5.) “It is better off than he” lit. “more rest has this one than that one”

##### **3. Full Life Span (6)**

- a. Condition: “Even if the (other) man lives a thousand years twice”
- b. Contrast: “and does not enjoy good things”
- c. Conclusion: “do not all go to one place”

##### **4. Fleeting of satisfaction and rest (7-9)**

- a. Proverb 1
  - 1.) Condition: “all man’s labor is for his mouth” (7a)
  - 2.) Contrast: “yet the appetite is not satisfied” (7b)
- b. Proverb 2
  - 1.) Questions (8) rhetorical—demand negative answer

- a.) "For what advantage does the man over the fool?"
- b.) "What (advantage) does the poor man have, knowing (how) to walk before the living?"

c. Proverb 3

- 1.) Conclusion (9) (Eng. proverb-better 1 bird in hand than 2 in the bush)
  - a.) "What the eyes sees is better than what the soul desires"
  - b.) "This too is futility and a striving after wind."

**5. Forgone Conclusion: a Sovereign Lord (6:10-12)**

a. Condition (10)

- 1.) "Whatever exists has already been named" (10a)
- 2.) "and it is known what man is" (10b)

b. Conclusion (10-12)

- 1.) "for he cannot dispute with him who is stronger" (10c)
- 2.) "for there are many words which increase futility" (11a)
- 3.) "What is the advantage to man" (11b)
- 4.) "For who knows what is good for a man during his lifetime, the few years of his life" (12a)
- 5.) "He will spend them like a shadow" (12b)
- 6.) "for who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun" (12c)

**B. Life is Complicated: Live with care (7:1-29)**

**1. A Person's Present condition in Light of eternity (1:1-14)**

a. We must adopt a sensitivity toward death. (7:1-4)

- 1.) "A good name (reputation) is better than a good ointment" (1a)
- 2.) "The day of ones death is better than the day of one's birth" (1b)
- 3.) "It is better to go to a house of mourning (funeral) than to a house of feasting (party)" (2) Reasons

- a.) "Because that is the end of every man"
- b.) "and the living take it to heart."

4.) "Sorrow is better than laughter" (3)

Reason: "For when the face may be sad the heart may be happy"

5.) "The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning while the heart of the fool is in the house of pleasure" (4)

b. We must acknowledge the superiority of wisdom (7:5-12)

- 1.) The rebuke of a wise man is better than the song of a fool (7:5)
  - a.) The comparison of cracking of thorn bushes to laughter of fools: temporarily/transitory
  - b.) The conclusion of oppression of the wise: mad
  - c.) The corruptions of a bribe on the heart: injustice

2.) "The end of the matter is better than its beginning" (7:8a)

3.) "The patience of spirit is better than haughtiness of spirit" (7:8b)

4.) Being eager to be angry is foolish (7:9)

5.) Being nostalgic about the past is not wise (7:10)

- 6.) "Wisdom along with an inheritance is good." (7:11-12)
  - a.) They are advantageous to man
  - b.) They are protection to man
  - c.) "Wisdom preserves the lives of its possessors"
- c. We must accept the Sovereignty of God. (7:13-14)
  - 1.) Consider the work of God: "for who is able to straighten what He has bent" (7:13)
  - 2.) Consider your circumstances (7:14)
    - a.) "In the day of prosperity be happy"
    - b.) "In the day of adversity: Consider God has made the one as well as the other."
    - c. In the future: "so man may not discover anything that will be after him."

## **2. A Person's Character in Light of Revelation (7:15-29)**

- a. We must be balanced in our living (7:15-18)
  - 1.) Solomon's examination in his time of futility (15)
    - a.) "There is a righteous man who dies in his righteousness." (being righteous is no sure protection against hard times/early death)
    - b.) "There is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness."
  - 2.) Solomon's exhortation considering unexplained inequities (16-17)
    - a.) Solomon's exhortation regarding legalism (16)
      - (1.) "Do not be excessively righteous" (religiosity/superficiality)
      - (2.) "Do not be overly wise" (lit. think yourself wise, Prov. 3:7,8)
      - (3.) Question: "why should you ruin yourself?"
    - b.) Solomon's exhortation regarding lawlessness/libertinism (17)
      - (1.) "Do not be excessively wicked"
      - (2.) "Do not be a fool" (fool says there is no God, Ps. 14:1)
      - (3.) Question: "Why should you die before your time?"
  - 3.) Solomon's explanation of a balanced life (18)
    - a.) Requirement: "It is good that you grasp one thing" (righteousness) "and not let go of the other" (wisdom)
    - b.) Reason: "for the one who fears" (true piety in reverence and awe) "comes forth with both of them" (righteousness and wisdom)
- b. We must be balanced in our understanding (7:19-22)
  - 1.) Solomon's examination of wisdom and man (19-20)
    - a.) "Wisdom strengthens a wise man more than 10 rulers who are in a city" (19)
    - b.) "There is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins" 20)
  - 2.) Solomon's exhortation to man (7:21)
    - a.) "Do not take seriously all words which are spoken"

- b.) "Lest you hear your servant cursing you."
- 3.) Solomon's explanation to man—"For you also realized that you likewise have many times cursed others" (22)
- c. We must be balanced in recognizing the limitation of human wisdom (7:23-29)
  - 1.) Solomon's determination to be wise (7:23-24)
    - a.) "I tested all this with wisdom"
    - b.) "I will be wise"
    - c.) Conclusion—"it was far from me, what has been is remote and mysterious, who can discover it."
  - 2.) Solomon's direction of his mind to wisdom (25)
  - 3.) Solomon's discoveries (7:26-29)
    - a.) An immoral woman is more bitter than death (26)
      - (1.) "One pleasing to God will escape"
      - (2.) "the sinner will be captured"
    - b.) Finding wise and righteous people (27-28)
      - (1.) A wise and righteous man is rare
      - (2.) A wise and righteous woman is rarer (Prov. 31)
    - c.) Concerning man's condition (29)
      - (1.) "God made man upright"
      - (2.) Men "sought out many devices"

## **C. Wisdom has its limits (8:1-17)**

### **1. Wisdom in situations beyond a person's control (1-9)**

- a. Being a wise person is rare but does exist (1) Transition between chapters. 7,8
  - 1.) Reality: He knows how to interpret a matter
  - 2.) Result:
    - a.) Inner work: "wisdom illumines him"
    - b.) Outer expression: "wisdom causes a stern face to beam"
- b. Being wise in a king's throne room (2-6)
  - 1.) Requirements
    - a.) "Keep the command of the king" (2a)
    - b.) "Do not be in a hurry to leave him." (3a)
    - c.) "Do not join an evil matter" (3b)
    - d.) "Who will say to him what are you doing" (4b)
  - 2.) Reasons
    - a.) "Because of the oath before God" (2b)
    - b.) "For he will do as he pleases" (3c)
    - c.) Since the word of the king is authoritative (4a)
  - 3.) Result: "He who keeps a (royal) command experiences no trouble" (5a)
  - 4.) Reasons
    - a.) "For a wise heart know the proper time and procedure" (5b)
    - b.) "For there is a proper time and procedure for every delight" (6)
- c. Being wise through life's uncertainties (7-9)

- 1.) "Lack of knowing the future: If no one knows what will happen, who will tell him when it will happen?" (7)
- 2.) Examples of man's lack of control over life: (8)
  - a.) No one can "restrain the wind"
  - b.) No one can control "the day of death"
  - c.) No soldier can discharge himself in time of war
  - d.) Wicked deeds can never deliver evil doers
- 3.) Observation: men exercising authority over another to his hurt (9)

## **2. Being wise in God's throne room (10-17)**

- a. Observation concerning the wicked (10)
  - 1.) Prospect: "I have seen the wicked buried"
  - 2.) Practice: "Those who used to go in and out from the Holy Place"
  - 3.) Permanence: "They are (soon) forgotten in the city where they did thus"
  - 4.) Conclusion: "This too is futility"
- b. Observation: concerning delayed justice (11)
  - 1.) Reason: "Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly"
  - 2.) Reaction: "Therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil"
- c. Conviction: concerning the righteous and the wicked (12,13)
  - 1.) Conflict of injustice: "although a sinner does evil a 100 times and may lengthen his life" (12a)
  - 2.) Conviction of the righteous: "I know that it will be well for those who fear God, who fear Him openly" (12b)
  - 3.) Conditions of the wicked
    - a.) "But it will not be well for the evil man" (13a)
    - b.) "and he will not lengthen his days like a shadow" (13b)
  - 4.) Cause: "because he does not fear God" (13c)
- d. Futility of inequities (14)
  - 1.) "There are righteous men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked"
  - 2.) "There are evil men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous."
- e. Summation (15-17)
  - 1.) Commendation: Pleasure (15)
    - a.) "For there is nothing good for a man under the sun except to eat, drink, and be merry"
    - b.) "And this will stand by him in his toils throughout the days of his life which God has given him under the sun."

- 2.) Conclusion: “I saw every work of God”. (16,17)
  - a.) “When I gave my heart to” (16)
    - (1.) “Know wisdom”
    - (2.) “See the task which has been done on the earth”
  - b.) “That man cannot discover the work which has been done under the sun” (17)
    - (1.) “Even though a man should seek laboriously, he will not discover.”
    - (2.) “Though the wise man should say ‘I know’ he cannot discover”

#### **IV. In Conclusion, the Preacher Determined to Fear God, Obey God, and Enjoy Life (9:1-12:14)**

##### **A. Imperatives for Wise Living (9:1-18)**

###### **1. Accept God’s Sovereign Control—everything is in His Hand (9:1)**

- a. Source: “I have taken all this to my heart”—examining the gamut of human existence and earthly life he determines this truth:
- b. Summary: “righteous men, wise men, and their deeds are in God’s hand”
  - 1.) Men: righteous and wise
  - 2.) Manner: their deeds
- c. Scope: “Man does not know”—
  - 1.) “Whether it will be loved”—accepted
  - 2.) “or (whether it will be) hated”—rejected
  - 3.) “anything awaits him”—will not know what will happen until it unfolds.

###### **2. Accept the reality of death and the urgency of living (9:2-10)**

- a. The reality of death: “it is the same for all” lit. the all just as for the all (9:2-6)
  - 1.) Examples of “there is one fate for” (2)
    - a.) righteous and wicked
    - b.) good, clean and unclean
    - c.) “the man who offers a sacrifice and the one who does not sacrifice”
    - d.) the good man so is the sinner
    - e.) the swearer and the one who is afraid to swear—one who vows/takes an oath and the one who does not vow/take an oath
  - 2.) Explanation (3-6)
    - a.) “One fate for all men” (3)
    - b.) Depravity of man—“the hearts of men are full of evil” (3)
    - c.) Advantage of the living
      - (1.) Hope/Confidence of the living
      - (2.) They know they will die (5)

(3.) The dead:

- (a.) know nothing (5)
- (b.) No reward (5)
- (c.) Memory forgotten (5)
- (d.) Their love, hate zeal have perished (on earth) (6)
- (e.) “No longer share in all that is under the sun” (6)

b. The urgency of living—Enjoy life while you have it. (9:7-10)

1.) Enjoy physical blessings (7-8)

- a.) Food
- b.) Drink
- c.) Clothes
- d.) Oil

2.) Enjoy marital relationship (9)

3.) Enjoy work (10)

**3. Accept Life’s inescapable ironies (9:11-12)**

a. Examples of 5 ironies (11)

- 1.) “The race is not to the swift”
- 2.) “The battle is not to the warriors”
- 3.) “Neither is bread to the wise”
- 4.) “Nor wealth to the discerning”
- 5.) “Nor favor to men of ability”

b. Explanation—unpredictability (11f-12)

- 1.) “Time will overtake”
- 2.) Chance/happening/accident will overtake
- 3.) Man does not know when an evil time/calamity will come

**4. Accept the value of wisdom and the lack of appreciation for the wise—a lesson from history (9:13-18)**

a. The condition: (13-15)

- 1.) Poor wise man delivers a city under attack. (13-14)
- 2.) Poor wise man was not remembered. (15)

b. The Conclusion (16-18)

- 1.) “Wisdom is better than strength” (16a)
- 2.) “The Wise are sometimes despised and their words not heeded.” (16b)
- 3.) “Words of the wise heard in quietness better than the shouting of a ruler among fools.” (17)
- 4.) “Wisdom is better than weapons of war” (18a)
- 5.) “One sinner destroys much good.” (18b)

**B. Final Reflection about Folly (10:1-20)**

**1. Recognizing Fools (1-4)**

- a. The disclosure of fools--the smell of his folly is greater than the fragrance of his wisdom (1)



- b. The direction of fools is opposite the wise (2)
- c. The demonstration of fools is by his behavior (3)
- d. Deflect a ruler's temper with composure (4)

## **2. Realizing unjust/inequitable government (5-7)**

- a. Inept people are in places of high responsibility and power (6)
- b. Illustration: Slaves on horses and princes walking (7)

## **3. Receiving proverbs for everyday life settings (8-11)**

- a. Proverbs concerning calamity/hazards/risks (8-11)
  - 1.) "He who digs a pit may fall into it" (8a)
  - 2.) "Serpent may bite him who breaks through the wall" (8b)
  - 3.) "He who quarries stones may be hurt by them" (9a)
  - 4.) "He who splits logs may be endangered by them" (9b)
  - 5.) "If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen its edge, then he must exert more strength" (10a)
  - 6.) "If the serpent bites before being charmed, there is no profit for the charmer" (11)
- b. Principle concerning caution—"Wisdom has advantage of giving success" (10b)

## **4. Resulting words and works of a fool (12-15)**

- a. "Words from the mouth of the wise are gracious" (12a)
- b. Words from the "lips of a fool" (12b)
  - 1.) "Consume him" (12b)
  - 2.) "Beginning of his talking is folly" (13a)
  - 3.) "the end of it is wicked madness" (13b)
  - 4.) "The fool multiplies words" (14a)
  - 5.) Does not know the future (14b)
- c. Works—"Toil of a fool wearies him that he does not know how to go into a city" (15)

## **5. Responding with due diligence (16-20)**

- a. National comparison of wise and foolish leaders (16-17)
  - 1.) "Woe to the land whose king is a lad and whose princes feast in the Morning" (16)
  - 2.) "Blessed are you, O land, whose king is of nobility and whose princes Eat at the appropriate time—for strength, and not for drunkenness" (17)

# **C. Wisdom in regard to business and outlook on life (11:1-10)**

## **1. Wisdom related to business (1-6)**

- a. Diversify (1-2)
- b. Recognize some things are out of your control (3-5)
- c. Don't let risks paralyze you—"He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap" (4)
- d. Take all opportunities—do not be idle (6)

## **2. Rejoice in life (7-10)**

- a. Rejoice in light—“The light is pleasant, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun”(7)
- b. Rejoice in many years—“if a man should live many years, let him rejoice in them all” (8)
  - 1.) “Remember days of darkness for they shall be many” (8a)
  - 2.) Remember “everything to come will be futility” (fleeting) (8b)
- c. Rejoice in youth (9-10)
  - 1.) Requirements (9-10)
    - a.) “Rejoice, young man, during your childhood” (9a)
    - b.) “Let your heart be pleasant” (9b)
    - c.) “Follow the impulses of your heart and desires of your eyes” (9c)
    - d.) “Know God will bring you to judgment for all these things” (9d)
    - e.) “Remove vexation from your heart” (10a)
    - f.) “Put away pain from your body” (10b)
  - 2.) Reason: “childhood and prime of life are fleeting” (10c)

#### **D. Life Under a Setting Sun (12:1-14)**

##### **1. “Remember Your Creator in the Days of Your Youth” (1-8)**

- a. Before Old Age (1-5)
  - 1.) “Before the evil days come” (1a)
  - 2.) “and the years draw near when you will say I have not delight in them” (1b)
  - 3.) “Before the sun, the light, the moon, and the stars are darkened” (2a)
  - 4.) “and the clouds return after the rain” (2b)
  - 5.) “in the day that the watchman of the house tremble and the mighty men stoop” (3a)
  - 6.) “the grinding ones stand idle because they are few” (3b)
  - 7.) “those who look through the windows grow dim” (3c)
  - 8.) “and the doors of the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low” (4a)
  - 9.) “one will arise at the sound of the bird” (4b)
  - 10.) “and all the daughters of song will sing softly” (4c)
  - 11.) “Furthermore men are afraid of a high place and of terrors of the road” (5a)
  - 12.) “the almond tree blossoms” (5b)
  - 13.) “the grasshopper drags himself along” (5c)
  - 14.) “the caperberry is ineffective” (5d)
- b. Before death—“For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street” (5-8)
  - 1.) “Before the silver cord is broken” (6a)
  - 2.) “and before the golden bowl is crushed” (6b)

- 3.) "the pitcher by the well is shattered"(6c)
- 4.) "and the wheel at the cistern is crushed"(6d)
- 5.) "then the dust will return to the earth as it was" (7a)
- 6.) "and the spirit will return to God who gave it" (7b)
- 7.) "Vanity of vanities", says the Preacher, "all is vanity" (8)

## **2. Realize the writer's insight into himself and words (9-12)**

- a. His Character: "In addition to being a wise man" (9a)
- b. His Conduct (9b-10)
  - 1.) "The Preacher taught the people knowledge" (9b)
  - 2.) "he pondered, searched out, and arranged many proverbs" (9c)
  - 3.) "The Preacher sought to find delightful words" (10a)
  - 4.) The Preacher sought "to write words of truth correctly" (10b)
- c. His Conclusion (11)
  - 1.) "The words of wise men are like goads" (11a)
  - 2.) "and masters of these collections are like well driven nails" (11b)
  - 3.) "they are given by one Shepherd" (11c)
- d. His Caution (12)
  - 1.) "The writing of many books is endless" (12a)
  - 2.) "and devotion (to books) is wearying to the body" (12b)

## **3. Respond to Your Creator during your life (13-14)**

- a. Requirements to respond to your Creator (13)
  - 1.) "Fear God" (13a)
  - 2.) Follow God—"Keep His commandments" (13b)
- b. Reasons for responding to you Creator (13c-14)
  - 1.) Scope: "because this applies to every person" (13c)
  - 2.) Seriousness: "For God will bring every act to judgment" (14)
    - a.) "everything is hidden"
    - b.) "whether it is good or evil"