

AN OUTLINED COMMENTARY ON

ECCLESIASTES

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**GOSPEL
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Preface and Acknowledgment

These various commentaries and other Biblical studies were developed through many years of hard and close study of the Bible. I have had an insatiable appetite to learn all of God's Word possible. I grew up in the Beans Creek Community of Coffee County Tennessee. My family started attending the Lord's church at Beans Creek in 1949, where I was privileged to have sister Ethel Croft as an outstanding Bible class teacher. All seven members of my father's family were baptized into Christ, plus my wife, Marie. Each of our five children also obeyed the gospel.

Sister Croft greatly encouraged me to study the Bible and to become a good worker for the Lord. I tried not to cause her any disappointment. In 1978, after preaching for many years, the brethren at Beans Creek invited me to conduct a gospel meeting. Sister Croft, though she was in advanced years and had to drive a good distance, did not miss any of the services.

Since first becoming acquainted with the gospel more than seventy years ago, I have had the honor to hear some of the greatest gospel preachers of the time. Some of these are well-known to most members of the Lord's church, but some of them labored in the shadows, learning and dispensing the truth of God quietly and effectively. Not so many people in the brotherhood today knew such preachers as Luke Gibbs. I have learned much and have been profited greatly from many gospel preachers and teachers through these many years. I am fully appreciative also to those many sound brethren who have published books which I have had the privilege to study. I began preaching in July of 1961 in Italy.

A debt of gratitude is owed by many to the instructors of Memphis School of Preaching for the tremendous work they did through the years, patiently teaching their students the wonderful word of life. I am especially grateful to these great men who were serving in this capacity during 1970-72, when I attended the school: Roy Hearn, Frank Young, Richard Curry, Charles Pledge, and E.L. Whitaker.

I claim no originality for all of the material presented in the material included in my books. There is no way to give proper credit to all who have contributed to the information I have learned, but in every case possible, acknowledgment is cited. I have attempted to be as accurate, clear and concise as my finite knowledge allows, but, as with all human productions, there will doubtless be imperfections.

Some have incorrectly thought that my books are merely expansions of the notes I took while studying at MSOP. But those notes were skimpy at best, and were not in my possession when I wrote my material. The material was put together in connection with Bible classes I have taught over many decades. For several years, a hundred or more hours weekly were required as I prepared to teach two different Bible books each week, Sunday morning and Wednesday evening, while at the same time, during full-time work as a gospel preacher. These notes became the "Outlined Bible Commentaries" that have been made available to countless people.

It has not been my aim to make money through these efforts—indeed, we hardly cover our expenses. Many of my books have been given away without charge. An uncounted numbers of books and compact discs were ordered and shipped out, for which no payment was ever received. A good many of these non-paying costumers were gospel preachers. I have learned from brethren who operated Bible Bookstores that they have had the same problem. One of these brethren reported that he had to secure his supply of Bibles, in locked cases, to prevent their being stolen by preachers. How sad! "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Eph. 4:28).

The Bible quotations in my books are from the King James Version, unless noted otherwise. These books were intentionally put on 8.5 by 11 inch pages, to make the outline format easier to view. A normal hardback book contains about 800 words per page; my pages contain twice that number of words. The spiral-bound or wire-bound books are much less expensive to produce. My wife and I have done all the manual labor required to produce the books. The supplies, software and equipment are very costly. Marie still helps as much as she can despite the dementia she has had for several years— and her many surgeries and broken bones and heartaches.

Feel free to copy quotations from this material. It is designed to bring glory to God and information to souls! The same goes for the articles printed in my monthly publication: *Studies in the Old Paths*. This paper is free via e-mail.

INTRODUCTION TO ECCLESIASTES

A. The Author and Date of Composition.

1. The title "Ecclesiastes" is a transliteration of the Greek word found in verse one of the Septuagint (LXX) version, translated "Preacher" in the KJV.
 - a. The author referred to himself as the *Preacher* in chapter 1 (verses 1, 2, and 12), in chapter 7 (verse 27), and in chapter 12 (verses 8, 9, and 10).
 - b. *Preacher* (*qoheleth*, Hebrew) means "caller, congregator, preacher" (*Young's Analytical Concordance*). He describes himself therefore as one who teaches or proclaims a message, the subject of which is God's will for man.
 - c. If we determine who the preacher is, the author is thereby identified.
 2. Although the Book does not give a formal declaration of the author's identity, information is supplied to point to the right person.
 - a. He describes himself as "the son of David" and "king in Jerusalem." This certainly fits Solomon. These are the very words with which Solomon describes himself in Proverbs 1:1: "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel."
 - 1) Ecclesiastes 1:12: "I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem."
 - 2) Ecclesiastes 1:16: "I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all *they* that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge."
 - 3) "The word 'king' in the title is shown by the accentuation to be in apposition to 'Kohleth' not to 'David;' and there can be no doubt that the description is intended to denote Solomon, though his name is nowhere actually given, as it is in the two other works ascribed to him (Prov 1:1; Song 1:1). Other intimations of the assumption of Solomon's personality are found in Eccl 1:12, 'I Kohleth was king,' etc.; so in describing his consummate wisdom (Eccl 1:13,16; 2:15; comp. 1 Kings 3:12; 5:12), and in his being the author of many proverbs (Eccl 12:9; comp. 1 Kings 4:32) - accomplishments which are not noted in the case of any other of David's descendants. Also the picture of luxury and magnificence presented in Eccl 2. suits no Jewish monarch but Solomon" [The Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
 - b. The author was one who was noted for wisdom (12:8; 2:9), which pictures Solomon more than any other king in Jerusalem.
 - 1) Ecclesiastes 2:9: "So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me."
 - 2) Ecclesiastes 12:8: "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all *is* vanity."
 - 3) 1 Kings 3:12: "Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee."
 - 4) 1 Kings 4:29-34: "And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that *is* on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were
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a thousand and five. And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that *is* in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom."

- c. The author states in 1:16 that he possessed greater wisdom than all that had gone before him in Jerusalem: "I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all *they* that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge" (Eccl. 1:16). Since the writer lived after David, if he is not Solomon, which king of Israel was wiser than Solomon? Solomon is undoubtedly the wisest man of the ages, excepting Christ. If no other information was available to identify the author of Ecclesiastes, chapter 1:16 would be sufficient to reveal him to be Solomon.
 - d. The preacher had "sought out and set in order many proverbs" which were written.
 - 1) 1 Kings 4:32: "And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five."
 - 2) Proverbs 1:1: "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel."
 - 3) Ecclesiastes 12:9-10: "And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, *and* set in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and *that which was written was upright, even words of truth.*"
 - e. He accomplished great works, including the construction of houses, planting of vineyards, gardens, orchards and trees, and dug pools for water with which he watered the trees (2:4-7).
 - f. The author accumulated great wealth (cf. 1 Kings 10:14-29). His worth possibly surpassed all who went before or who came after him.
 - 1) Ecclesiastes 2:8-9: "I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, *as* musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me."
 - 2) Matthew 6:28-29: "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."
 - g. He had many servants to wait on him, and many singers to entertain him.
 - 1) 1 Kings 4:20-28: "Judah and Israel *were* many, as the sand which *is* by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry. And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life. And Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal, Ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep, beside harts, and roebucks, and fallowdeer, and fatted fowl. For he had dominion over all *the region* on this side the river, from Tiphshah even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side the river: and he had peace on all sides round about him. And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon. And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen. And those officers provided victual for king Solomon, and for all that came unto king Solomon's table, every man in his month: they lacked nothing. Barley also and straw for the horses and dromedaries brought they unto the place where *the officers* were, every man according to his charge."
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- 2) Ecclesiastes 2:7-8: "I got *me* servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, *as* musical instruments, and that of all sorts."
- h. Jewish tradition ascribes the authorship to Solomon.
3. Some scholars have sought out every kind of pretext to deny Solomon wrote the book, but with the foregoing in mind, the conclusion is inescapable that Solomon, the son of David, who succeeded his father as king in Israel, is the inspired penmen.
 - a. The author pictures himself as having fallen into many evils as he sought happiness through wealth, mirth, servants, vast holdings, and exquisite inventions; he ended his book with the great conclusion: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:13-14).
 - b. Solomon fell victim to sin in his latter years, being persuaded to turn to idolatry by his many wives and concubines (1 Kings 11:1-8; Neh. 13:26). The repentance of Solomon is evinced in the book of Ecclesiastes, being set forth abundantly in the closing verses.
4. The date of the book is established by the foregoing as being toward the end of the reign of Solomon. Its composition necessarily occurred after his fall into sin and subsequent to his restoration. His repentance is implied by the words of Ecclesiastes 12:13-14. He was king for 40 years (1 Kings 11:42), from about 974 to 934 B.C. To experience and accumulate all the items listed in the book, it is most likely that Ecclesiastes was written later on in Solomon's life.

B. The Purpose of the Book.

1. In a sense, God performed an experiment with Solomon for the benefit of all men who will read and learn from his experiences. He gave the wise man fabulous wealth, wisdom far beyond that enjoyed by other men, vast possessions which could be the envy of the world, a fame that surpassed all others of his time, and to this Solomon availed himself of all the pleasures and gratifications that money and position could provide.
2. But when all of these things were duly considered by the wise man, he could properly conclude that all earthly wealth and mirth are empty, unable to give full satisfaction and happiness. The grand conclusion to which God guided him is stated in the closing statement of the book: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil" (Eccl. 1:12-14).
3. "By teaching with tremendous emphasis the vanity of all earthly things the author first disillusiones his hearers. For men will have at least some expectation of the comfort and the solace that are to be derived from the possession of earthly goods. As long as they are thus minded they are preparing the way for added sorrows. Especially in evil times men should stake no hope on earthly goods and treasures" (Leupold, p.17).

C. The Divine Authority of the Book.

1. Even with the absence of direct New Testament quotations from the book, Ecclesiastes can be shown to be an inspired production.
 2. Evidences of its inspiration, and thus its divine authority, are seen in the following information:
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- a. Its author has been shown to be Solomon, an inspired spokesman and writer.
 - 1) 1 Kings 3:28: "And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God *was* in him, to do judgment."
 - 2) 1 Kings 4:32: "And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five."
 - 3) Proverbs 1:1: "The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel."
- b. Ecclesiastes is included as an integral part of the Old Testament, which contains many internal and external proofs of inspiration. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1:20-21).
- c. Ecclesiastes 1:7 gives a reference to the evaporation cycle of nature, a process that was not discovered by human investigation until the 17th century after Christ.
- d. The nature of the teachings presented in the book corresponds well to the overall high spiritual content of the Bible, which exalts spiritual values above material concerns. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, *shall he* not much more *clothe* you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day *is* the evil thereof" (Matt. 6:24-34).

D. Outline of Ecclesiastes (Leupold, pp.25-27).

1. Prologue: "All Is Vanity" (1:1-11).
2. The Vanity Of All Things (1:12—6:12).
 - a. First group of things whose vanity is demonstrated (1:12—2:23).
 - 1) The vanity of human striving after wisdom (1:12-18).
 - 2) The vanity of human mirth (sensuous enjoyment) (2:1-11).
 - 3) The vanity of human wisdom as such (2:12-17).
 - 4) The vanity of human labor (2:18-23).
 - b. General principles that show that such vanity is a logical necessity (2:24-3:22).
 - 1) Real enjoyment in all things depends on a higher source than man (2:24-26).
 - 2) For God is the absolute Ruler over His people (3:1-15).
 - 3) Even perversion of justice must serve His sovereign purpose (3:16-22).

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- c. Another group of things by which vanity is demonstrated (4).
 - 1) By the sad lot of the oppressed (4:1-3).
 - 2) By the futility of earthly endeavor (4:4-6).
 - 3) By the futility of the acquisition of riches (4:7-12).
 - 4) By the vanity of high station (4:13-16).
 - d. An inserted exhortation—against the danger of becoming vain in worship 5:1-19).
 - 1) Warning against formalism (5:1-9).
 - 2) Comfort in the face of oppression (5:8-9).
 - e. The third group of things by which vanity is demonstrated (5:10—6:12).
 - 1) The vanity of riches (5:10-20).
 - a) As being unable to satisfy (5:10-12).
 - b) As being a harm to man (5:13-17).
 - c) Brief exhortation to enjoy the gifts God permits (5:18-20).
 - 2) The vanity of possessing goods that cannot be enjoyed (6:1-6).
 - 3) Why a man cannot be satisfied with riches (6:7-9).
 - 4) Why it is useless for a man to strive for riches (6:10-12).
3. Counsel for Days of Suffering (7:1—12-7).
- a. The value of suffering (7:1-10).
 - 1) Its value by way of comparison (7:1-4).
 - 2) The value of the rebuke of the wise in times of suffering (7:5-7).
 - 3) The value of patient endurance of suffering (7:8-10).
 - b. The value of wisdom at such times (7:11-29).
 - 1) Wisdom, a fine regulative in days of suffering (7:11-14).
 - 2) Wisdom, the golden mean (7:15-18).
 - 3) The self-restraint of wisdom in the face of humiliation (7:19-22).
 - 4) The difficulty of attaining unto true wisdom (7:23-29).
 - c. Problems on which wisdom throws light (8:1—10:20).
 - 1) Submission to the heavenly King (8:1-8).
 - 2) The oppression of the righteous (8:9-13).
 - 3) The inability to fathom God's doings (8:14-17).
 - 4) The similar fate of the godly and the ungodly—no cause for pessimism and inaction (9:1-10).
 - 5) The higher destiny controlling the final outcome (9:11-12).
 - 6) Wisdom still the greatest of Israel's resources (9:13-18).
 - 7) The ultimate readjustment of disturbing discrepancies in God's government (10:1-11).
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- a) Folly will bear its usual fruit (1-4).
 - b) The discrepancy—Israel's humiliation (5-7).
 - c) The ultimate failure of great worldly enterprises though lack of wisdom (8-11).
- 8) A correct estimate of the rulers of the time (10:12-20).
- a) The vanity of the endeavors of foolish rulers (12-15).
 - b) Their reprehensible debauchery (16-20).
- d. Exhortation to benevolence and cheerful activity (11:1-8).
- e. Exhortation to youth to enjoy the days of youth (11:9—12:7).
4. Epilogue (12:8-12).
- a. The author's authentication of himself (8-11).
 - b. The author's recommendation of his message (12-14).
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ECCLESIASTES 1

A. Ecclesiastes 1:1-11: Prologue: Things That Have Constancy.

1. Verse 1: "The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem."
 - a. The Preacher (the caller, proclaimer, teacher) is said to be the son of David, king in Jerusalem. If we get the idea that the king is David, this miscalculation is corrected in 1:12 where the author plainly states that he was the king in Jerusalem in question, not David. Evidence that the writer is Solomon is discussed in detail under the introduction.
 - b. The most important facet of his background and position is that of Preacher; his relationship to David and his regal power are placed secondary. When James Garfield, a member of the Lord's church and a gospel preacher, took the office of President of the United States, he described that move as a step down.
 - c. What is a more important calling in life than that of instructing people in the will of Almighty God? The scope of this great work extends into eternity.
 - 1) Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil."
 - 2) Mark 16:15-16: "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 - 3) Luke 22:32: "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."
 - 4) John 21:15-17: "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, *son* of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."
 - 5) Matthew 28:19-20: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen."
 - 6) John 6:44-45: "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me" (ASV).
 - 7) Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
 2. Verse 2: "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all *is* vanity."
 - a. The first lesson taught is that all is vanity. Of course, he has reference to things of an earthly nature. These are described as the emptiness of emptinesses. This is the leading theme of the book, pointing to the grand conclusion of 12:13-14.
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- b. During Solomon's reign, Israel enjoyed its greatest glory. David had defeated the enemies around them, which allowed Solomon to control territory to the full extent God intended the nation to have (2 Sam. 8:3; 1 Kings 4:21). It was a period of unparalleled power, prominence, and prosperity in Israel.
- 1) 2 Samuel 8:3: "David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates."
 - 2) 1 Kings 4:21: "And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life."
- c. In Solomon's personal life, he had everything that money and power could provide, yet happiness was elusive. He concluded (by providence and inspiration) that the things of earth cannot satisfy the deep longings of the soul, nor can the physical appetites of man be fully and finally gratified (Matt. 5:1-12).
3. Verse 3: "What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?"
- a. What lasting, earthly profit does a man gain from his worldly labors? Notice the limiting phrase, "Under the sun" (i.e., in this life on earth). While he lives he may enjoy the fruit of his labors, but when he dies, what he has provided will pass into another man's hands. "There are no pockets in a shroud." Even while he lives, material possessions do not give him full happiness.
 - b. "If a man thus busies himself with earthly values alone, what he has left in the end is practically nothing" (Leupold, p.44).
4. Verse 4: "*One* generation passeth away, and *another* generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever."
- a. One generation succeeds the former generation. There is a continual changing of the people who inhabit God's footstool. "And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel" (Judg. 2:10). The members of a given congregation today have replaced those who comprised it a hundred years ago. The occupants of the White House are not the same today from just a few years past. Those who comprised a military unit during World War Two have been replaced by an entire new group of people.
 - b. What you and I see as individuals is only the tiniest particle of time, for our lives are short and encompass only a minute fraction of human history: "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (Jas. 4:13-14). But God inhabits eternity, and is eternal; he was there at the beginning, he is present throughout time; he will be present at the end of time. He sees it all, and knows all.
 - c. Materialists abuse the final clause, asserting that in it is found proof of their theory that the earth was created at the beginning, never to be destroyed! This conclusion is in direct contradiction to the plain statement in 2 Peter 3 that the earth will be destroyed, burned up, dissolved at the coming of Christ.
 - 1) 2 Peter 3:8-12: "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day *is* with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *Seeing* then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation
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- and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"
- 2) It also fails to notice the fact that "for ever" does not always mean "eternal." Jonah was in the sea "for ever" (Jonah 2:6). The word, according to lexicographers, means "the fullness of the time required." That time might be for eternity, or in other contexts, for a relatively short period of time. The earth will be present until the time appointed for it is fulfilled, which will occur at the Lord's second coming. The earth will be here until the last generation has run its race.
 - d. Jeremiah 10:13: "When he uttereth his voice, *there is* a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures."
5. Verse 8: "All things *are* full of labour; man cannot utter *it*: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing."
 - a. Continual, unending labor is required on the part of man to produce his food, provide for his clothing, and insure his daily well-being. One cannot eat one time and be filled for the rest of his life; the eye and the ear need to be "fed" daily with the information necessary to make life possible.
 - b. There is always something that we want to see and hear; these senses can never be sated for all time.
 6. Verses 9-10: "The thing that hath been, *it is that* which shall be; and that which is done *is* that which shall be done: and *there is* no new *thing* under the sun. Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this *is* new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us."
 - a. There is a constancy of things in this life, even though the nature of all the creation is transitory. He obviously did not include the inventions that are developed from time to time.
 - b. He has in mind things of a more fundamental kind.
 - 1) The three avenues of temptation to sin are unchanged.
 - a) Genesis 3:6: "And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."
 - b) The temptations of Christ followed the same pattern—Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13.
 - c) 1 John 2:15-17: "Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."
 - 2) Sin is still the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4).
 - 3) Sin separates the guilty party from God: "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:1-1).
 - 4) The penalty of sin remains unchanged: "For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).
 - 5) The reward of faithfulness is still heaven: "But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:30).
 - 6) The plan of salvation is the same as when it was first given: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel

of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:16-17; cf. Mark 16:15-16; Acts 17:30; 8:37; 2:38).

- 7) Christ is the same: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8).
 - 8) God's word is unchanged.
 - a) Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
 - b) 1 Peter 1:24-25: "For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."
 - c. The needs of man remain the same from generation to generation; his weaknesses are the same.
7. Verse 11: "*There is* no remembrance of former *things*; neither shall there be *any* remembrance of *things* that are to come with *those* that shall come after."
- a. When a man perishes from earthly life, memory of his life, personality, work, activities, etc., are not long remembered by those who survive him. How many people do you know who lived during the year 950 B.C.? In 1850 A.D.? How much less do we know of the details of their lives! Only the ones who lived extraordinary lives are remembered, and even then only a small portion of their lives is known. We do not know how Abraham Lincoln's voice sounded. What survives us on earth is minute, perhaps at the most a tombstone bearing our name.
 - b. A subsidiary lesson is that each generation, for the most part, must re-learn the same lessons the former generation had to learn. History repeats itself; human experiences run in cycles. Each generation thinks that because it is the latest, it is the wisest. But notice how often it repeats the mistakes of the former.
 - c. While men quickly forget those who have died, God does not. His remembrance is eternal and perfect. God forgets only what he chooses to forget (cf. Matt. 25:31-46).
 - 1) Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil."
 - 2) Romans 14:10-12: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, *As* I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad."
 - 4) Hebrews 6:10: "For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."
 - 5) Revelation 20:12-15: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they

were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

8. The point of this section is to illustrate the truth that all earthly affairs are empty, are never fully finished.
 - a. Man works to produce a crop; and must repeat the process the following year. We mow our lawn, but it does not stay mown. "What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?" (vs. 3).
 - b. One generation arrives, but does not remain; another takes its place or else human history would come to a full end. "One generation passeth away, and *another* generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever" (v. 4).
 - c. The sun arises in the east, but sets in the west; it does not shine on the same spot, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, century after century. "The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose" (v. 5).
 - d. The wind is always changing; it blows from the north and later from the south. The predominant feature of its nature is that it never stays the same. "The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirlleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits" (v. 6).
 - e. The rivers continually run, but they do not run dry (in the normal case); and the sea is never filled up. "All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea *is* not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again" (v. 7).
 - f. Man never sees all that he wants to see (in the aggregate); there is always something else to see and hear. "All things *are* full of labour; man cannot utter *it*: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing" (vs. 8).
 - g. There is a cycle of the same kind of things going on throughout history. "The thing that hath been, it *is that* which shall be; and that which is done *is that* which shall be done: and *there is* no new *thing* under the sun. Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this *is* new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us" (vv. 9-10).
 - h. Each generation forgets the details of its predecessor. "*There is* no remembrance of former *things*; neither shall there be *any* remembrance of *things* that are to come with *those* that shall come after" (v. 11).

B. Ecclesiastes 1:12-18: The Vanity of Wisdom.

1. Verses 12-13: "I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all *things* that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith."
 - a. The Preacher, king over Israel in Jerusalem, dedicated his heart to obtain wisdom concerning all things under the sun. It was a difficult task, and an unending quest; there is always something else to be learned.
 - b. No man is able to discover all the information God incorporated into nature. It is impossible for one person to record and know all the activities of the human family. We take pictures, write journals and diaries, keep records, make audio and video recordings—all in an attempt to preserve a moment of time for future recollection. But these pieces of the past are themselves temporary; they fall to dust. Where is the great library of Alexandria?
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- c. Solomon applied his hand to accomplishing great feats: constructing the marvelous temple; planting vineyards and orchards; digging pools to water his trees and vines; stables to house great numbers of horses; etc. Yet what was the final outcome of these ventures? He lost it all when he died! Others enjoyed the fruits of his labors. There was no lasting satisfaction for him from these things. The temple itself was ultimately destroyed; the glory produced by his wisdom did not endure.
 - d. The past tense of verse 12 is explainable under the assumption that it was intended to be published posthumously. Or that Solomon's life was nearly over when he penned these things, and those who read it would primarily be those of future ages, hence, his reign had been completed—this suggests that Ecclesiastes was penned near the end of Solomon's life.
2. Verse 14: "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit."
- a. He had seen the works done by man under the sun. None of the earthly pursuits endure. Even the great pyramid retains only a shadow of its former glory. Where are the other wonders of the ancient world? Where will the Empire State Building and the Golden Gate Bridge be in another thousand years, or after the coming of Christ? Where will our houses be then? Our other "precious" possessions and heirlooms? They will go the way of all the earth! Hitler boasted that his Third Reich would last a thousand years—it only had twelve years! The Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City could have been expected to endure centuries—but two airplanes brought them down with great tragedy.
 - b. Thus, Solomon can say that all of these things are vanity (empty) and vexation of spirit (saddening to the spirit). They are valuable to us for a time, but eventually become empty and depressing because they are transitory, even as we are.
 - c. In times of crisis, our valuables lose their worth. When the Titanic was sinking, a lady ran back to her room to get something important—some oranges. She left her expensive jewelry behind. Food was more valuable to her than those trinkets!
 - d. All earthly treasure is temporary; it can be lost, stolen, or destroyed. But there is a treasure which cannot be harmed by time, pilfered by thieves, or polluted by the passing of time—a life of faithful obedience to the God of heaven!
 - 1) Matthew 6:19-21: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
 - 2) Hebrews 6:10: "For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."
 - 3) Revelation 14:13: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."
3. Verse 15: "*That which is* crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered."
- a. This statement expands on the previous verse. There are many things that are imperfect; there is much that needs to be done. The more one learns, the more he sees that needs to be done.
 - b. He is not saying that life is hopeless because we cannot do all we see to do, but that we cannot work to the point that we can say, "Nothing else will ever need to be done in the future."
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- c. "This is intended as a confirmation of ver. 14. By the utmost exercise of his powers and faculties man cannot change the course of events; he is constantly met by anomalies which he can neither explain nor rectify (comp. Eccl 7:13)...The writer is not referring merely to man's sins and delinquencies, but to the perplexities in which he finds himself involved, and extrication from which is impracticable. That which is wanting cannot be numbered.... We cannot reckon where there is nothing to count; no skill in arithmetic will avail to make up for a substantial deficit. So nothing man can do is able to remedy the anomalies by which he is surrounded, or to supply the defects which are pressed upon his notice" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
4. Verse 16: "I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all *they* that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge."
- a. What is said here could only be applied to Solomon. God promised that he would give him wisdom that surpassed all who went before him or who came after him: "Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee" (1 Kings 3:12).
- b. In surveying his domain, he perceived his great estate, that his wisdom indeed was greater than any of his predecessors. His wisdom and knowledge were truly great. This was no boastful claim; he is simply stating the fact.
5. Verse 17: "And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit."
- a. He had been given a grand degree of wisdom by the operation of God; and to this he had been able to add an abundance of knowledge and further wisdom. But he had also acquired madness and folly! His greatest madness and folly were expressed in his departure from God: "Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin" (Neh. 13:26; cf. 1 Kings 11:1ff).
- b. Thus, his great knowledge and wisdom ill-served him. It brought about "vexation" of his spirit—a saddening, depressing condition. He knew that he had violated God's law.
6. Verse 18: "For in much wisdom *is* much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."
- a. He is not saying that one is happiest who is the most ignorant. He does say that wisdom can produce much grief. Look at his case. He had such wisdom that his fame was known far and wide; we still speak of his wisdom in proverbial fashion: "As wise as Solomon." But the wisest of the wise can show the greatest foolishness. Precocious children are apt to be disliked, unhappy, and foolish as adults, despite their genius status.
- b. He was one to whom God has spoken; we should think that such a one would be so impressed with God's majesty and power that he would never turn against him. But 1 Kings 11 shows that Solomon allowed his wives to turn him from the Almighty to idols in his old age. "Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin" (Neh. 13:26).
- c. Great blessings and talent carry great responsibility:
- 1) Luke 12:47-48 "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not *himself*, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few *stripes*. For unto whomsoever much is given,
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of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

- 2) Ezekiel 3:17-19: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."
 - 3) Ezekiel 33:4, 7-9: "Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head....So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked *man*, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."
 - 4) Acts 18:6: "And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook *his* raiment, and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I *am* clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles."
 - 5) Acts 20:26-27: "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."
 - 6) Acts 20:28: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."
 - 7) 1 Timothy 4:16: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."
 - 8) James 3:1: "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation."
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ECCLESIASTES 2

A. Ecclesiastes 2:1-11: Solomon Sought Happiness Through Worldly Pleasure.

1. Verses 1-2: "I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also *is* vanity. I said of laughter, *It is* mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?"
 - a. The human heart is the seat of the emotions, and thus is properly addressed in the passage. He learned that mirth was an unsatisfactory provider of happiness. After resolving to give pleasure to himself through mirth (laughter), he discovered that there was only emptiness in the end. Being gleeful does not insure contentedness; one cannot laugh all the time.
 - b. Even the funniest joke cannot make a sorrow-filled, sick, or exhausted individual burst forth into laughter. There is a limit to mirth's power to give happiness.
 - c. A merry heart dispels many clouds, but one cannot build his life on mirth. While there is a time to laugh, there is a time when laughter is out of place and empty. A tasty dessert tops off a good meal, but it could not rightly serve as the meal. "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness" (Prov. 14:13).
 - 1) Job 14:1-2: "Man *that is* born of a woman *is* of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not."
 - 2) Luke 12:15-21: "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."
 - 3) James 4:14: "Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."
 - d. "The crumbs of the Gospel are infinitely richer than the dainties of the world. But this is man's common delusion—to suppose that happiness is the creature of circumstances. If, therefore, he is disappointed in one course, he will seek it in another. Little does the self-deluded victim, know that he carries the principle of his misery in his own bosom. Far, indeed, is he from his object. What he wishes is one thing. What he really needs is another" (Bridges, p.28).
 - e. There are too many solemnities in life for one to give himself over to a life of mirth. Man, being the offspring of God, cannot be truly happy while separated from his Heavenly Father.
 - f. The wise man correctly concluded that mirth and gaiety is not the stuff from which a happy life is constructed.
 - 1) Philippians 4:11-13: "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."
 - 2) 1 Timothy 4:7-8: "But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself *rather* unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having

promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

- 3) Applying the principles of the Beattitudes and cultivating the Christian Graces will result in genuine happiness (Matt. 5:3-11; 2 Pet. 1:1-12).
2. Verse 3: "I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what *was* that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life."
 - a. Solomon next turned his mind to finding happiness through wine. Wisdom by itself could not give him happiness (1:17-18); mirth could do no better; so what about the two of them in combination? Could mirth, tempered by wisdom, provide happiness? In this present case, he decided to seek happiness through wine, but holding on to wisdom at the same time. The use of wine is classified as *folly*—the counterpoint of wisdom. "And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom *is* much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow" (Eccl. 1:17-18).
 - b. He appears to be trying to enjoy the "pleasures" of wine while exercising a measure of the restraint of wisdom. This is tantamount to a man seeking the thrill of jumping from an aircraft, while depending on his wisdom to pull the ripcord of his parachute in time to save his life. Both are extremely dangerous endeavors!
 - c. Aside from the spiritual considerations, alcohol is too powerful to keep under the control of one's will. The higher faculties of the mind (the judgment, will power and inhibitions) are the first parts of our being to be affected by alcohol. With these impaired from functioning properly, how can one be assured that he will not lose all control? And once the practice of drinking is started, how can one be assured that he can quit? Multiplied millions have been deceived by strong drink and wine. It is certain that no man committed a sin by drinking, or became a slave to alcohol, who never took the first swallow!
 - d. If it were possible for a wise man to use alcohol wisely and safely, Solomon would be the one who could do so. But since he failed, what makes men today think that they can succeed? He had the time to amply test the proposition; his kingdom was at peace with the world; he had the money to finance his *research*; and his great wisdom gave him the ability to make a proper deduction. Millions could be spared a life of misery and an eternity of loss if they would only read Solomon's *research paper*.
 - 1) Proverbs 20:1: "Wine *is* a mocker, strong drink *is* raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."
 - 2) Proverbs 23:29-35: "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, *shalt thou say, and* I was not sick; they have beaten me, *and* I felt *it* not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again."
 - 3) Ecclesiastes 12:8,13-14: "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all *is* vanity....Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil."
 - e. The purpose of this "controlled experiment" was to determine what the "good things" of life were.
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Alcohol advertisers today deceive the public by asserting that "the good life" is made possible by their products—a more deceitful lie has never been concocted. The toddler will often refuse to learn from its mother's experience, and will touch the hot stove she has warned him not to touch. We could make life much easier on ourselves if we would but learn and heed God's "operating instructions."

3. Verses 4-6: "I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all *kind of* fruits; I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees."
 - a. The wise man sought happiness through great works. It is true that we can take a large amount of pleasure from surveying the works of our hands. We all have a good sense of accomplishment when we complete a worthwhile project. But how long does the pleasure last? Not even as long as the work, which will crumble with time.
 - b. He built houses, but they have long since fallen into ruin or were destroyed.
 - 1) "And the foundation *was of* costly stones, even great stones, stones of ten cubits, and stones of eight cubits. And above *were* costly stones, after the measures of hewed stones, and cedars. And the great court round about *was* with three rows of hewed stones, and a row of cedar beams, both for the inner court of the house of the LORD, and for the porch of the house" (1 Kings 7:10-12). "And all the cities of store that Solomon had, and cities for his chariots, and cities for his horsemen, and that which Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion" (1 Kings 9:19).
 - 2) The greatest of his works was the temple, but we do not even know for sure how it looked.
 - c. He planted vineyards, but where are they now? (Song 8:11; 1 Chron. 27:25-31). He provided gardens and orchards in which all kinds of fruit trees were planted, but none of these have survived the ages.
 - 1) 1 Chronicles 27:25-31: "And over the king's treasures *was* Azmaveth the son of Adiel: and over the storehouses in the fields, in the cities, and in the villages, and in the castles, *was* Jehonathan the son of Uzziah: And over them that did the work of the field for tillage of the ground *was* Ezri the son of Chelub: And over the vineyards *was* Shimei the Ramathite: over the increase of the vineyards for the wine cellars *was* Zabdi the Shiphmite: And over the olive trees and the sycamore trees that *were* in the low plains *was* Baalhanan the Gederite: and over the cellars of oil *was* Joash: And over the herds that fed in Sharon *was* Shitrai the Sharonite: and over the herds *that were* in the valleys *was* Shaphat the son of Adlai: Over the camels also *was* Obil the Ishmaelite: and over the asses *was* Jehdeiah the Meronothite: And over the flocks *was* Jaziz the Hagerite. All these *were* the rulers of the substance which *was* king David's."
 - 2) Song of Songs 8:11: "Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand *pieces* of silver."
 - d. He dug pools to hold the water with which he watered the trees. "Thy neck *is* as a tower of ivory; thine eyes *like* the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bathrabbim: thy nose *is* as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus" (Song 7:4). "Three pools in the vicinity of Bethlehem have been attributed to Solomon. They were 300, 400, and 500 hundred feet long and about 200 feet wide, and twenty to thirty feet deep. An earthen aqueduct brought water into Jerusalem and into the temple area" (ALC, 1956, p.233).
 - e. The great works cited in this passage are not sinful of themselves, but if they come between the individual and God they become wrong. Solomon's purpose in these things was to find happiness, which cannot be done apart from God.
 4. Verse 7: "I got *me* servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions
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of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me."

- a. Solomon mentions the large number of servants, many of whom were born in his house. Many servants would be necessary in order to run his affairs. To feed his family, his servants, and others who were about him, many cattle were required; these would also be used in sacrifices. He stated that he possessed more of these than all others who preceded him in Jerusalem.
 - b. 1 Kings 4:22-23: "And Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal, Ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep, beside harts, and roebucks, and fallowdeer, and fatted fowl."
 - c. 1 Kings 10:4-7: "And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen *it*: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard."
5. Verse 8: "I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, *as* musical instruments, and that of all sorts."
- a. He gathered treasures and obtained men and women to sing for his pleasure. If money could buy happiness, Solomon would have been the world's happiest individual. But it cannot and he was not.
 - b. 1 Kings 9:26-28: "And king Solomon made a navy of ships in Eziongeber, which *is* beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red sea, in the land of Edom. And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon. And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought *it* to king Solomon." Cf. 1 Kings 10:10-23, 27.
 - c. The value of a talent of gold in Solomon's day was equal to \$32,640. He received 666 talents of gold annually (1 Kings 10:16). He received the peculiar treasure of kings and others, by way of tribute. He had the best money and influence could provide in the fine arts, including the singers and the musical instruments which were delightful to men. The pleasant strains they gave out could only offer momentary pleasures.
6. Verses 9-10: "So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour."
- a. In summing up his possessions and accomplishments, Solomon stated that he was great, and had gained more than all those who preceded him in Jerusalem, and he still had his God-given wisdom. He obtained everything that he desired, and every joy he wished, he procured. His wealth and authority insured this.
 - b. He found joy in his labor: in the temple, his palace, his navy, his wealth, and other accomplishments. He tried to find happiness in these things, but failed just as all will fail who seek it in similar ways.
 - c. In writing about the things under consideration in this passage, Solomon was not being boastful; he was merely stating the facts in order to establish his point.
 - d. In surveying the wise man's experiences, one can see his participation in the lust of the flesh (1 Kings 11:1ff), the lust of the eyes (his fulfilling every desire), and the pride of life (evidenced by his pride
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in what he had obtained and done). "Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15-17; cf. Gen. 3:6; Matt. 4:1-11).

7. Verse 11: "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all *was* vanity and vexation of spirit, and *there was* no profit under the sun."
 - a. In looking back from the vantage point of his latter years, when he had regained his spiritual perspective, he could say that all of these efforts to obtain happiness through the gratification of lusts and pride, were empty. There was no profit to be gained from these.
 - b. These things gave momentary satisfaction, but only for a time; even the physical senses grow tired of such things. There was a deep longing in the soul that could not be filled by material and sensual indulgences. Solomon said these indulgences are a vexation of the spirit ("a striving after wind"—ASV).
 - c. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections [passions] and lusts" (Gal. 5:24).

B. Ecclesiastes 2:12-17: The Emptiness of Madness and Folly.

1. Verse 12: "And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what *can* the man *do* that cometh after the king? *even* that which hath been already done."
 - a. Solomon, having the wisdom, wealth and power that exceeded others, could say that if he had failed to find satisfaction in his pursuits, which had the greatest degree of support possible, then what could someone else who followed him, who did not have these assets, hope to gain?
 - b. The lessons any other man learns from similar ventures will be the same as those learned by Solomon. As used in the passage, madness and folly are equals.
 - c. "And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly (Eccl 1:17). He studied the three in their mutual connection and relation, comparing them in their results and effects on man's nature and life, and deducing thence their real value. On one side he set wisdom, on the other the action, and habits which he rightly terms 'madness and folly,' and examined them calmly and critically" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
2. Verse 13: "Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness."
 - a. He could now see that wisdom excelled over folly, just as light is greater than darkness. There is as much difference between wisdom and folly, as between daylight and dark.
 - b. "This result, at any rate, was obtained—he learned that wisdom had a certain value, that it was as much superior to folly, in its effects on men, as light is more beneficial than darkness. It is a natural metaphor to represent spiritual and intellectual development as light, and mental and moral depravity as darkness (comp. Eph 5:8; 1 Thess 5:5)" [Pulpit Commentary, *ibid.*].
 - 1) Ephesians 5:8: "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light."
 - 2) 1 Thessalonians 5:5: "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness."
 - c. Jamieson thinks the wisdom here is worldly wisdom: "He had tried (worldly) wisdom (ch. 1:12,13), and folly (foolish pleasure) (vv. 1-11); he now compares them (v.12), and finds that whilst (worldly)

wisdom excelleth folly (vv.13,14), yet the one event, death and oblivion, befall both (vv.14-16), and that thus the wealth acquired by the wise man's 'labor' may descend to a 'fool,' that hath not laboured (vv.18,19,21); therefore, all his labour is vanity (vv.22,23)" (JFB, p.517).

3. Verse 14: "The wise man's eyes *are* in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all."
 - a. The wise man sees by the information in his head; the foolish man, having little wisdom, walks in darkness (he has no *eyes*). Though there are great differences between the wise man and the fool, there is still a similarity: they both must die (see verse 16).
 - b. "This clause is closely connected with the preceding verse, showing how wisdom excelleth folly. The wise man has the eyes of his heart or understanding enlightened (Eph 1:18); he looks into the nature of things, fixes his regard on what is most important, sees where to go; while the fool's eyes are in the ends of the earth (Prov 17:24); he walks on still in darkness, stumbling as he goes, knowing not whither his road shall take him. And I myself also (I even I) perceived that one event happeneth to them all....With all his experience, he could only conclude that in one important aspect the observed superiority of wisdom to folly was illusory and vain. He saw with his own eyes, and needed no instructor to teach, that both wise and fool must succumb to death, the universal leveler" [Pulpit Commentary].
 - c. Ecclesiastes 12:5,7: "Also *when* they shall be afraid of *that which is high*, and fears *shall be* in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets...Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."
 - d. Hebrews 9:27: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."
 4. Verse 15: "Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also *is* vanity."
 - a. He communed with himself: "I have great wisdom; the fool has none; yet as he will die, even so must I die. What advantage has my wisdom given me?" He could then see and say, "Having superior wisdom has not made me immune to death; in this particular, therefore, wisdom is empty."
 - b. Throughout Proverbs, the wise man labored to show that wisdom was to be obtained at all costs; he does not contradict here his inspired counsel in the Proverbs. He is showing in this place that wisdom does not override death.
 - c. Worldly wisdom, or wisdom misdirected and misused, offers no lasting happiness or blessings.
 5. Verse 16: "For *there is* no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now *is* in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise *man?* as the fool."
 - a. Both the wise and the foolish suffer the consequence of death, and one is not more apt to be remembered on earth than the other. "Time sweeps away all remembrances, except the very few out of millions which are preserved for a while in the page of history" (Clarke, p.811).
 - b. Accidents, disease, suddenness of death, suffering, all of the particulars that pertain to the foolish, also pertain to the wise.
 6. Verse 17: "Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun *is* grievous unto me: for all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit."
 - a. The wise man again reaches the conclusion that the activities, accomplishments, and advantages given in life are meaningless—they do not guarantee happiness; they do not prolong life indefinitely; they
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do not cause one to be long-remembered on earth.

- b. So he did not perceive any real good about life; nothing about it was worth re-living. We must keep in mind that he is speaking only about things "under the sun."
- c. Even godly people grow weary of living, when the toils, heartaches, and years dull our zeal and sap our strength. But we know of the better life "on the other side."

C. Ecclesiastes 2:18-23: The Vanity of Labor.

1. Verses 18-19: "Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise *man* or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun. This *is* also vanity."
 - a. Solomon perceived that he could not take his wealth and the other benefits of his labor with him at death. All that he had done would be left to another man, for his benefit and enjoyment.
 - b. The wise man wondered whether the one filling his place and partaking of fruits he would leave behind would be wise or foolish. As it turned out, Rehoboam was very foolish; he precipitated a great division in Israel, which led in time to the loss of the prosperity and power which Solomon had solidified during his reign.
 - c. He correctly concluded that as far as his enjoyment of his own labors (on earth, in the future), there was none to anticipate; therefore, his labors were in vain; they profited him only for a little while, and even then they gave no full or lasting enjoyment.
 - d. Again, he places the limit of the point to this sphere of time—"under the sun." His final conclusion (12:13-14), increases the scope of things to include eternity.
 2. Verse 20: "Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun."
 - a. He was moved to despair when he considered the ultimate pointlessness of his earthly labors; what would they mean for him, in the future, on the earth? Nothing.
 - b. "I gave up as desperate all hope of solid fruit from my labour" (JFB, p.518).
 3. Verse 21: "For there is a man whose labour *is* in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it *for* his portion. This also *is* vanity and a great evil."
 - a. This shows the reason for the point in verse 20: What profit has been gained if my labor was in wisdom, knowledge, and justice, if my accomplishments and gains are left to one who is unappreciative and undeserving? Perhaps he saw Rehoboam's weakness.
 - b. Many a wise and industrious man has labored for position and wealth, only to have his accomplishments wasted by a weak, sinful son.
 4. Verses 22-23: "For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? For all his days *are* sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity."
 - a. What does a man retain of the labor he has wrought in life? He cannot take it with him. When a certain rich man in the community died, someone asked, "How much did he leave?" The pithy reply was, "He left it all!" A man may labor throughout life, gain much and do more, but in the end he leaves it all behind. He may fill his days on earth with toil, and his lot here may be sorrow. He still faces the prospect of death, and if his emphasis has been on worldly matters, he can find nothing in those earthly advantages to comfort him in death. Hence, it is "vanity."
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- b. Job 1:21: "And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."
- c. 1 Timothy 6:7: "For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out."

D. Ecclesiastes 2:24-26: God Gives Good Things.

1. Verses 24-25: "*There is* nothing better for a man, *than* that he should eat and drink, and *that* he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it *was* from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who else can hasten *hereunto*, more than I?"
 - a. He does not say, "Let us eat, drink and be merry." This would contradict his timeless conclusion of Ecclesiastes 12:13-14. He rather speaks of the good things of earth, that we should enjoy what we can of life, while it lasts. Man should be grateful to God for the bounties he gives.
 - b. Romans 14:14: "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that *there is* nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean."
 - c. 1 Corinthians 7:31: "And they that use this world, as not abusing *it*: for the fashion of this world passeth away."
 - d. 1 Corinthians 10:31: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."
 - e. 1 Timothy 4:3-4: "Forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving."
 - f. James 1:17: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."
 2. Verse 26: "For *God* giveth to a man that *is* good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to *him that is* good before God. This also *is* vanity and vexation of spirit."
 - a. As God sees fit, he gives to man wisdom, knowledge, and joy; but to the sinful he gives travail (Gal. 6:7-8), enough that it can be gathered and heaped up. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7-8).
 - b. What good are life's bounties to a sinner? But God gives a sure reward to the godly. "The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness *shall be* a sure reward" (Pr. 11:18).
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ECCLESIASTES 3

A. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8: There Is a Proper Time For All Worthy Activities.

1. Verse 1: "To every *thing there is* a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:"
 - a. Everything in nature is in a state of flux and flow, but God is still in control of his universe. Things are always changing, but there is a stabilizing effect which this regularity promotes. This seems to be a thread which has run through the book to this point. Even in this section, God has established appointed seasons for the things that are named.
 - b. God's world does not operate on a haphazard basis; it is all according to plan. God exercises control over earthly affairs by means of the laws of nature, his spiritual law, and his providence.
 - 1) Genesis 8:22: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."
 - 2) Ecclesiastes 1:5-10: "The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea *is* not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. All things *are* full of labour; man cannot utter *it*: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that hath been, *it is that* which shall be; and that which is done *is* that which shall be done: and *there is* no new *thing* under the sun. Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this *is* new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us."
 - c. This verse does not uphold the Calvinistic theory of predestination, that every single occurrence was predetermined to take place and that there is nothing man can do to alter it. Many passages in God's word say the opposite: "And they built the high places of Baal, which *are* in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through *the fire* unto Molech; which I commanded them not, **neither came it into my mind**, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin" (Jer. 32:35).
 2. Verse 2: "A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up *that which is* planted."
 - a. As there is a time for birth, so there is a time of death. We would be saying more than the verse states if we affirm that the very instant of our birth and our death has been programmed from eternity.
 - 1) 1 Kings 2:2: "I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and show thyself a man."
 - 2) Hebrews 9:27: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."
 - 3) Hebrews 13:14: "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come."
 - b. As there is a time for planting a crop, so there is a time for harvesting that same crop. Neither the time for planting nor the reaping is so set that it cannot be varied by a few days or weeks.
 - c. Since the time to plant and the time to reap are general; and since the time to weep and the time to laugh, etc., are general times, so the time of our birth and the time of our death are also general.
 3. Verse 3: "A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up."
 - a. Solomon says there is a time to kill and a time to heal; and a time to break down and a time to build up. He did not say there was a proper time to commit murder. Some critics of the Bible might try to make this verse a contradiction of the sixth commandment (Ex. 20:13).
 - b. Taking the life of another is not always wrong. God took lives (Gen. 38; 1 Sam. 15; Acts 5). God
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authorizes civil government to execute those who violate certain laws (Rom. 13:1-5), and required such of ancient Israel (Deut. 21:18-21, etc.). The 6th commandment prohibited murder.

- 1) Genesis 9:4-6: "But flesh with the life thereof, *which is* the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man."
 - 2) Matthew 19:18: "He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, **Thou shalt do no murder**, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness."
- c. There is a proper time to tear some edifice down. If your house is so severely damaged by a storm or fire that it cannot be restored, what remains of it must be town down before a new house can be erected. Before the truth can be established in the hearts of sinful men, their false beliefs and practices must be exposed.
- 1) Jeremiah 1:10: "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant."
 - 2) Acts 2:36-41: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls."
 - 3) 2 Timothy 4:2: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."
4. Verse 4: "A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance."
- a. As we experience life, there are times when weeping is proper; but there is also a time for laughter. Although Jesus was a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," there were undoubtedly occasions when he laughed. However, there is no specific record of him laughing.
 - b. The two sets given in this verse are identical in effect: the weeping is equal to mourning, and the laughter and the dancing both express happiness.
 - c. Some have tried to justify modern dances by appealing to this verse. The dancing of the ancient Israelites (cf. Ex. 15:20-21) is not parallel with the dances of our day; there was a separation of the sexes in the case cited; no intent was given then to excite lust; rather their dances were intended to express happiness and gratitude.
5. Verse 5: "A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing."
- a. There is a time to gather stones and a time to cast stones away. Perhaps the wise man has in mind clearing stones from a field in the one instance, and in the next the gathering of stones to be used in some useful enterprise, such as in building a wall or a house.
 - b. As there is a time to gather or cast away stones, so there is a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing. When someone is in need of sympathy or love, then is a time for embracing; but if there is pressing work to be done, or an emergency to be handled, hugging can wait.
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- c. In family matters, there is a time when a child is to be embraced, but under another circumstance, a spanking may be needed.
6. Verse 6: "A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away."
 - a. There is a time to obtain and a time to lose; a time to keep and a time to give. In business affairs, some seasons call for selling and getting, but times also arise when one must spend more than he obtains.
 - b. In the tourist business in Florida, there is a season when one is very busy taking care of trade, but in the off-season, one must often spend money in preparation for the good season.
 - c. In farming, there are the planting and tilling seasons in which money and effort are freely spent; profit from these expenses are reaped in the harvest season.
 - d. In spiritual affairs, we spend and are spent for the sake of the gospel, but in the eternity before us, we then obtain and enjoy the reward of the faithful.
 7. Verse 7: "A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak"
 - a. Another simple truth from life: a time to rend and a time to sew. If one is planning to remake a larger garment belonging to an older member of the family into a smaller garment for one of the youngsters, the original item must be disassembled first.
 - b. The reference is more likely to those occasions among the Israelites when they in grief would rend their garment. When the anguish had passed, then was the time to repair it.
 - c. There is also a time to keep quiet and say nothing, but another situation calls for one to speak. Christ refused to say anything to Herod (Luke 23:8-11), but he spoke freely before Pilate. Wisdom dictated the difference.
 8. Verse 8: "A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace."
 - a. There is a time to hate and a time to love, but the gospel teaches that we are not to have hatred toward anyone, not even our enemies. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:43-48).
 - b. But we are to hate every false way: "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way....Therefore I esteem all *thy* precepts *concerning* all *things to be* right; *and* I hate every false way" (Ps. 119:104, 128). "Every false way" includes every sin and every religious error. We are also to "hate" in the sense of loving less everything and everyone in comparison to the Lord. In all cases of sin and error, we must repudiate and oppose each item. Our attitude toward sin and error is one of hatred, for these are antagonistic to God's truth. While we hate sin and error, we love the souls of those who are deceived thereby.
 - 1) Matthew 10:37: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."
 - 2) Luke 14:26: "If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."
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3) Genesis 29:30-31: "And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years. And when the LORD saw that Leah *was* hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel *was* barren."

- c. In the Mosaic Age, Israel was required to fight many wars. It was right as well as necessary that they do so. But there were also times in which they had peace.
- d. In the church, we often have periods in which many great battles must be fought to preserve the cause of truth, but we also have periods of peace.

B. Ecclesiastes 3:9-15: God's Work and Man's Work.

1. Verses 9-10: "What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth? I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it."
 - a. In keeping with the trend of the book, Solomon asks the rhetorical question, "What is a man profited from all his labors he undertakes in the world?" "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26). After a lifetime of labor, accumulating wealth and possessions, man must in the end relinquish hold over all he has acquired. What good do they do him on earth after his death?
 - b. Earthly life requires a certain amount of labor and toil in order to provide for our needs. Many times we meet with loss and disaster due to circumstances beyond our control, or perhaps through our own ignorance. Because of sin, toil and travail are required of us all, to some extent. "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of it* all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:16-19).
 - c. We learn from other passages that our works of faithful obedience to God's word will help us in obtaining the help and blessings of the Creator in this life, and a home with him in heaven in eternity (Jas. 2:14-26; Rom. 6:1-18).
 - 1) Romans 8:14-18: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 4:16-18: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 5:1-10: "For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be

swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad."

- 4) Revelation 14:13: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."
 - 5) Revelation 22:14: "Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."
2. Verse 11: "He hath made every *thing* beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end."
 - a. The ASV gives "eternity" for what the KJV calls "the world." God created man and put him in the material world, but he placed in man's heart the idea of eternity.
 - b. All around man in this world are grim, but clear, reminders that his earthly life is short. But man craves to live; we do not wish to give up those things which make life happy for us; we want to live forever if we could be in pleasant circumstances.
 - c. God has told us about eternity in his word, an idea we can grasp, even though we cannot comprehend it in reality. We cannot properly conceive of an existence in which there is no *time*.
 - d. God's works are beyond man's comprehension. It is well that an eternity awaits us, for a veritable eternity would be required for us ever to grasp the fullness of his deeds.
 3. Verses 12-13: "I know that *there is* no good in them, but for *a man* to rejoice, and to do good in his life. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it *is* the gift of God."
 - a. There is no lasting good to the labors that man produces on earth. The best that a man can hope to obtain, in the rewards he can have in this life on earth, is to do the best he can, be as happy as he can be, and have the essentials of life.
 - b. But even this is the gift of God; man cannot, apart from God's goodness, provide for himself. God is the giver of all good gifts (Jas. 1:17), including the earth, its fertility and seasons, rain from heaven, and sunshine (Acts 14:17; Gen. 8:22; Matt. 5:45). He even provided the laws by which we can grow and produce crops, and manufacture what we need.
 - 1) Acts 14:17: "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."
 - 2) James 1:17: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."
 - 3) Matthew 5:45: "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."
 - 4) Genesis 8:22: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."
 - c. We come into this world with absolutely nothing; and when we leave, we can carry nothing with us. While we are here, we can only use what God has provided, and under the best of circumstances, we
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can only say, "We have merely done that which was our duty to do." "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10).

4. Verse 14: "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth *it*, that *men* should fear before him."
 - a. God has so ordered the universe that man can do nothing to change its course. What man is able to stop the inexorable march of time? Or cause the tide to cease its restless motion? Or make the sun or stars to quit giving forth their light? Man is able to make his habitation into a pig sty; he can abuse his environment; he can waste the wealth God placed in the earth; but he cannot intrude into God's realm.
 - b. What God has done, stays *done*. When he finished with his great work of creation, he could rightly call everything he had done, *very good* (Gen. 1:31). "For he spake, and it was *done*; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33:9).
 - c. Some sectarians might try to misuse this verse and say, "Since everything God does, is fully and forever done, then when one obtains salvation he has it for all time." But the salvation we receive in this life is in reference to past sins; when we are saved (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Mark 16:15-16), we are forevermore forgiven of past sins; but that does not insulate us against future acts of disobedience.
 - 1) Hebrews 8:12: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."
 - 2) 1 John 1:7-10: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."
 - 3) Romans 5:8-9: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." By walking in the light of the gospel, faithful saints will be delivered from the second death.
 - 4) Galatians 5:4,7: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace....Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?"
 - 5) Hebrews 10:23-39: "Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were

made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

- 6) 2 Peter 2:20-22: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."
 - d. With God's revelation in mind, what man has the authority to make changes to it? Man must maintain a deep reverence for God lest he "rush in where angels fear to tread!"
 - 1) Deuteronomy 4:2: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."
 - 2) Proverbs 30:6: "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."
 - 3) Galatians 1:6-12: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."
 - 4) Revelation 22:18-19: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book."
 - 5) Ecclesiastes 5:1-2: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter *any* thing before God: for God *is* in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."
 - 6) Psalms 89:7: "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all *them that are* about him."
 - 7) Hebrews 10:29-31: "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again,
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The Lord shall judge his people. *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

- 8) Hebrews 12:28-29: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God *is* a consuming fire."
- e. Science has taught that matter cannot be destroyed; it can only be changed into some other form. With all the countless millions who have lived upon earth, it still is the same size; we have not diminished it in that regard.
5. Verse 15: "That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past."
 - a. Solomon states the same principle here as he did in chapter 1:9-10. Although the things of earth are constantly changing, there really is nothing new under the sun.
 - b. The wind keeps changing, but that has always been. The rain falls and the waters run into the sea, only to evaporate and fall again as rain; but that has been the usual down through the ages. The sun still rises and sets as it has been doing from the very beginning of the world.
 - c. The requirements of God for man have changed only in the details; he still demands that man "do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly" with God (Micah 6:8). Put in other words, God has always required that man love God with his whole heart, and love others as he loves himself: "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment. And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:29-31).

C. Ecclesiastes 3:16-22: There Must Be More to Life Than What is Lived Upon Earth.

1. Verse 16: "And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, *that* wickedness *was* there; and the place of righteousness, *that* iniquity *was* there."
 - a. In examining earthly affairs, the wise man perceived that where justice should have been, there was wickedness (injustice); and where righteousness should be found, there iniquity was. Man had perverted what should have been kept pure; he had defiled his own situation.
 - b. Micah 6:8: "He hath showed thee, O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"
 - c. Matthew 23:23-24: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. *Ye* blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel."
 2. Verse 17: "I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for *there is* a time there for every purpose and for every work."
 - a. He reasoned that God will judge both the righteous and the wicked; he will of course bless the former and punish the latter (Eccl. 12:13-14). Man must be held accountable for his actions on earth.
 - b. He has shown that there is a time for all proper things (Eccl. 3:1-8), hence, there is a time for justice to be given, by the hand of God.
 3. Verses 18-20: "I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men
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befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all *is* vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again."

- a. He reasoned further, that man and beast have this in common: none of them is destined to live forever, under the sun; all will die and their bodies will return to the dust (12:7). If life on earth is all there is, all is vanity.
 - b. 1 Corinthians 15:12-20: "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept."
4. Verse 21: "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?"
- a. Both man and beast have life. In this sense a beast has a soul or spirit. But man also has an immortal element. At the death of a man, his spirit "goeth upward," but the "spirit" of the beast "goeth downward to the earth."
 - 1) Job 32:8: "But *there is* a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding."
 - 2) Ecclesiastes 12:7: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."
 - 3) Daniel 7:15: "I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of *my* body, and the visions of my head troubled me."
 - 4) Zechariah 12:1: "The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him."
 - b. The animal ceases to be at death, but man continues his existence. "Man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets" (12:5).
5. Verse 22: "Wherefore I perceive that *there is* nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that *is* his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?"
- a. Materialists abuse this and the preceding verse; they think that man goes out of existence at death, and that only those who follow their doctrine will be raised up to life again. But the things of this verse are limited to earthly considerations. Earthly life is not all there is to our existence; but we can enjoy the fruits of our earthly labors only in this life. Thus, the wise man perceived that one ought to use and enjoy this world's blessings while he is here, for after death, he can no longer do so.
 - b. But if we would be blessed in eternity, our lives here must be ordered by the will of God: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19-20).
 - 1) Romans 8:18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us."
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- 2) Hebrews 11:10: "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God."
 - 3) Hebrews 13:14: "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come."
 - 4) 1 Peter 1:3-5: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."
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ECCLESIASTES 4

A. Ecclesiastes 4:1-3: The Vanity of Living Under Oppression.

1. Verse 1: "So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of *such as were* oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors *there was* power; but they had no comforter."
 - a. "So I returned and considered" is a Hebrew expression carrying the idea "and again I saw" (Leupold, p.103). What the wise man beheld were the oppressions which the mighty impose upon the weak.
 - b. Selfishness on the part of rulers results in suffering on the part of the people. If the principles of the gospel (including putting the other person first) were practiced by rulers, prosperity and happiness could be had by all; and if they were practiced by the population, peace and contentment would be manifest. "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. 2:21).
 - c. But where rulers are selfish and haughty, the people are oppressed, and only God sees their tears; there is no one but God to offer comfort to them. The oppressors have power, but the people have no comforter.
 - 1) Psalm 69:20: "Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked *for some* to take pity, but *there was* none; and for comforters, but I found none."
 - 2) Psalms 142:4: "I looked on *my* right hand, and beheld, but *there was* no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul."
 - 3) 2 Timothy 4:16: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all *men* forsook me: *I pray God* that it may not be laid to their charge."
2. Verse 2: "Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive."
 - a. The writer, in a spirit of pessimism and discouragement, perceived the dead to have an advantage over the living. The living were oppressed; the dead were removed from this oppression. The wicked, rich man of Luke 16 is not better off than those living under oppression on earth; he cannot change his destiny, but as long as he is on earth, he can make a change.
 - b. 2 Corinthians 6:1-2: "We then, *as* workers together *with him*, beseech *you* also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation)."
 - c. Hebrews 9:27: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."
3. Verse 3: "Yea, better *is he* than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun."
 - a. But in this same frame of mind, he saw that those who had not yet been born were better off than either the living or the dead. The closing thought places a limit to the statements: under the sun. Solomon's frame of reference is to things on earth, in this life.
 - b. Life would be miserable for most of us, and there would be no hope for any improvement or retribution for oppression, if there were no Judgment and Eternity.
 - c. "Herodotus (5. 4) relates how some of the Thracians had a custom of bemoaning a birth and rejoicing at a death. In our own Burial Service we thank God for delivering the departed 'out of the miseries of this sinful world'" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].

B. Ecclesiastes 4:4-6: The Vanity of Worldly Labor.

1. Verse 4: "Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This *is* also vanity and vexation of spirit."
 - a. He next considered all labor and skillful work (ASV). This is a source of envy on the part of others. An artist might labor for weeks in producing a beautiful painting; we might be envious of his skillful production. But what ultimate good does he accomplish? He will die; the picture will be decayed in time; its beauty will be lost.
 - b. Thus, as far as lasting good on earth, it has been an empty work. The same is true with all earthly endeavors. One crop is harvested, but another must be planted; the dishes are washed and the floors are swept, but these jobs must be done again and again.
 - c. But teaching, guiding, and training precious souls in the way of righteousness will never be done in vain!
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."
 - 2) 1 Timothy 4:8: "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."
 - 3) Hebrews 6:10: "For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."
2. Verse 5: "The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh."
 - a. This statement warns the sluggard lest he get the idea that he might as well do nothing, in view of the vanity of labor.
 - b. The one who folds his hands in idleness is foolish; he destroys himself by his indolence. It is as if he were eating his own flesh.
 - c. "The connection of this verse with the preceding is this: activity, diligence, and skill indeed bring success, but success is accompanied by sad results. Should we, then, sink into apathy, relinquish work, let things slide? Nay, none but the fool (*kesil*), the insensate, half-brutish man, doth this. The fool foldeth his hands together. The attitude expresses laziness and disinclination for active labor, like that of the sluggard in Prov 6:10. *And eateth his own flesh....*The expression is really equivalent to 'destroys himself,' 'brings ruin upon himself.' Thus we have in Ps 27:2, 'Evildoers came upon me to eat up my flesh;' and in Mic 3:3, 'Who eat the flesh of my people' (comp. Isa 49:26). The sluggard is guilty of moral suicide; he takes no trouble to provide for his necessities, and suffers extremities in consequence" [Pulpit Commentary, *ibid.*].
3. Verse 6: "Better *is* an handful *with* quietness, than both the hands full *with* travail and vexation of spirit."
 - a. A better situation is to have little and live in quietness, rather than to have much, with labor and striving after wind. As Paul expressed it, "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Tim. 6:6-8).
 - b. There is another view of the passage that bears consideration:
 - 1) "Better is a handful with quietness; literally, better a hand full of rest. Than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit; literally, than two hands full of travail, etc. This verse, which has been variously interpreted, is most simply regarded as the fool's defense of his indolence, either expressed in his own words or fortified by a proverbial saying. One open hand full of

quietness and rest is preferable to two closed hands full of toil and vain effort. The verse must not be taken as the writer's warning against sloth, which would be out of place here, but as enunciating a maxim against discontent and that restless activity which is never satisfied with moderate returns" [Pulpit Commentary, *ibid.*].

- 2) "Either the fool's sarcasm on his successful but restless neighbor; or the comment of Solomon recommending contentment with a moderate competence. The former meaning seems preferable" [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft].

C. Ecclesiastes 4:7-12: The Vanity of Acquiring Riches.

1. Verses 7-8: "Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun. There is one *alone*, and *there is* not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet *is there* no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither *saith he*, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This *is* also vanity, yea, it *is* a sore travail."
 - a. As the wise man turned to another earthly situation, he considered the case of the person who is alone with his riches. What good is wealth to an old man who is now alone with it? He could not say while he was amassing his fortune that he was laying it up for his large family; he has none but himself; he seeks it for the momentary satisfaction it gives.
 - b. He may take comfort and pride in his riches while he accumulates it, but it is a poor companion in old age! In obtaining it he deprives his soul of what it needs. The worldly farmer of Luke 12 thought he could feed his soul with the possessions he had acquired.
 - c. One who seeks wealth as his primary goal in life is doomed to disappointment. He can never obtain enough to satisfy his lust; when he has it, it does not give him contentment; and finally, as he faces death, it offers no comfort or hope. Many have traded their souls for silver—and shame.
 - 1) Matthew 16:26: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"
 - 2) Luke 9:25: "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?"
 - 3) Luke 12:13-21: "And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."
 - d. He must leave it all behind, for the enjoyment of others. This is the life of a miser. "The Great Marlborough—scraping together a fortune of a million and a half—would walk through the rain at night to save six-pence! *bereaving himself of good*—for whom? for a family, whom he had always regarded as his enemies" (Bridges, p.87).
 - 1) Psalms 39:6: "Surely every man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up *riches*, and knoweth not who shall gather them."

2) Ecclesiastes 2:18-20: "Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise *man* or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun. This *is* also vanity. Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun."

2. Verses 9-10: "Two *are* better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him *that is* alone when he falleth; for *he hath* not another to help him up."
 - a. It is better to have companionship in life, for if he falls, the companion can lift him up again. This is especially true of marriage. The labor of the two will be worthwhile; it is done as much for the other as for himself. In this there can be great satisfaction and happiness.
 - b. While there is nothing essentially or necessarily wrong with being alone, there are definite advantages to having a constant companion. Aristotle said, "Whosoever delighteth in solitude is either a wild beast or a god" (quoted by Bridges, p.89).
 - c. Christ sent the disciples on the limited commission in teams of two. There is much encouragement and support in this arrangement. "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Prov. 17:17).
 - d. The average person needs companionship to be happy. But in those cases where marriage or companionship is impossible, the Lord is ample company! "A man *that hath* friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend *that* sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24).
3. Verses 11-12: "Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm *alone*? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."
 - a. Three other illustrations are given to show the advantage of companionship: in cold weather, two can keep warmer than one; and in case of an attack, two can offer a better defense than one; and a cord with three strands is less likely to break than one strand alone. To this we might add, a fire of many coals gives off much heat; but if the coals are separated, they might cease to burn because of the loss of the heat emitted by the others.
 - b. Matthew 18:19-20: "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."
 - c. 1 Corinthians 12:25: "That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another."
 - d. Ephesians 4:15-16: "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."
 - e. Hebrews 10:24-25: "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

D. Ecclesiastes 4:13-16: The Vanity of a High Station in Life.

1. Verse 13: "Better *is* a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished."
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- a. The proverb affirms that it is better to be a poor but wise child, than to be an old and foolish king who will not receive instruction. It is all too often the case that when one reaches old age, after having lived a selfish and autocratic life, he is even more stubborn and demanding.
 - b. Such a person has no wisdom of his own, and will not heed that wise counsel offered by another, and in that condition could rightly be called foolish. On the other hand, the wise but poor youth will recognize that he does not know everything, and will be willing to receive instruction.
 - c. The contrasts are between the young and the old, between the wise and the foolish, and between the poor and the rich (wealth is usually inherent with kings).
2. Verse 14: "For out of prison he cometh to reign; whereas also *he that is* born in his kingdom becometh poor."
- a. The poor man with wisdom can gain the throne under the right conditions even though he may have been in prison; but the king on the throne can lose his power and wealth. There is uncertainty in the reign of any king (cf. Russian presidents); and just because one is born in poverty or suffers abasement in life does not mean that it shall always be so.
 - b. Joseph is a fitting example of the former, and Zedekiah of the latter (Jer. 39:6-8). In the next world, Lazarus and the rich man had changed their respective positions: whereas the rich man had been the exalted one on earth and Lazarus only a poor beggar, in the hadean realm the rich man was tormented and Lazarus was comforted.
 - 1) This illustrates the great truth uttered by Christ: "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matt. 23:12; cf. 1 Pet. 5:6).
 - 2) Jeremiah 39:6-8: "Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah. Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to Babylon. And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem."
 - c. Bridges gives an excellent analogy: "Joyous is the prospect of the resurrection morning—when their prison garments being changed for the glorious image of their Lord—*out of prison they shall come forth to reign—sharers of his throne for ever*" (p.94).
3. Verse 15: "I considered all the living which walk under the sun, with the second child that shall stand up in his stead." "I saw all the living that walk under the sun, that they were with the youth, the second, that stood up in his stead" (ASV).
- a. The ASV shows the connection with the preceding two verses. The wise man considered the common fickleness of humanity.
 - b. When a new king comes to the throne, he may be acclaimed the greatest by his subjects; the future looks bright for his lineage; it appears that his glory will extend through the centuries.
 - c. "I considered all the living which walk under the sun; or, I have seen all the population. The expression is hyperbolic, as Eastern monarchs speak of their dominions as if they comprised the whole world (see Dan 4:1; 6:25). With the second child that shall stand up in his stead....That they were with the youth, the second, that stood up in his stead. The youth who is called the second is the one spoken of in the previous verses, who by general acclamation is raised to the highest place in the realm, while the old monarch is dethroned or depreciated. He is named second, as being the successor of the other, either in popular favor or on the throne. It is the old story of worshipping the rising sun. The verse may still be applied to Joseph, who was made second to Pharaoh, and was virtually
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supreme in Egypt, standing in the king's place (Gen 41:40-44)" [Pulpit Commentary].

- d. "History affords many instances of mean persons raised to sovereign authority, and of kings being reduced to the meanest offices, and to a morsel of bread. Agrippa himself ascended the throne of Israel after having been long in prison. See Josephus, Ant. lib. 18 c. 8....Though I have given what the Jews suppose to be the allusion in these verses, yet the reader may doubt whether the reference be correct, There is a case implied, whether from fact or assumption I cannot say; but it seems to be this: A king who had abused the authority vested in him by oppressing the people, had a son whose prudent conduct promised much comfort to the nation, when he should come to the throne. The father, seeing the popular wish, and becoming jealous of his son, shut him up in prison. In the interim the old king either dies or is deposed, and the son is brought out of prison, and placed on the throne. Then (Eccl 4:15-16) multitudes of the people flock to him, and begin to walk under the sun; i.e., the prosperous state to which the nation is raised by its redemption from the former tyranny. However, the wise man insinuates that this sunshine will not last long. The young king, feeling the reins in his own hands, and being surrounded by those whose interest it was to flatter in order to obtain and continue in court favour, he also becomes corrupted so that those who come after shall have no cause of rejoicing in him. This appears to be the case; and similar cases have frequently occurred, not only in Asiatic, but also in European history, I have, in another place, referred to the case of Rushn Achter, who was brought out of prison, and set upon the throne of Hindustan. This is expressed in the following elegant Persian couplet, where his fortune is represented as similar to that of the patriarch Joseph: 'The bright star is now become a moon: Joseph is taken out of prison, and become a king'" [Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by Biblesoft].
4. Verse 16: "*There is no end of all the people, even of all that have been before them: they also that come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and vexation of spirit.*"
 - a. But even though the present king may be highly respected and his fame heralded far and wide, the time will come when he will be forgotten when his successor comes into power.
 - b. As Absalom stole the hearts of Israel from David (2 Sam. 15), so the glory of those formerly in power often fades after their passing.
 - c. Thus the wise man concludes that earthly honor is short-lived; it is empty; to seek fame among men is like striving after the wind.
 - d. Fame, beauty, riches, position, successes, etc., may be gratifying for the moment, but they lose their splendor with the passing of time. However, if we build our lives in obedience to God, our blessings and honor in heaven are reserved and will not fade. "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:3-5).
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ECCLESIASTES 5

A. Ecclesiastes 5:1-7: Warning Against Lipservice.

1. Verse 1: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil."
 - a. "Solomon, having before intimated, though very briefly, that the only cure against human vanity is a due sense of religion, now enters more largely on this important subject, and gives some excellent directions with regard to the right performance of Divine service..." (Clarke, p.818). "For the first time the Preacher resorts to admonition, and it is direct and extended" (Leupold, p.117).
 - b. Be full of care when entering God's house (the temple). It was easy then, as it is today, to enter the worship without due thought to what is being done. Thus, "keep thy foot"; let it not be with a careless step, that worship is offered to God.
 - 1) "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all they that are about him" (Ps. 89:7).
 - 2) "Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever" (Ps. 93:5).
 - c. Those who worship God must be willing and ready to hear what God instructs. Jesus warned that we must take heed "how ye hear" (Luke 8:18) and "take heed what ye hear" (Mark 4:24). Those who teach and preach God's word have no authority of themselves, but when it is the gospel they present, their auditors are obligated to take heed unto it: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me" (Luke 10:16).
 - d. One who offers "the sacrifice of fools" does evil. This is a reference to careless worship offered to God. The "worship" offered to God by men of the world is vain. Only that praise which is sincerely offered in accordance with God's word is acceptable.
 - 1) Matthew 15:8-9: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men."
 - 2) John 4:24: "God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth."
 - 3) The life of the worshipper must be in harmony with God's word or else the worship he offers is rejected: "For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is* Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; *he shall be free*. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye" (Mark 7:10-13).
 - e. The common theology of men is that they have the right to worship God as they wish. All kinds of activities have found their way into the "worship" they offer, everything from rock and roll, to dancing, to shouting gibberish, etc. How foolish men are who think they can glorify God by their own means! Worship and eternity are closely connected. The attitudes we manifest in worship will be the attitudes we have in eternity: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Rev. 22:11). If our attitudes are irreverent now, they will keep us out of heaven in eternity.
 2. Verse 2: "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter *any* thing before God: for God *is* in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."
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- a. Words are easily spoken; they can exert great effect; they can express the greatest reverence or the greatest dishonor for God; they can be the determining factor in our eternal destiny: "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:36-37).
 - b. Therefore, Solomon warns against letting our hearts speak rash words. In our prayers we must be careful what we say. Do we really understand, when we pray, that it is the greatest Being in the universe we are addressing? Think of it: we are speaking to the Creator!
 - c. The difference between God and man is great. God is in heaven; we are on earth. God is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient; we are limited in every way. God is entirely pure and holy; we are weak and unprofitable servants at best (Luke 17:10). Therefore, no man has the right to place himself on familiar or equal terms with the God of heaven!
 - d. In the Bible, when some man was in the presence of an angel of God, or before some manifestation of God, he trembled and quaked! They recognized the awesome power of the Almighty, and they perceived his unlimited holiness and their own unworthiness.
 - 1) Isaiah 6:1-5: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."
 - 2) Daniel 5:1-6: "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which *was* in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which *was* at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another."
 - 3) Hebrews 12:18-29: "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which *voice* they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not we escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also
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heaven. And this *word*, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God *is* a consuming fire."

- e. Our words are therefore to be guarded, reverent, and few. As a sermon need not be eternal to be immortal, so our prayers need not be long, fancy, or loud to be heard and answered by our God. Many have been falsely taught that if they will give utterance to a certain number of memorized "prayers," they have a better chance of being heard. "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites *are*: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him" (Matt. 6:5-8).
3. Verse 3: "For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice *is known* by multitude of words."
 - a. As our dreams at night usually result from the experiences of the preceding day, so the voice of a fool may be identified by the multitude of words he speaks. For most of us it is easier to speak than to act or plan; therein lies a danger.
 - b. The tongue is often the instrument of much evil, and stern warnings are issued in the Bible regarding its use. "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same *is* a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be" (Jas. 3:1-10).
 4. Verses 4-5: "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for *he hath* no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better *is it* that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay."
 - a. Vows can be uttered in the excitement of the moment, which on more sober consideration, are seen to be impossible to fulfill. The counsel of the passage pertains to us, for if God would not countenance false vows in those dark days, surely he will not do so in the sunlight age of Christianity. The Israelites were taught the seriousness of vowing, and warned to do what they promised.
 - 1) Numbers 30:2: "If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth."
 - 2) Deuteronomy 23:21-23: "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee. But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee. That which is gone out of thy lips thou

shalt keep and perform; *even* a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth."

- b. Foolish vows that bind us to do something sinful should not be kept. Jephthah made a foolish vow (Judges 11:29-40). A man known to this writer promised his mother that he would never leave the Episcopal Church; when he later learned the truth, he still felt bound to his foolish vow, and continued in his disobedience.
 - 1) Herod erred in fulfilling his foolish vow: "And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded *it* to be given her" (Mt. 14:9).
 - 2) Hannah lived up to her vow: "And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head....And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh: and the child *was* young. And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli. And she said, Oh my lord, *as* thy soul liveth, my lord, I *am* the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD. For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him: Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there" (1 Sam. 1:11,24-28).
 - c. It is better never to offer a vow, than to vow that which is not kept. God has no pleasure in the activities of fools. To vow and not perform is to play the fool.
5. Verse 6: "Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it *was* an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?"
- a. The warning is grave: if one vows and fails to fulfill what he has promised, he has allowed his mouth to cause his flesh to sin. It is the spirit of man that must bear the guilt of sin, but the fleshly body in which the spirit lives is the agent by which the sin is committed.
 - b. Sin can have certain effects upon the body: drinking; fighting; fornication. And as a consequence of sin, the body may be afflicted or even die. But the physical body does not enter into eternity (cf. 1 Cor. 15:50; Matt. 10:28). It is the soul (spirit) that bears the guilt (Ezek. 18:20; 1 Pet. 2:11).
 - 1) Ezekiel 18:20: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."
 - 2) Matthew 10:28: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 15:50: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."
 - 4) 1 Peter 2:11: "Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;"
 - c. The angel of the passage is likely the priest who is to offer the proper sacrifice in behalf of the offender who has vowed what he cannot pay. Malachi 2:7-8 speaks of a priest as "the messenger of the Lord of hosts." The word *angel* means *messenger*.
 - d. The offending Jew who made a vow and could not pay it, might come lightly before the priest to ask him to offer the required sacrifice (cf. Lev. 5:4-13). Men are prone to esteem sin lightly. The man
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pictured by Solomon presents himself before the priest, casually saying, "I erred." He seems to forget that God has been offended; his will has been violated. It is no little thing to trample underfoot the will of the Creator. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:26-29).

- e. More is involved in being forgiven than merely saying, "Forgive me." Those words may be spoken easily and without meaning. It is impossible to be forgiven for a sin without repenting (Luke 13:1-5; Acts 17:30). Repentance can be produced in our hearts only by sincere sorrow for the error we have committed (2 Cor. 7:9-10). One who sins, and does not feel genuine remorse for his transgression, cannot truly repent. Suppose a member of the church quits attending because he does not like one of the other members; that disliked member leaves, and the unfaithful member resumes his attendance. He cannot be accepted back into fellowship unless he repents; and he cannot repent unless he is genuinely sorry for having quit attending **and** for having evil feelings toward that other brother. The offending member is guilty of more than missing the assemblies!
- f. The severity of the offense discussed in the verse is such that the offending Jew is on the verge of being horribly punished by the hand of an angry God. It is a most serious matter when one violates God's word! Sin will condemn an immortal soul to everlasting torment (Rom. 6:23).
 - 1) "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). God must be held in the highest reverence, a deeply felt fear that extends also to the will of God.
 - 2) "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God *is* a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28-29).
6. Verse 7: "For in the multitude of dreams and many words *there are* also *divers* vanities: but fear thou God."
 - a. The emphasis of this verse is on the words, "fear God." There is emptiness in a multitude of dreams and in a multitude of words. Our dreams may tend to frighten us, and there is a danger in talking too much. We should not let the dreams we have at night cause us to be fearful, and we should use restraint with reference to the kind and amount of our words.
 - b. He who fears God has no reason to fear anything else. And if we fear God, we will refrain from foolish speaking.

B. Ecclesiastes 5:8-9: Comfort for the Oppressed.

1. Verse 8: "If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for *he that is* higher than the highest regardeth; and *there be* higher than they."
 - a. In view of the foregoing warnings, the reader might be moved to inquire why oppression of the poor is permitted. Why does not God punish the oppressor and care for the oppressed?
 - b. If one should see this oppression, the violent removal of justice and right dealing, out in the provinces, he should not be too astonished. The king might not be aware of these offenses. But there is one who is higher than the highest in the land. This High One (God) takes note of the offense. Even though God usually did not directly punish offenders then, and does not do so today, we may be sure that he will do so in his own good time and way. "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou
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set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, *As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God*" (Rom. 14:10-12).

- c. Some think that the high one mentioned is the king or chief ruler in the land, and that sooner or later he will hear of the oppression imposed by his underlings, and take action to correct the miscarriage of justice.

2. Verse 9: "Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king *himself* is served by the field."

- a. The king in the land must take his profit from the field just as the lowliest peasant. He cannot eat his silver and gold. What is put on his table must be grown from the land. Even his wealth is ultimately derived from the ground.
- b. "Thus, God joins the *head* and *feet* together; for while the peasant is protected by the king as executor of the laws, the king himself is dependent on the peasant; as the wealth of the nation is the fruit of the labourer's toil" (Clarke, p.819).

C. Ecclesiastes 5:10-17: More on the Vanity of Riches.

1. Verse 10: "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this *is* also vanity."

- a. Greed is a created desire which cannot be satisfied. There is always something else that is sought. If a man has one pocketful of silver, he wants another; if he has one farm, he wants two.
- b. "The thought of the acts of injustice and oppression noticed above, all of which spring from the craving for money, leads the bard to dwell upon the evils that accompany this pursuit and possession of wealth, which is thus seen to give no real satisfaction. Avarice has already been noticed (Eccl 4:7-12); the covetous man now reprobated is one who desires wealth only for the enjoyment he can get from it, or the display which it enables him to make, not, like the miser, who gloats over its mere possession. Various instances are given in which riches are unprofitable and vain" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
- c. Colossians 3:5: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry."
- d. 1 Timothy 6:10: "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

2. Verse 11: "When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good *is there* to the owners thereof, saving the beholding *of them* with their eyes?"

- a. "Nor is it to be forgotten, that an *increase of goods* is followed with a corresponding *increase* of consumers. Solomon's expensive establishment kept pace with his increasing treasures. (1 Kings 4:22-26.) ... The *owner* may be a poorer man, than when he had less riches, and fewer mouths to feed. The only *good* is the mere empty pleasure of *beholding with his eyes*, and saying, 'These are mine.' 'The poorest artisan in Rome, walking in Caesar's garden, had the same pleasures which they ministered to their lord. The birds made him as good music; the flowers gave him as sweet smiles; he there sucked as good air, and delighted in the beauty and order of the same, for the same reason, and upon the same perception as the prince himself: save only that Caesar paid for all that pleasure vast sums of money, the blood and treasure of a province, which the poor man had for nothing'" (Bridges, p.115).
- b. Proverbs 30:8-9: "Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny *thee*, and say, Who *is* the LORD? or lest I be

poor, and steal, and take the name of my God *in vain*."

- c. "Koheleth proceeds to notice some of the inconveniences which accompany wealth, which go far to prove that God is over all. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them. The more riches a man possesses, the greater are the claims upon him. He increases his household, retainers, and dependents, and is really none the better off for all his wealth. So Job in his prosperous days is said to have had 'a very great household' (Job 1:3), and the servants and laborers employed by Solomon must have taxed to the utmost even his abnormal resources (1 Kings 5:13, etc.). Commentators from Piueda downwards have quoted the remarkable parallel in Xenoph., 'Cyropaed.,' 8:3, wherein the wealthy Persian Pheraulas, who had risen from poverty to high estate, disabuses a young Sacian friend of the idea that his riches made him happier or afforded supreme content. 'Do you not know,' said he, 'that I neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep with any more pleasure now than I did when I was poor? by having this abundance I gain merely this, that I have to guard more, to distribute more among others, and to have the trouble of taking care of more. For now numerous domestics demand of me food, drink, clothes; some want the doctor; one comes and brings me sheep that have been torn by wolves, or oxen killed by falling down a precipice, or tells of a murrain that has affected the cattle; so that I seem to myself to have more afflictions in my abundance than I had when I was poor....It is obligatory on him who possesses much to expend much both on the gods and on friends and on strangers; and whosoever is greatly pleased with the possession of riches will, you may be assured, be greatly annoyed at the expenditure of them.' What good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 3. Verse 12: "The sleep of a labouring man *is* sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep."
 - a. The common laborer's food may be sparing, but his sleep is sweet, while the rich man's abundance cannot insure him a good night of slumber.
 - b. Good reasons may be assigned for this: (1) the rich man's riches, and perhaps abundant diet, keep him awake; plus his concerns over problems related to his wealth. (2) The laborer may not eat much, but his toils enable him to sleep well.
 4. Verse 13: "There is a sore evil *which* I have seen under the sun, *namely*, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt."
 - a. The wise man has shown that riches cannot satisfy and may rob a man of needed sleep. Here, he shows that wealth can be the cause of definite harm.
 - b. Solomon did not specify the hurts he had in mind, but several announce themselves: (1) robbers may take note of his wealth and relieve him of it and his life; (2) he may use his wealth improperly and lose his health or life; (3) he may place his trust in his wealth instead of God, and lose his soul (Mark 10:24); (4) it takes money to make money, but money easily obtained is also easily lost, thus he may find himself a pauper, with no means of making a living; and (5) his wealth may ruin his children.
 5. Verses 14-15: "But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and *there is* nothing in his hand. As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand."
 - a. Money takes wings and flies away. If one has wealth, but loses it, he may not be able to care for his children. One who has been *in the money* finds it difficult to make a living when he loses his wealth. Pride can keep him from common jobs.
 - b. We came into the world utterly destitute of material possessions, and our departure will also be
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without them. The statement of verse 15 is similar to other passages:

- 1) Job 1:21: "And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."
 - 2) Psalms 49:17: "For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him."
 - 3) 1 Timothy 6:7: "For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out."
- c. What of this world's goods can be taken into eternity? "There are no pockets in a shroud!" However, our good deeds of obedience to the will of God will accompany us.
- 1) Ecclesiastes 12:14: "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."
 - 3) Hebrews 6:10: "For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."
 - 4) Revelation 14:13: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."
6. Verses 16-17: "And this also *is* a sore evil, *that* in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind? All his days also he eateth in darkness, and *he hath* much sorrow and wrath with his sickness."
- a. What profit is there in a man's earthly labors which have been done in order to accumulate vast possessions? It is as if he has labored to capture the wind; what has he accomplished if he should be able to catch a bagful of air?
 - b. He has blindly fed himself in the dark, during life, if his life has been spent in gaining wealth. And in his final days on earth, when sickness and frailty afflict him, as it usually does, what will result? There will be sorrow and much wrath!
 - c. When a sinful kinsman died in a fiery truck crash, a relative tearfully remarked, "He left this earth in the anguish of fire, and entered into an eternal destiny of a far greater torment of fire."

D. Ecclesiastes 5:18-20: God's Bounty Can Give Joy.

1. Verse 18: "Behold *that* which I have seen: *it is* good and comely *for one* to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for *it is* his portion."
- a. It is right for man to use his earthly blessings. They are God's bounty.
 - b. Matthew 5:44-45: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."
 - c. Acts 14:17: "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."
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- d. 1 Timothy 4:10: "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe." [This has reference to God's provision for mankind to live and survive in this world].
 2. Verse 19: "Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this *is* the gift of God."
 - a. God gives man the necessities of life; man should be grateful for what he receives, and use these gifts wisely.
 - b. God's gift is what he gives. "Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labor—this is the gift of God" (Eccl. 5:19, ASV).
 - c. "Before he can enjoy his possessions a man must first receive them from God's hands. The two terms here used are not quite synonymous. While the former word, *osher*; is used for wealth of any kind whatever, the latter, *nekasim*, means properly 'wealth in cattle,' like the Latin *pecunia*, and thence used generally for riches (*volek*). Hath given him power to eat thereof. Abundance is useless without the power to enjoy it. This is the gift of God, a great and special bounty from a loving and gracious God" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by Biblesoft].
 3. Verse 20: "For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth *him* in the joy of his heart."
 - a. Events of our daily routine are easily forgotten; we tend to remember those events that are outstanding, for the good or evil they contain.
 - b. If we are happy in our daily lives, there are not many great things that stand out: we are content. Our contentedness results from the blessings God gives.
 - c. Philippians 4:9-13: "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."
 - d. 1 Timothy 6:6-10: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."
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ECCLESIASTES 6

A. Ecclesiastes 6:1-6: Vanity of Having Things Which Cannot Be Enjoyed.

1. Verses 1-2: "There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it *is* common among men: A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this *is* vanity, and it *is* an evil disease."
 - a. The wise man introduces an evil which he has seen in life, an evil which he says is common among men. The evil is identified as when a man is given wealth and honor which he is unable to savor.
 - 1) Isaiah 3:10: "Say ye to the righteous, that *it shall be well with him*: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings."
 - 2) Jeremiah 15:16: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts."
 - b. Obtaining wealth and position may seem to one, who strives for such, the end of all poverty and want. But when one has amassed a great fortune, what then? Most of us cannot be content if there is no challenge before us. There are only so many cars and boats and clothes that one person can use. Once a person has traveled over the earth, even that enjoyment can lose its appeal. One cannot always live luxuriously; the time comes when luxury loses its power over us, and we can no longer enjoy it.
 - c. We either lose our desire for such things; or we lose the things themselves; or we grow too sick and old to enjoy them; or we die and leave them for others to possess.
2. Verses 3-5: "If a man beget an hundred *children*, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also *that* he have no burial; I say, *that* an untimely birth *is* better than he. For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness. Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known *any thing*: this hath more rest than the other."
 - a. The miser who has much of this world's treasures, if he should beget a hundred children and live for many years, an untimely birth (a miscarriage) is better than he, if his soul is not filled with good.
 - b. He grows up with vanity; his death will be in darkness; he will not be missed. His miserable condition also includes his death, but no burial. Compare: "Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and *there was none to bury them*" (Ps. 79:3). Jehoiakim's case is an excellent illustration:
 - 1) Jeremiah 22:19: "He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem."
 - 2) Jeremiah 36:30: "Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost."
 - 3) While the Bible does not give a detailed report of his death and the disposition of his body, the Jewish historian Josephus reports: "Now, a little time afterwards, the king of Babylon made an expedition against Jehoiakim, whom he received [into the city], and this out of fear of the foregoing predictions of this prophet, as supposing he should suffer nothing that was terrible, because he neither shut the gates, nor fought against him; yet when he was come into the city, he did not observe the covenants he had made, but he slew such as were in the flower of their age, and such as were of the greatest dignity, together with their king Jehoiakim, whom he commanded to be thrown before the walls, without any burial; and made his son Jehoiachin king of the

country, and of the city: he also took the principal persons in dignity for captives, three thousand in number, and led them away to Babylon; among which was the prophet Ezekiel, who was then but young. And this was the end of king Jehoiakim, when he had lived thirty-six years, and of them reigned eleven. But Jehoiachin succeeded him in the kingdom, whose mother's name was Nehushta; she was a citizen of Jerusalem. He reigned three months and ten days" [Josephus: Antiquities of the Jews, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database Copyright © 2003 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved].

- c. The character described in this verse is the same person verse two pictures. One who never enters into the world, the Preacher says, is better off than this empty person. The miscarried baby does not see the light of day; so the wicked miser has failed to see anything beyond this vale of tears.
3. Verse 6: "Yea, though he live a thousand years twice *told*, yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place?"
 - a. Continuing his description of the miserable failure the man of verses two and three makes of his life, Solomon emphasizes the dire straits into which he has plunged himself. Even if he should live a thousand years, or twice that length of time, on the earth, his enjoyment of the goods he has amassed will be little. (See verse two).
 - b. One who places the emphasis of his life upon material wealth and honor, and excludes his obligations to his Maker, is merely living for the moment. What is our three score years and ten compared to eternity? What are the morsels of earth's bounty we may gain, in comparison to the excellent glories of heaven?
 - 1) Psalms 90:9-12: "For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale *that is told*. The days of our years *are* threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength *they be* fourscore years, yet *is* their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, *so is* thy wrath. So teach *us* to number our days, that we may apply *our* hearts unto wisdom."
 - 2) James 4:13-14: "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."
 - c. One who occupies himself during his earthly moment by focusing his attention, his ambition, and his strength merely on worldly advantages, is like the pig who spends his short life eating the acorns and wallowing in the mud, giving no thought to the giver of the acorns; he lives for the momentary pleasures. But the pig has no choice; he operates by instinct, not by making rational choices.
 - d. Wicked men, whether poor or rich, must all die; men die just as do all the members of the lower creation, whether plant or animal. "And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, *that* wickedness *was* there; and the place of righteousness, *that* iniquity *was* there. I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for *there is* a time there for every purpose and for every work. I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all *is* vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? Wherefore I perceive that *there is* nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that *is* his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?" (Eccl. 3:16-22).
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B. Ecclesiastes 6:7-12: The Vanity of an Earthly Life Separated From God.

1. Verses 7-8: "All the labour of man *is* for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled. For what hath the wise more than the fool? what hath the poor, that knoweth to walk before the living?"
 - a. The labor of a worldly man is to feed his mouth, and yet the appetite cannot be satisfied for long. The wise man's appetite is no better in this regard than the fool's. What advantage does a wise man have over a fool if this life is all there is? Or the rich man over the poor man? Every person has the same basic external needs; God provides for these necessities.
 - 1) Proverbs 16:26: "He that laboreth laboreth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him."
 - 2) Acts 14:17: "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."
 - 3) 1 Timothy 4:10: "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."
 - b. If this is all there is to our existence, we are all on the same plane: we all live with our common needs, face toils and troubles, and finally we all die. Both are on the same level in the basics of life. Compare: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept" (1 Cor. 15:19-20).
 - c. Christ said: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you..." (John 6:27).
 2. Verse 9: "Better *is* the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire: this *is* also vanity and vexation of spirit."
 - a. The wandering of the desire is the lust for something more. The wise man says it is better to enjoy what is already within one's eyesight (i.e., to enjoy the things we already have). "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."
 - b. The appetites of the flesh can never be finally satisfied. As long as we live and maintain our normal faculties of body and mind, we will always need and desire more food, water, love, money, etc. "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this *is* also vanity" (Eccl. 5:10).
 3. Verse 10: "That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it *is* man: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he."
 - a. Much can be learned about a human being by looking at the name: he is man; he is an earthling; he was made lower than angels, even though he is higher than the animals. Solomon is showing the greatness of God in comparison to the weakness of men.
 - 1) Isaiah 55:8-9: "For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."
 - 2) "...Can any such frail being, having such an humble origin, ever dare to attempt to strive with God or contend with Him?" (Leupold, p.143).
 - b. Calvinists vainly try to squeeze from this passage some support for their theory of predestination. The Preacher is not saying that everything that happens in a man's life has been programmed to occur and that there is nothing that any man can do to change it. If that were the case, why does God make any demands on us if we have no power to decide? Why are we given the invitation to obey the gospel if our response has already been set? Why does God punish a man for doing what was programmed
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for him to do, without regard to the individual's desires? God is no respecter of persons.

- 1) Joshua 24:15: "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."
 - 2) Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."
- c. Psalms 8: "O LORD our Lord, how excellent *is* thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all *things* under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, *and whatsoever* passeth through the paths of the seas. O LORD our Lord, how excellent *is* thy name in all the earth!"
4. Verses 11-12: "Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what *is* man the better? For who knoweth what *is* good for man in *this* life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?"
- a. There are many things under the sun which increase our vanity. What profit is there in them for man? Who knows what is good for man? Man, with his worldly wisdom, does not know. Only God can know.
 - 1) Genesis 1:26-27: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."
 - 2) Matthew 6:8: "Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."
 - 3) John 2:24-25: "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all *men*, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man."
 - b. No man can reveal future earthly events; only God can know.
 - 1) Psalms 39:6: "Surely every man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up *riches*, and knoweth not who shall gather them."
 - 2) Ecclesiastes 8:7: "For he knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be?"
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ECCLESIASTES 7

A. Ecclesiastes 7:1: The Value of a Good Name.

1. Ecclesiastes 7:1: "A good name *is* better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth."
 - a. By *name*, the wise man means our reputation. The *name* we have decides our influence. In the gospel system, our influence is extremely important, even more so than under the Mosaic system, since they were not charged with a world-wide mission of converting the unbelievers.
 - 1) Having a good name with people is paramount, if we expect to convert the lost. "For though I be free from all *men*, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with *you*" (1 Cor. 9:19-23).
 - 2) Having a good name is essential to be acceptable to God.
 - a) 2 Corinthians 7:1: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."
 - b) 1 John 3:1-3: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."
 - b. Proverbs 22:1: "A *good* name *is* rather to be chosen than great riches, *and* loving favour rather than silver and gold."
 - c. Paul was not being petty, but was endeavoring to preserve his good name, when he demanded that the ones who imprisoned him to personally release him: "And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace. But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast *us* into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans. And they came and besought them, and brought *them* out, and desired *them* to depart out of the city" (Acts 16:36-39). If Paul and Silas had quietly left town, the population might have gotten the idea that they had been punished for criminal behavior. When the magistrates personally released them from prison, that was an announcement that the preachers were innocent, and therefore their influence for good was unimpaired.
2. The day of death, Solomon says, is better than the day of one's birth. This is not to be taken as a universal proposition, for he gives a limiting statement later: "For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion" (Eccl. 9:4).
 - a. Thus, there are some exceptions to the statement he made in the text. For one who dies in sin, death is not better (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; Rev. 21:8; cf. Matt. 26:24; Acts 1:25). As long as a sinner lives on earth, there is the possibility (although it may be remote) that he will come to repentance.
 - 1) Matthew 26:24: "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom

the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born."

- 2) Acts 1:25: "That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place."
 - 3) Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."
 - 4) Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
 - 5) Revelation 21:8: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."
- b. The death of the primary provider in a family may create extreme hardship on the family, hence his death was not better than his birth, as far as his loved ones are concerned.
- c. But when a faithful child of God passes into eternity, he finds a far better state. At birth he enters a state of hardship, trouble, and suffering, but at death he leaves behind all of these distresses.
- 1) Job 14:1: "Man *that is* born of a woman *is* of few days, and full of trouble."
 - 2) Psalms 16:11: "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore."
 - 3) Romans 8:17-18: ""And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together. *18* For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us."
 - 4) Philippians 1:21,23: "For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain....For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:"
 - 5) 2 Timothy 3:12: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."
 - 6) Revelation 14:13: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."
- d. "[Name ... ointment] The likeness between reputation and odor supplies a common metaphor: the contrast is between reputation, as an honorable attainment which only wise people win, and fragrant odor, as a gratification of the senses which all people enjoy" [Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft].
- e. "Is better than precious ointment (Prov 22:1)—used lavishly at costly banquets, and peculiarly refreshing in the sultry East. The Hebrew for name and for ointment have a happy paronomasia, sheem (OT:8034), shemen (OT:8081). So our phrase to be in good odour....And the day of death ... birth. Not a general censure upon God for creating man, but, connected with the previous clause, death is to him who hath a godly name 'better' than the day of his birth—'far better,' as Phil 1:23 hath it. This is the consolation offered to those mourning the death of godly friends (Eccl 7:2; Isa 57:1-2). Their 'good name' still endures, and shall be blessed on earth (Prov 10:7; Ps 112:6). Their day of death also teaches more instructive lessons than the day of their birth. The light of life, says the Preacher, is sweet (Eccl 11:7), and we have good reason to 'eat and drink with a merry heart' (Eccl 9:4,7-8). But this present life is not to be our chief good: that is not to be found until we change this vale of tears for the realms of tearless joy (Rev 14:13)" [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft].

B. Ecclesiastes 7:2-10: The Value of Suffering.

1. Verse 2: "*It is* better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that *is* the end of all men; and the living will lay *it* to his heart."
 - a. Another contrasting statement is given here. It is better, the wise man says, to go to a house of mourning than to a house of feasting. What good can come from attending a revelry? Attending a funeral, on the other hand, might teach one some needed lessons.
 - b. Pleasure teaches little; mourning teaches us to rely on the Lord. Beholding death teaches us that life is brief at best, and that death is certain. The thoughtful individual will be instructed when he enters where death has visited.
 - c. "The thought in the last verse leads to the recollection of the circumstances which accompany the two events therein mentioned—birth and death, feasting and joy, in the first case; sorrow and mourning in the second. In recommending the sober, earnest life, Koheleth teaches that wiser, more enduring lessons are to be learned where grief reigns than in the empty and momentary excitement of mirth and joyousness" [Pulpit Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2001 by BibleSoft].
 - d. "Our Saviour both feasted at the wedding of his friend in Cana and wept at the grave of his friend in Bethany; and we may possibly glorify God, and do good, and get good, in the house of feasting; but, considering how apt we are to be vain and frothy, proud and secure, and indulgent of the flesh, it is better for us to go to the house of mourning, not to see the pomp of the funeral, but to share in the sorrow of it, and to learn good lessons, both from the dead, who is going thence to his long home, and from the mourners, who go about the streets" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1991 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
 2. Verses 3-4: "Sorrow *is* better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise *is* in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools *is* in the house of mirth."
 - a. He contrasts laughter and sorrow, and says it is better to mourn than to have mirth. Again, some limitations are implied. The New Testament teaches Christians to be joyful (Phil. 4:4); but it also requires mourning (Matt. 5:4). We are to mourn over our sins and rejoice over the blessings we have.
 - b. In facing the reality of sin, it is better to be sorrowful than to laugh. When we see the world headed for ruin, only the most indifferent heart could laugh.
 - c. Therefore, those who see the awful condition of the world, and know the destiny awaiting sinful souls and is aware of the horrors in store for those who teach and practice false doctrine, will be sorrowful. But at the same time, there is great joy in our hearts over the hope we have, and which we can extend to the lost.
 - d. Foolish men scoff at the Bible teachings of the hereafter; they make jokes about the most serious things.
 3. Verse 5: "*It is* better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools."
 - a. A rebuke from a wise man is better for us to hear than the song of the foolish. Yet thousands will travel great distances, stand in line for hours, pay exorbitant charges, and sit in crowded, raucous, smelly auditoriums in order to hear entertainers sing their songs which often are filled with vulgarities and obscenities.
 - b. But few there are in our society who will ride in a comfortable automobile to an equally comfortable meeting place to hear the soul-saving gospel of Christ! Solomon drew a good picture of many in our generation. No one ever reaches a point in this life where he is finally beyond the need for a rebuke.
 4. Verse 6: "For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so *is* the laughter of the fool: this also *is* vanity."
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- a. The laughter of foolish people is likened to the sound of thorns crackling in the fire under the pot. It makes a merry sound, but look at the result! It is burned to ashes. The laughter of fools is empty; it gives pleasure for a moment, but the end is too awful to consider.
 - b. "To hear, not only with patience, but with pleasure, the rebuke of the wise, is a sign and means of wisdom; but to be fond of the song of fools is a sign that the mind is vain and is the way to make it more so. And what an absurd thing is it for a man to dote so much upon such a transient pleasure as the laughter of a fool is, which may fitly be compared to the burning of thorns under a pot, which makes a great noise and a great blaze, for a little while, but is gone presently, scatters its ashes, and contributes scarcely any thing to the production of a boiling heat, for that requires a constant fire! The laughter of a fool is noisy and flashy, and is not an instance of true joy. This is also vanity; it deceives men to their destruction, for the end of that mirth is heaviness. Our blessed Saviour has read us our doom: Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh; woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep, Luke 6:21,25" [Matthew Henry's Commentary, *ibid.*].
 - c. Luke 6:21, 215: "Blessed *are ye* that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed *are ye* that weep now: for ye shall laugh....Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep."
 - d. Revelation 20:12-15: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."
 - e. Revelation 21:8: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."
5. Verse 7: "Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad; and a gift destroyeth the heart."
- a. The oppression he names could be either the giving or the receiving of it. Ancient rulers were often guilty of oppressing their subjects for their own enrichment and power. To do so leads to madness, although not necessarily in the literal sense.
 - b. A monarch can become power-mad; he can lose his sense of justice. If he will oppress some person because of a bribe offered by someone else, he destroys his own heart. What happens to one who practices oppression and bribe-taking? He will lose his interest in justice; he will have no concern over right and wrong. What is the destiny of such a person? He will obviously be lost.
6. Verse 8: "Better *is* the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: *and* the patient in spirit *is* better than the proud in spirit."
- a. We tend to give up too easily. We judge the end of a matter by its beginning. If we enter some important work, and meet with defeat at the start, we often think it is a lost cause. Things can change if we patiently continue.
 - 1) Hebrews 10:35-39: "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."
 - 2) Hebrews 12:1-4: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of
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witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

- b. A small congregation may encounter financial difficulties; the members may get the notion that the work will come to naught. But even a small group of Christians, if they are dedicated to the cause of Christ, and live right, and will walk by faith, will not be deserted by the God of heaven!
 - c. There is always a need for trusting the Lord. This is a lesson easily enunciated but most difficult to learn. Although we see the truth of the proposition clearly, we must personally learn to *trust*. All too often we will enter a work only if we can see the end from the beginning; and have all the answers to all the questions, and all the solutions to all the problems we will encounter. This is walking by sight; it is not walking by faith. "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7).
 - d. Solomon admonishes us to be patient in spirit, for that is better than to be proud in spirit. If we work out all the solutions before we will start, the glory will be ours, not God's. If we show no trust in God to supply what we cannot provide, any success will be accidental or only by human power.
 - e. Without learning to trust the Lord, our strengths will be human, and our successes will likewise be human. Without *faith*, it is impossible to please God.
 - 1) Mark 16:14-16: "Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
 - 2) Romans 10:17: "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
 - 3) Romans 14:23: "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith: for whatsoever *is* not of faith is sin."
 - 4) 2 Corinthians 5:7: "For we walk by faith, not by sight."
 - 5) Hebrews 11:6: "But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."
 - f. The final outcome is more important than the beginning. Many runners enter a long distance race, but not all finish. Many people enter the Christian race, but a far smaller number complete it. The Lord's church had a very small beginning, with only a few comprising its membership, but at the end of time, those who will have served the Lord faithfully in his kingdom will be virtually innumerable.
 - g. If we connect this verse with verse seven, we learn the lesson of being patient when we fall under the heavy hand of oppression; the end will be worthwhile to the faithful man of God: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).
7. Verse 9: "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools."
- a. This statement grows out of the preceding verse. We are admonished against being hasty in spirit to become angry. If things do not work out as well as we had hoped, or success is not had as quickly as we had anticipated, we tend to grow angry. Solomon cautions us against such an action. Anger, he says, rests in the bosom of fools, not of wise men. One who allows anger to govern his heart is
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certain to do foolish things. Anger is not sinful if it is soon brought under control, and if it was kept within the bounds of righteousness while it was *loose*.

- b. Ephesians 4:26-27: "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil."
8. Verse 10: "Say not thou, What is *the cause* that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this."
 - a. If we grow weary with hardship and difficulty, we might fall into the pit of self-pity. One may be pitying himself when he asks, "Why do not we have things as easy as our fathers had?"
 - b. We sometimes think that other generations enjoyed easier times than we have. It seems to us that frontier preachers were able to baptize far more people, and do it with less effort, than we do. But they also had far worse conditions in which to work; their means of transportation and communication were primitive, and there were many spiteful enemies.
 - c. We might think that it was easier to live the Christian life in former ages, but the saints had to face the same basic temptations and problems, plus overt persecution was more likely then than now.
 - d. Solomon teaches us that we are foolish to think that former days were much better and easier than ours. We are also foolish if we think we can excuse our failure to do the will of God by blaming it on the hard times in which we live.

C. Ecclesiastes 7:11-22: The Value of Wisdom.

1. Verses 11-12: "Wisdom *is* good with an inheritance: and *by it there is* profit to them that see the sun. For wisdom *is* a defence, *and* money *is* a defence: but the excellency of knowledge *is, that* wisdom giveth life to them that have it" (KJV). "Wisdom is as good as an inheritance; yea, more excellent is it for them that see the sun. For wisdom is a defence, even as money is a defence; but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom preserveth the life of him that hath it" (ASV).
 - a. Solomon links wisdom to the idea of an inheritance. Scholars still discuss the proper translation, whether he speaks of the value of wisdom which accompanies an inheritance, or whether the marginal rendering is better (which the ASV uses), or whether wisdom is the inheritance (Leupold's view). Verse 12 lists wisdom and inheritance as separate items, thus it appears the KJV rendering is more accurate.
 - b. Wisdom with or without an inheritance is good; wisdom as an inheritance is good. The basic point of the verse is to extol the value of having wisdom: it will profit those who have it in this life.
 - c. Both wisdom and money are able to provide a defense. Either can furnish protection from the weather (by wise planning; by buying a house), from robbers, etc. But the right kind of knowledge (God's word) can preserve our lives. *Knowledge* is used in the verse as a synonym for wisdom. Wisdom excels money because money cannot give us spiritual life.
 - 1) Proverbs 8:35: "For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD."
 - 2) John 17:3: "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."
 - 3) James 1:18,21: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.... Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls."
 - 4) 1 John 5:20: "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This

is the true God, and eternal life.

- d. "Wisdom is necessary to the right managing and improving of our worldly possessions: Wisdom is good with an inheritance, that is, an inheritance is good for little without wisdom. Though a man have a great estate, though it come easily to him, by descent from his ancestors, if he have not wisdom to use it for the end for which he has it, he had better have been without it. Wisdom is not only good for the poor, to make them content and easy, but it is good for the rich too, good with riches to keep a man from getting hurt by them, and to enable a man to do good with them....It is of great advantage to us throughout the whole course of our passage through this world....It contributes much more to our safety, and is a shelter to us from the storms of trouble and its scorching heat; it is a shadow (so the word is), as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Wisdom is a defence, and money (that is, as money) is a defence. As a rich man makes his wealth, so a wise man makes his wisdom, a strong city....It is joy and true happiness to a man. This is the excellency of knowledge, divine knowledge, not only above money, but above wisdom too, human wisdom, the wisdom of this world, that it gives life to those that have it. The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and that is life; it prolongs life. Men's wealth exposes their lives, but their wisdom protects them. Nay, whereas wealth will not lengthen out the natural life, true wisdom will give spiritual life, the earnest of eternal life; so much better is it to get wisdom than gold" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible, *ibid.*].
2. Verse 13: "Consider the work of God: for who can make *that* straight, which he hath made crooked?"
 - a. Wisdom is able to perceive and admire the wondrous workings of God. His works are so well-wrought and permanent that no man can alter them.
 - b. Wisdom teaches us this. Worldly wisdom may think that God's designs are flawed. What man can improve them?
 - c. God's providential workings may not meet with man's approval, but only God knows what is best. If we received every item we requested in prayer, undoubtedly we would create chaos in our lives.
 3. Verse 14: "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him."
 - a. Solomon says that we are to rejoice in days of prosperity, but in days of adversity we are to *consider*. It is God who gives both days. "But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips" (Job 2:10). In days of prosperity and plenty our vices are often brought to light, but in days of adversity and pain our virtues are developed. We need both types of days for the proper balance in life. In nature, all sunshine and no rain would be as bad as all rain and no sunshine. A proper meal cannot be all cake.
 - b. "If a man should take upon himself to review the work after him, and conceive that a greater or less degree of prosperity or adversity would have been better—or that either would have sufficed, without the balance of the other—he only stands before us in all the folly and presumption of fancying himself to be wiser than God. What God has done, he has done best" (Bridges, p.159).
 - c. God knows what is best for us and for our posterity. If we "fare sumptuously" all our lives, we will be useless to the cause of God, our selfishness and ease will destroy our own souls, and our children and grandchildren will most likely follow our example. Man is unable to see the future of earthly events that shall unfold after his death; God can, thus in his wisdom he sends both good and hard times upon us. The wicked rich man of Luke 16:19-31 could not see the present estate of his five brothers back on earth; he knew the kind of men they were before his death; he presumed that they had not changed.
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4. Verses 15-18: "All *things* have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just *man* that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked *man* that longeth *his life* in his wickedness. Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time? *It is* good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all."
- a. Solomon had seen during his lifetime in the flesh the righteous man who perished and the wicked man that lived long in his wickedness. Just because one is righteous does not guarantee a long and prosperous life; neither does a life of evil mean that such a person will die young. But in the end the wicked and the righteous will be justly rewarded.
 - b. A word of caution grows out of verse 15 for those who are righteous. "Do not think that you will assure yourself a long and prosperous life by going to religious extremes." If one who is genuinely righteous is not guaranteed earthly prosperity, those who are overzealous in religion cannot expect it. "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind....Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh" (Col. 2:18, 23). Solomon does not encourage a half-hearted religion; he cautions against extremes. If one does so, he is overly "wise" and destroys himself. To go beyond God's law is sin.
 - c. Another word of caution growing out of verse 15 is addressed to those who have a kind view of sin. "Do not give yourself over to wickedness. To do so is to be foolish, and bring on premature death." To plunge into sin is to invite an early death, perhaps from punishment from on high. Solomon is not encouraging one to dabble in sin, for the wages of sin, any sin, is death (Rom. 6:23; 1 John 3:4). The verse recognizes that even the most righteous person is subject to commit sin; one must strive with his might to keep away from its evil allurements lest he be overtaken and destroyed. To come short of God's requirements, or violate them in any way, is sin.
 - 1) Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 10:12-13: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."
 - 3) 1 Thessalonians 5:22: "Abstain from all appearance of evil."
 - 4) 1 John 1:7-10: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."
 - 5) 1 John 3:4: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."
 - d. The wise man encourages his readers (vs. 18) to take hold of this lesson, for to so is to fear God, and those who fear God shall be more highly esteemed by Him than any.
 - 1) Proverbs 1:7: "The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction."
 - 2) Ecclesiastes 12:13: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his
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commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man."

5. Verses 19-20: "Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty *men* which are in the city. For *there is* not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."
 - a. Wisdom can do more for a man than ten mighty men defending a city. A walled city was relatively easy to defend. Everyone needs wisdom, for no one is above sin, and wisdom can keep you from committing sin.
 - b. Verse 20 describes the state of all accountable persons—outside of the realm of salvation. "The wisdom above signified is, indeed, absolutely necessary, if one would escape the consequences of that frailty of nature which leads to transgression. Wisdom shows the sinner a way out of the evil course in which he is walking, and puts him back in that fear of God which is his only safety" [Pulpit Commentary, *ibid.*].
 - 1) 1 Kings 8:46: "If they sin against thee, (for *there is* no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near."
 - 2) Proverbs 20:9: "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?"
 - 3) Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."
 - 4) James 3:2: "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same *is* a perfect man, *and* able also to bridle the whole body."
 - 5) 1 John 1:8: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." [This is said about Christians, for we are not beyond the reach of temptation].
6. Verses 21-22: "Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee: For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others."
 - a. No one is utterly free from speaking against another; the master has been critical of the servant, so he should not be over-concerned to learn that his servant has spoken critically against the master. Sin does not recognize social lines.
 - b. "Here is another matter in which wisdom will lead to right conduct. You will not pay serious attention to evil reports either about yourself or others, nor regulate your views and actions according to such distortions of the truth. To be always hankering to know what people say of us is to set up a false standard, which will assuredly lead us astray; and, at the same time, we shall expose ourselves to the keen—eat mortification when we find, as we probably shall find, that they do not take us at our own valuation, but have thoroughly marked our weaknesses, and are ready enough to censure them. We have an instance of patience under unmerited reproof in the case of David when cursed by Shimei (2 Sam 16:11), as he, or one like minded, says (Ps 38:13), 'I, as a deaf man, hear not; and I am as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. Yea, I am as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs'" [Pulpit Commentary, *ibid.*].
 - c. We do ourselves an injustice and accrue unnecessary pain by allowing the disparaging words others speak against us to destroy our peace of mind. It is also possible that we have uttered similar ugly words against them. A wise man will not speak evil of us, hence overheard evil words are not likely to be of benefit. However, the rebuke of a wise man, which he will direct to us directly, are worthy of heeding. Wisdom on our part will enable us to discern whether the speaker is attacking us to do us injury, or is offering information that will strengthen us.

D. Ecclesiastes 7:23-29: Solomon's Quest for Wisdom.

1. Verses 23-25: "All this have I proved by wisdom: I said, I will be wise; but it *was* far from me. That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out? I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason *of things*, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness *and* madness."
 - a. He says wisdom is hard to obtain: it was far off and exceedingly deep. But he applied himself to learn it, and thus to perceive the baseness of folly and madness.
 - b. Obtaining wisdom or knowledge is demanding, on our time, our strength, and perhaps also our money. Those things that are the most worthwhile are also difficult to obtain. Anyone can learn to sin, but not everyone is willing to expend the resources necessary to obtain righteousness and godliness.
 - c. "Thus he possessed wisdom up to a certain degree, and in part; but his purpose...was to possess it fully and completely; i.e., not merely to be able to record observations and communicate advices, but to adjust the contradictions of life, to expound the mysteries of time and eternity, and generally to solve the most weighty and important questions which perplex men. But this wisdom was for him still in the remote distance. It is the wisdom after which Job, ch. 28, made inquiry in all regions of the world and at all creatures, at last to discover that God has appointed to man only a limited share of wisdom" [Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
 2. Verse 26: "And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart *is* snares and nets, *and* her hands *as* bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her."
 - a. He had found by wisdom that a conniving, trap-laying woman is worse than death. Only the God-fearing man will escape her clutches; a sinful man is helpless before her.
 - b. A man (or a woman) who is handsome (or beautiful), wealthy, or occupies a position of power and authority, will have to deal with many conniving and grasping suitors. Solomon could speak with the voice of bitter experience. We can only wonder how many of his 700 wives and 300 concubines truly loved him—and how many of them he loved.
 3. Verses 27-28: "Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, *counting* one by one, to find out the account: Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found."
 - a. In his search, he had found only one man in a thousand who was upright; but he had not found a single upright woman among a thousand. This is not a blanket condemnation of women in every age and place, but is his depiction of the corruption of those of his time with whom he was acquainted. One is not apt to find a jewel in a pig sty.
 - b. "This have I found—namely, what is stated in the previous part of the book....(Counting) one by one—by comparing one thing with another....To investigate a subject thoroughly we should, like Solomon, take up only one part of it at a time and thoroughly sift it, and then similarly take up another part, and so consecutively until we have thoroughly examined the whole....Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found....One man—i.e., worthy of the name 'man,' 'upright:' not more than one in a thousand of my courtiers (Job 33:23; Ps 12:1). Jesus Christ alone of men fully realizes the perfect ideal of 'man'....No perfect 'woman' has ever existed, not even the Virgin Mary. Solomon, in the word 'thousand,' alludes to his 300 wives and 700 concubines (1 Kings 11:3). Among these it was not likely that he should find the fidelity which one true wife pays to one husband. This verse is connected with Eccl 7:26, which condemns the seducing woman, and is not therefore to be taken as an universal and unqualified condemnation of the sex, as Prov 12:4, etc., prove. But the thing which Solomon here speaks of his
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seeking in vain is WISDOM—i.e., the full knowledge of the deep ways of God by investigation....Spiritual uprightness is an indispensable qualification for a right research after the wisdom in question. Solonion disqualified himself for it so long as he sinned with the strange women (Eccl 7:26)” [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, *ibid.*].

4. Verse 29: "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions."
 - a. God made man to be upright, but man corrupts himself when he seeks out things of his own choosing, which things contaminate his soul. The Bible does not teach the sectarian doctrine of original sin—that babies inherit the sins of their fathers and other ancestors. Rather, as this passage shows, we come from God free from any taint of sin; we become guilty of sin only after we have transgressed personally God word, for that is what constitutes sin (1 John 3;40).
 - 1) Ezekiel 18:20: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."
 - 2) Ezekiel 28:15: "Thou *wast* perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee."
 - 3) Genesis 8:21: "And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done."
 - 4) Matthew 18:3: "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."
 - 5) Matthew 19:14: "But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."
 - b. “Man has thus abased his free-will, and employed the inventive faculty with which he was endowed in excoriating evil (Gen 6:5). How this state of things came about, how the originally good man became thus wicked, the writer does not tell. He knows from revelation that God made him upright; he knows from experience that he is now evil; and he leaves the matter there” [Pulpit Commentary, *ibid.*].

ECCLESIASTES 8

A. Ecclesiastes 8:1-8: Wisdom Causes the Face to Shine.

1. Verse 1: "Who *is* as the wise *man*? and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? a man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed."
 - a. The two questions with which this chapter begins point us to the power of wisdom. Wisdom is, of course, that which makes a wise man wise; and it is wisdom which is able to provide the proper interpretation of a matter.
 - b. There is a great difference between heavenly wisdom and worldly wisdom. The source and nature of each mark the distinction. Only heavenly wisdom can give answer to the meaning of life, what to do to be saved, what lies beyond this life, and a host of other timeless questions.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 1:18-29: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 2:9-14: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, *yea*, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned."
 - c. Wisdom is able to make the face to shine. Wisdom has an effect on the one who has it. There is no change in the face itself: we still look the same. But when one is converted to the Lord, observable changes in his heart are wrought, which are outwardly demonstrated. Expressions of anger and hatred are softened; the countenance, disposition, and demeanor now indicate an inner happiness.
 - d. The "boldness" (*hardness*, ASV) of his face is changed and is made to *shine*. Take Saul of Tarsus as a case in point. His physical appearance was not altered when he was converted, but his actions and mind were changed. Before, he looked with anger and hatred upon the followers of Christ; now, he was part of them. Often, when one is converted, his former fear is changed into confidence; he is at ease within himself; he does not live in terror of the adversaries; there is a deep-seated

contentedness about him; outward troubles do not destroy his peace of mind. "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content" (Ph. 4:11).

- e. These changes are not wrought instantly. But as we delve deeper into the riches of the gospel, as we serve the Lord, we are transformed day-by-day to become more like the Savior.
 - 1) Romans 12:1-2: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 3:18: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord."
 2. Verse 2: "I *counsel thee* to keep the king's commandment, and *that* in regard of the oath of God."
 - a. By the authority of an inspired spokesman, the wise man gives counsel that his auditors take heed to the commandment of the king. It appears that the *king* is the civil ruler, although Leupold thinks the reference is to God. The second half of the verse also has a difficulty: is the oath one which God has made or one which he has required of men?
 - b. "[In regard of the oath of God.] You have sworn obedience to him; keep your oath, for the engagement was made in the presence of God. It appears that the Jewish princes and chiefs took an oath of fidelity to their kings. This appears to have been done to David, 2 Sam 5:1-3; to Joash, 2 Kings 11:17; and to Solomon, 1 Chron 29:24" [Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by BibleSoft].
 - c. Certainly, God requires allegiance to his authority; it is equally true that he demands obedience to the lawful decrees of earthly rulers (Rom. 13:1ff). The latter seems to be the reference here.
 - d. The oath might be the heavenly decree, that those who disobey civil, rulers must answer to God, from whom all authority descends. The same practical application develops if the oath is our pledge of obedience to the God of heaven or to the civil ruler.
 - 1) Daniel 4:32: "And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling *shall be* with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will."
 - 2) John 19:10-11: "Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power *at all* against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin."
 - 3) Romans 13:1-5: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore *ye* must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."
 3. Verse 3: "Be not hasty to go out of his sight: stand not in an evil thing; for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him."
 - a. To be part of the *court* of a king was an honor; to depart from that situation hastily, or rashly, would
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be to give up that honor. To stand (or persist in) in evil is denounced. This reference, if interpreted in direct connection with the context, is one which depicts open rebellion against, or resistance to, the lawful king.

- b. The wise man, therefore, warns that the king is able to do what pleases him to do; that he is empowered to bring punishment upon the offender. If the king is a reference to God, the punishment is even more sure.
 - c. "Further advice concerning political behavior. Be not hasty to go out of his (the king's) sight. Do not, from some hasty impulse, or induced by harsh treatment, cast off your allegiance to your liege lord. We have the phrase, 'go away,' in the sense of quitting of service or desertion of a duty, in Gen 4:16; Hos 11:2. So Peter urges servants to be subject unto their masters, 'not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward' (1 Peter 2:18). Solomon might have given this advice to the Israelites who were ready to follow Jeroboam's lead; though they could have remained loyal to Rehoboam only from high religious motives. But it is better to bear even a heavy yoke than to rebel" [Pulpit Commentary, *ibid.*].
4. Verses 4-5: "Where the word of a king *is, there is* power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou? Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment."
- a. In a monarchy, no one has the authority to bring the king into question. His word is the law; the power of the kingdom is behind his decrees. The greatest power in the universe is behind the decrees of God.
 - b. One who is obedient to the lawful decrees of an earthly king has nothing to fear from that king. The wise man will be able to discern the time and judgment. He is able by his wisdom to know when and what to say or do in order to retain the king's good pleasure. A faithful child of God has no reason to fear retribution from his heavenly Father as long as he does his Father's will; and he will know by wisdom what to say and do as he serves his Father.
5. Verse 6: "Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, therefore the misery of man *is* great upon him."
- a. A man will generally have the time and opportunity to do, or try to do, what he has purposed to do. And since many things which men do are evil, and since evil brings adversity upon those who do it, the misery of such men is great. If God's will is the object of rejection here, the misery suffered by violators of his word is great indeed.
 - b. Another view of the verse shows that there are times and opportunities for doing good things; if these are ignored, misery is the outcome. God opens many doors for us, and if we shun them, we do so to our own hurt.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 16:9: "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and *there are* many adversaries."
 - 2) Revelation 3:8: "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name."
6. Verse 7: "For he knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be?"
- a. It is not within the scope of our powers to know the future. Opportunities open up to us as we make our journey through life. Only if we have wisdom are we able to discern them. Hence, we need to pray for opportunities, for wisdom to perceive them, and for the strength and courage to make the best use of them.
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- b. Acts 14:27: "And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles."
 - c. Acts 19:8-20: "And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of *one* Sceva, a Jew, *and* chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all *men*: and they counted the price of them, and found *it* fifty thousand *pieces* of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed."
 - d. Colossians 4:2: "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving."
 - e. 2 Thessalonians 3:1: "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have *free* course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you."
7. Verse 8: "*There is* no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither *hath he* power in the day of death: and *there is* no discharge in *that* war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it."
- a. This statement is a general truth which affects every person, whether great or small in authority. No man is able to retain the spirit within the human body, thus to prevent death. No one can do so for others, or for himself.
 - b. A physician's skill and a hospital's facilities may prolong the inevitable, but they cannot forestall it. No one has power in the day of death to defeat it and drive it away. "It is appointed unto man once to die" is a divine decree admitting of no exceptions, save those of Enoch and Elijah. In the war with death, there are no discharges given.
 - c. Wickedness, with all its power of evil, cannot deliver from death those who have given themselves over to its bondage. Both the good and the wicked face death.
 - d. "When the soul is required it must be resigned, and it is to no purpose to dispute it, either by arms or arguments, by ourselves, or by any friend: There is no man that has power over his own spirit, to retain it, when it is summoned to return to God who gave it. It cannot fly any where out of the jurisdiction of death, nor find any place where its writs do not run. It cannot abscond so as to escape death's eye, though it is hidden from the eyes of all living. A man has no power to adjourn the day of his death, nor can he by prayers or bribes obtain a reprieve; no bail will be taken, no *essoine* [excuse], protection, or *imparlance* [conference], allowed. We have not power over the spirit of a friend, to retain that; the prince, with all his authority, cannot prolong the life of the most valuable of his subjects, nor the physician with his medicines and methods, nor the soldier with his force, not the orator with his eloquence, nor the best saint with his intercessions....Death is an enemy that we must
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all enter the lists with, sooner or later: There is no discharge in that war, no dismissal from it, either of the men of business or of the faint-hearted, as there was among the Jews, Deut 20:5,8. While we live we are struggling with death, and we shall never put off the harness till we put off the body, never obtain a discharge till death has obtained the mastery; the youngest is not released as a fresh-water soldier, nor the oldest as miles emeritus—a soldier whose merits have entitled him to a discharge....Men's wickedness, by which they often evade or outface the justice of the prince, cannot secure them from the arrest of death, nor can the most obstinate sinner harden his heart against those terrors" [Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible, *ibid.*].

B. Ecclesiastes 8:9-13: The Wicked Will be Punished and the Righteous Will be Rewarded.

1. Verse 9: "All this have I seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is done under the sun: *there is* a time wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt."
 - a. The wise man had seen in his experiences certain occasions in which one man was able to rule over other men; this was done to the hurt of both.
 - b. Many in the Old South owned slaves, but the time came when that proved to be a detriment to their own souls and their own lives.
 - c. "This may be spoken of rulers generally, who, instead of feeding, fleece the flock; tyrants and oppressors, who come to an untimely end by their mismanagement of the offices of the state. All these things relate to Asiatic despots, and have ever been more applicable to them than to any other sovereigns in the world. They were despotic; they still are so" [Adam Clarke's Commentary, *ibid.*].
2. Verse 10: "And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: *this is* also vanity."
 - a. Corrupt men had ruled over God's holy house, but in time they lost their power, and were forgotten. What became of the oppressors and evil leaders of the past?
 - b. Those who live by the sword will often die by the sword. "Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matt. 26:52).
 - c. "And gone from the place of the holy—from the place of judicature, where they sat as God's representatives (Ps 82:1-6). Joab, by Solomon's command, was sent to the grave from the 'holy place' in the temple, which was not a sanctuary to murderers (Ex 21:14; 1 Kings 2:28,31). The very word 'bury' is used there. So the 'wicked rulers' (Eccl 8:9) and high priests, who condemned Jesus, in God's time of judgment had to 'go from the place of the holy,' the temple, to the grave. 'The place of the holy' (the place of judicature, and the temple, and the holy city and congregation) was not the rightful place of the wicked. Therefore in God's due time they must go from it forever (cf. Isa 4:3; 52:1; 49:17)" [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, *ibid.*].
3. Verse 11: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."
 - a. But God does not immediately punish every evil deed. Because just punishment is not usually swift in coming, many sinners persist in doing evil. When sin is committed, sentence is passed; but the penalty is not executed immediately.
 - b. God gives men "space for repentance" due to his longsuffering nature.
 - 1) Genesis 6:3: "And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also *is* flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years."
 - 2) 1 Peter 3:20: "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in

the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."

- 3) 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."
 - 4) Revelation 2:21: "And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not."
- c. No one would be left alive who transgressed his word if he executed every sinner immediately upon the commission of sin.
- 1) Ecclesiastes 7:20: "For *there is* not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."
 - 2) Ecclesiastes 7:29: "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions."
 - 3) Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"
- d. Most people walk by sight, not by faith. Although God has revealed the penalty for sin, most will choose to disregard it since they do not see him carrying out his threat. One bold atheist called on God to strike him dead; this was the argument he used to *prove* there was no God.
- e. God's promises to punish the wicked are just as sure as his promises to reward the righteous.
- 1) Matthew 25:46: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."
 - 2) 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10: "Seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."
4. Verses 12-13: "Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his *days* be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him. But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong *his* days, *which are* as a shadow; because he feareth not before God."
- a. If a sinful man commits hundreds of sins, and apparently gets by with it, that does not militate against the reward of the righteous. Just because a wicked man lives for many years in his iniquity, and prospers materially in the meantime, does not argue against the blessings God has promised to the godly. It simply means that as he is waiting until the proper time to bestow the rewards of godliness, so he is waiting for the proper time for the outpouring of the just punishment the wicked are to receive.
 - b. Although the wicked man may live for many years, his life will surely come to an end; his life is but a shadow. It is then that he will receive his full reward.

C. Ecclesiastes 8:14-17: Man's Inability to Comprehend God's Works.

1. Verse 14: "There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just *men*, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked *men*, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said that this also *is* vanity."
 - a. Evil things happen to good men; and good things happen to evil men. One cannot look at the good or bad things that happen to a man in this life and determine whether he is either good or evil himself.
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- b. If we were merely to judge from outward circumstances, we might get the foolish notion that righteousness does not pay. Solomon suggested this philosophy for consideration, but quickly points out that there is more to God's dealings that meets the eye.
- c. J.W. McGarvey relates the following "Conversation" between an unbeliever and a Christian:
- 1) *"The Bible is a failure; for there are only a few that will be saved."* Answer: Infidelity is a much greater failure; for by it nobody at all will be saved."
 - 2) *According to the Bible account of things, the devil is more powerful than God."* Answer: Better wait till the fight is over, before you decide who whips.
 - 3) *If the Bible is true, it would be better not to have been created."* Answer: But you have been created; so you had better make the best of it.
 - 4) *None but the friends of Jesus testified to his resurrection."* Answer: Of course not; for honest men could not testify to his resurrection till they knew it to be a fact, and that knowledge made them his friends.
 - 5) *"The witnesses of the resurrection were all interested witnesses."* Answer: Yes; they were interested to the extent of receiving imprisonment, scourging and death for testifying. [J.W. McGarvey, *Biblical Criticism*, July 18, 1893]
2. Verse 15: "Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun."
- a. "These are some more of the cavils of the infidel objector: 'Since virtue is frequently under oppression, and vice triumphs in health, and rolls in wealth, I see plainly that we should not trouble ourselves about future things'" (Clarke, p.827).
 - b. The philosophy of, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die" is a fool's doctrine. One who looks only at the surface of life might foolishly think this is the way he should operate, and a great many of our generation have fallen victim to this folly. But God shall bring into the Judgment every thing, good and evil, and will reward the individual accordingly (Eccl. 12:13-14).
 - 1) Romans 14:10-12: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, *As I live*, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."
 - 2) 2 Corinthians 5:10-11: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done in his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences."
 - c. David perceived the truth about this proposition: "Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full *cup* are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? Behold, these *are* the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase *in* riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend *against* the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it *was* too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction" (Psa. 73:10-18).
3. Verses 16-17: "When I applied mine heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the
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earth: (for also *there is that* neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes:) Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek *it* out, yet he shall not find *it*; yea farther; though a wise *man* think to know *it*, yet shall he not be able to find *it*."

- a. He applied himself to learn wisdom, apparently going without sleep during the quest. Though a man gives himself wholly to the discovery of God's works, he is unable to fully uncover them. There is a mass of information that man does not know.
 - b. There are innumerable truths about the earth and its operations, including details of its life-forms, which have not yet been learned by man. There is so much information to be discovered and learned that there will still be secrets unknown to man until the end of the earth.
 - c. Solomon lived during a time when only a small portion of God's will had been revealed; even though we live during the sunlight age of Christianity, there are still things hidden from our eyes. The Bible is such a rich storehouse of information that many lifetimes could not discern the fullness thereof. We may perceive some of God's purposes, but we still await eternity when we shall understand it more fully. We can see to some degree why the righteous must suffer; to some degree we see why the wicked prosper; but who can comprehend the fullness of this and other mysteries of God's purposes?
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ECCLESIASTES 9

A. Ecclesiastes 9: 1-3: Troubles and Blessings Come Upon the Good and the Evil.

1. Verses 1-2: "For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, *are* in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred *by* all *that is* before them. All *things come* alike to all: *there is* one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as *is* the good, so *is* the sinner; *and* he that sweareth, as *he* that feareth an oath."
 - a. Having considered the preceding information, Solomon states that the righteous and the wise, and their works, are all in the hand of God. No man is able to know if the things that happen to him are for his punishment or good. He can know if he is walking in the light of the gospel as a faithful saint. Based on that fact, the individual who is undergoing problems can perceive that those troubles are intended for his good.
 - b. The difficulties and sorrows that come upon many wicked men, also come upon the righteous (9:2). By looking at the hardships in a man's life, no one can determine from them whether that person is righteous or good, whether his sufferings are intended to punish or strengthen.
 - c. Both Ahab and Josiah lost their lives in battle.
 - 1) 1 Kings 22:34: "And a *certain* man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded."
 - 2) 2 Kings 23:29: "In his days Pharaohnechoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him."
 - d. Abraham and Haman were both wealthy.
 - 1) Genesis 13:2: "And Abram *was* very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold."
 - 2) Esther 5:11: "And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all *the things* wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king."
 - e. It does not matter whether a man is righteous or wicked; good and clean or evil and unclean; whether he obeys God or does not obey God; whether he is a good man or a sinner; whether he uses or does not use oaths: there are blessings and sorrows which all must face.
 - f. God sends his rain and sunshine upon all, and he provides even the rankest sinner with many of earth's bounties.
 - 1) Matthew 5:45: "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."
 - 2) Acts 14:17: "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."
 - 3) 1 Timothy 4:10: "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."
 - g. The wise man shows in verses 7-10 the attitude with which God's people can meet their earthly travails. Although everyone has difficulties in life, the child of God has many definite advantages. He has the guidance of God's wisdom in meeting his problems; he has the comfort and confidence

that comes by knowing God cares and can help; and when life here is done, he has the hope of heaven.

2. Verse 3: "This *is* an evil among all *things* that are done under the sun, that *there is* one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness *is* in their heart while they live, and after that *they go* to the dead."
 - a. One of the bad things on earth is the fact that the saint and the sinner must each face the turmoils of life. This is one of the consequences of sin (Gen. 3).
 - b. Sinful men deserve the troubles which come their way. Their hearts are full of wickedness (cf. 7:20,29; 8:11-12). Not only must they face the consequences of their sins here, but when they die, they suffer the full penalty of the dead sinner.
 - 1) Ecclesiastes 7:20: "For *there is* not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."
 - 2) Ecclesiastes 7:29: "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions."
 - 3) Ecclesiastes 8:11-12: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his *days* be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him."
 - c. But even the saint has a background of sin, and stumbles into sin occasionally after he becomes a Christian (Rom. 3:23; 1 John 1:7-10). Many times, there are certain consequences he must endure for his past sins even as he lives the Christian life. Sometimes the consequences are in the form of some physical malady produced by a sinful life (cf. drunkenness; drugs; fornication); there may be awful scars on the conscience, which produce pain when we remember our former evil ways. Paul could never forget his previous conduct.
 - 1) Acts 22:19-20: "And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him."
 - 2) Acts 26:9-11: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against *them*. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them* even unto strange cities."
 - 3) 1 Timothy 1:13-15: "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

B. Ecclesiastes 9:4-6: The Knowledge of Death.

1. Verse 4: "For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion."
 - a. While a man lives, there is hope. Solomon illustrates this by asserting that a living dog is better than a dead lion.
 - b. As we live amid our troubles, we *hope* that our circumstances will change for the better. As long as we are alive, there is the possibility that we will obey the will of God. A living beggar is better off than a rich man who died in his sins.
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- c. "The dog in Palestine was not made a pet and companion, as it is among us, but was regarded as a loathsome and despicable object (comp. 1 Sam 17:43; 2 Sam 3:8); while the lion was considered as the noblest of beasts, the type of power and greatness (comp. Prov 30:30; Isa 31:4). So the proverbial saying in the text means that the vilest and meanest creature possessed of life is better than the highest and mightiest which has succumbed to death. There is an apparent contradiction between this sentence and such passages as claim a preference for death over life, e.g. Eccl 4:2; 7:1; but in the latter the writer is viewing life with all its sorrows and bitter experiences, here he regards it as affording the possibility of enjoyment. In the one case he holds death as desirable, because it delivers from further sorrow and puts an end to misery; in the other, he deprecates death as cutting off from pleasure and hope. He may also have in mind that now is the time to do the work which we have to perform: 'The night cometh when no man can work'" [Pulpit Commentary, *ibid.*].
2. Verse 5: "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten."
- a. One of the most basic truths of nature, which we come to know from an early age, is that one day we must die. There is no truth more evident than this. As we live on earth, we pass each day with the realization present in our minds that some day we will die. But the dead man knows nothing of what is transpiring *under the sun*. Life on earth is a probationary period during which we prepare for eternity.
- b. Following death, we face the consequences of the life we lived during this period of testing. The nature of these consequences depends on the nature of our life.
- 1) Romans 14:10-12: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, *As I live*, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."
- 2) 2 Corinthians 5:10-11: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done in his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences."
- 3) Revelation 20:12-15: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."
- c. After death, we lose all of our earthly possessions; the title to our automobile is given to another; the deed to our property passes into another hand; control of our money and bank accounts then belongs to someone else.
- d. And memory of our lives grows dim with the passing of years, until at last there is no one on earth that has any awareness at all of our having lived! Realization of this cold fact has caused us to develop the practice of erecting monuments and gravestones, which are carved from granite so as to endure the ages. Who knows but that the tombstone marking our grave may one day be removed and turned into paving or building material.
- e. We have only a minute knowledge of a tiny fraction of those who lived before us on earth; the rest
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have passed into oblivion, known only to God. We need God!

3. Verse 6: "Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any *thing* that is done under the sun."
 - a. The love, the hatred, and the envy that seemed so important to them while they lived on earth is now gone. After death, we are completely separated from all that is material; we have no possible use for anything physical; there is no way that a spirit being can make use of anything material in the spirit world. Flesh and blood shall not enter heaven (1 Cor. 15:50).
 - b. The things we lusted after, coveted, and fought others to obtain, will all be seen then to be utterly unimportant. No wonder God commands us to love each other, even our enemies.
 - 1) Matthew 7:12: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."
 - 2) Mark 12:29-31: "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment. And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."
 - 3) Romans 12:9: "*Let* love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good."
 - 4) Romans 13:8: "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law."
 - 5) Romans 13:10: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love *is* the fulfilling of the law."
 - c. The passage (verses 4-6) does not support the materialists' contention that man is completely mortal. It addresses the dead man's relationship with life under the sun. It teaches that we are forever separated from earthly life when we die.

C. Ecclesiastes 9:7-10: The Right Attitude to Have in View of the Foregoing.

1. Verse 7: "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works."
 - a. What he says here has application only to those who are acceptable with God. God's people may go about their daily activities with joy, because they know their standing with God is what it should be. Although they face the harsh realities of life, they have the happy realization that they are in the best possible condition to face life with its problems, and death with its potentials.
 - b. The verse says nothing about the use of alcoholic wine, for the careful student will remember that the word translated *wine* is used of both alcoholic and non-alcoholic wine, with only the context being able to show which is meant. The point the verse makes is that the child of God can enjoy the temporal blessings, realizing that their source is God.
 2. Verse 8: "Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment."
 - a. "The Jews wore white garments on festal occasions, as emblems of joy and innocence. Be always pure, and always happy. The inhabitants of India are all dressed in clean *white cotton*, and to this is the allusion in the text" (Clarke, p.829).
 - b. This tells us to be pure in life (white garments), and partake of the blessings of God (the ointment upon the head). "Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity! *It is* like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, *even* Aaron's beard: that
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went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, *and as the dew* that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, *even life for evermore*" (Psalm 133).

3. Verse 9: "Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that *is* thy portion in *this* life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun."
 - a. Live joyfully with the wife whom you love, throughout your life, which God has given you to live. This is your portion under the sun.
 - b. Solomon had horribly failed in this matter, for he had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11). He finally learned that happiness on earth could not be obtained through such a sinful arrangement.
4. Verse 10: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do *it* with thy might; for *there is* no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."
 - a. As we live here, if an activity is worthwhile, it should be pursued with all of our attention and strength. This applies to the essentials of life, but most especially to serving God.
 - b. Many worthy endeavors require all our might. Paul could never have done what he accomplished without his full interests being employed. Christ could not have finished his mission successfully without an all-out effort.
 - c. The verse indicates that our life here is a period of probation. Beyond it there is no possibility of doing anything. Without the body we can do nothing in this life; when it dies, it returns to the dust, and our spirits return to God.
 - 1) John 9:4: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.
 - 2) John 17:4: "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."
 - d. "For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave. The departed have no more work which they can do, no plans or calculations to make; their knowledge is strictly limited, their wisdom is ended. It needs body and soul to carry on the labors and activities of this world; when these are severed, and can no longer act together, there is a complete alteration in the man's relations and capacities. 'The grave,' *sheol* (which is found nowhere else in Ecclesiastes), is the place to which go the souls of the dead—a shadowy region. Whither thou goest; to which all are bound. It is plain that the writer believes in the continued existence of the soul, as he differentiates its life in *sheol* from its life on earth, the energies and operations which are carried on in the one case being curtailed or eclipsed in the other. Of any repentance, or purification, or progress, in the unseen world, Koheleth knows and says nothing" [Pulpit Commentary, *ibid.*].
 - e. When one dies and his spirit returns to God's keeping, that individual is able to nothing more on earth. He cannot do any more work here; he is unable to conceive of any plan; he cannot gain more knowledge of earthly concerns; he cannot acquire any more wisdom—all of these pertain to the time of our probation. The Preacher's point is to urge his auditors to do all within their power to do while there is time, opportunity, strength, and the means.

D. Ecclesiastes 9:11-12: Man is Subject to the Caprice of Nature.

1. Verse 11: "I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race *is* not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all."
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- a. In looking at another aspect of life, the Preacher observes that just because a man may be swift, does not mean he will win the race. All kinds of unexpected things can interfere. Just because an army has an overwhelming force of arms does not mean it is assured of victory. Some sudden turn of events can thwart its efforts, as in the case when Gideon and his three hundred men put to flight the great army of the Midianites (Judges 7). Three hundred Spartans withstood a Persian army numbering at least two hundred thousand for three days in the battle of Thermopylae in 480 B.C. The Persians finally won, but the Greeks won the approbation of history for their courageous stand.
 - b. The same kind of thing is true of the wise and wealthy and skillful. The passing of time, the time in which one lives, and the vagaries of nature, may disrupt the best plans. Being righteous or unrighteous may not guarantee success or failure in a venture.
 - c. The verse indicates that there are circumstances which naturally occur that affect the just and the unjust. While God can influence circumstances for the good of his people, that he does not control every item is manifest. There are cases where good people suffer horrible tragedies and where evil men seem to live in the lap of luxury.
2. Verse 12: "For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so *are* the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them."
 - a. Man does not know what awaits him in life. As the fish swim into the waiting net, never suspecting the danger, and as the birds are lured into the snare, so men are often victims of time and circumstance. Turning right or left on leaving a building might mean the difference in living or dying. Fatal accidents happen to faithful saints as well as to sinners.
 - b. While we walk in the providence of God, that does not guarantee complete freedom from dangers, accidents, disease, or death.
 - c. "Man acts so heedlessly, notwithstanding all his wisdom, and all his warnings, that he is often taken, as a risk is, by the baited hook; and the bird by the baited snare. And thus, an evil time, like the snare, gin, trap, hook, falleth suddenly upon them; and they are taken in a moment, and have no means of escaping. How frequently do we see these comparisons illustrated!" [Adam Clarke's Commentary, *ibid.*].

E. Ecclesiastes 9:13-18: Wisdom is Powerful but is Quickly Overlooked.

1. Verses 13-15: "This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it *seemed* great unto me: *There was* a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man."
 - a. He depicts a wise man who was able to deliver a little city which was under attack by a great army. This poor wise man used his wisdom in saving the city, but the citizens soon forgot what he had done.
 - b. The righteous need not be concerned over their good deeds being forgotten, for while man may take little notice, God is sure to remember.
 - 1) Matthew 10:42: "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."
 - 2) Hebrews 6:10: "For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."
 - 3) Revelation 14:13: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours;

and their works do follow them."

2. Verse 16: "Then said I, Wisdom *is* better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom *is* despised, and his words are not heard."
 - a. The Preacher concluded that wisdom was greater than strength, even though it is often despised and rejected. What we teach the lost is wisdom, but it is often shunned.
 - b. "I cannot help pursuing this illustration a little further. The soldier who found Archimedes busily employed in drawing figures upon the sand, put to him some impertinent question, withal rudely obtruding himself on his operations. To whom this wonderful mathematician replied, 'Stand off, soldier, and do not spoil my diagram;' on which the bloody savage struck him dead!" [Adam Clarke's Commentary, *ibid.*].
 - c. Ephesians 5:17: "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."
 3. Verses 17-18: "The words of wise *men are* heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools. Wisdom *is* better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good."
 - a. The wise man who speaks quietly his words of wisdom is heard more clearly by those who are perceptive when they need help, than is the cry of the leader of fools.
 - b. Ecclesiastes 5:1-2: "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter *any* thing before God: for God *is* in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."
 - c. Matthew 6:7-8: "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."
 - d. Wisdom is better than the mighty weapons of war. If one wise man can bring about much good, so one sinner can bring great harm. Jeroboam brought great evil upon the ten tribes of Northern Israel. Rehoboam's foolishness caused a great division in the kingdom, leading to the formation of two nations, the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom. See 1 Kings 12.
 - e. "Wisdom can do what no material force can effect, and often produces results which all the implements of war could not command. But one sinner destroyeth much good. The happy consequences which the wise man's counsel might accomplish, or has already accomplished, may be overthrown or rendered useless by the villany or perversity of a bad man" [Pulpit Commentary, *ibid.*].
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ECCLESIASTES 10

A. Ecclesiastes 10:1-15: A Variety of Proverbs.

1. Verse 1: "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: *so doth* a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom *and* honour."
 - a. Flying insects often find their way into places where they are not wanted, even in dishes of food and containers of expensive medicine. As a little insect can make an ointment to stink, so only a little foolishness can taint the reputation of one who is otherwise known as a man of wisdom and honor.
 - b. The ointment might be a medicinal concoction or perfume. In the former case, no one would want to take medicine that had been contaminated by dead flies; in the latter, the smell emitted would not be pleasant, but repulsive.
 - c. Through due care, flies can be kept out of the ointment; likewise, due precaution can prevent folly from tainting our good name. "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed *is* he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" (Rev. 16:15).
 2. Verses 2-3: "A wise man's heart *is* at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left. Yea also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth *him*, and he saith to every one *that* he *is* a fool."
 - a. The right hand is ordinarily the stronger and more skillful in doing many tasks; in olden times, to be on the right hand was considered more honorable than on the left.
 - b. To say that a wise man's heart is on his right hand is to say that it is where it belongs; it is located in an honorable position; it is strong and ready. But the foolish man's heart is just the opposite. "The wise man's eyes *are* in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all" (Eccl. 2:14).
 - c. The foolish man, having little or no wisdom, announces himself to be a fool by the way he conducts himself. The things he says and the actions he takes or does not take, all speak eloquently of his foolishness.
 3. Verse 4: "If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences."
 - a. If one is serving as counsellor to a ruler or other important person, and the one being served is not pleased with the counsel given, the counsellor ought not rashly to resign his position because the wisdom of his advice has not been accepted. Rather than forfeiting his station rashly on account of pride, he should accept the rejection; patience is able to pacify hurt feelings. The principle of the verse has application to many other relationships.
 - b. "The faithful adviser may be constrained to give unpalatable counsel; and the spirit of the ruler may *rise up against* him. Still let him not hastily *leave his place*. Jonathan indeed under this heavy provocation *left his place*, probably only for a time (1 Sam. 20:34,42); but, generally speaking, the rule of patience is wisdom" (Bridges, p.239).
 - c. 2 Samuel 12:1-7: "And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich *man* had exceeding many flocks and herds: But the poor *man* had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man
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that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, *As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man....*"

- d. "The idea seems to be that a statesman or councilor gives wise advice to a monarch, which the latter takes in bad part, and shows strong resentment against the person who offered it. Now, when a man knows himself to be in the right, and yet finds his counsel rejected, perhaps with scorn and reproach added, he is naturally prone to feel sore, and to show by some overt act his sense of the ill treatment which he has received. But what says wisdom? Leave not thy place (makom); i.e. position, post, office. Do not hastily resign the situation at court to which you have been appointed" [Pulpit Commentary, *ibid.*].
4. Verses 5-7: "There is an evil *which* I have seen under the sun, as an error *which* proceedeth from the ruler: Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place. I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth."
 - a. An evil observed by the wise man sprang from the ruler in a country or some province. The evil lay in the elevation of foolish men to positions of power. While those who were foolish were promoted, men of greater wisdom were shunned. Thus, the writer describes the situation of one where the servants rode upon horses, and princes had to walk.
 - b. Following the War Between the States, carpetbag rulers exalted former slaves, who were illiterate, to high offices in the South; this was done primarily as a means of humiliating the defeated Confederacy. During Sherman's march to the sea, union soldiers, at gunpoint, forced former slaves to sexually assault white women and girls. No doubt some slave-owners abused their slaves in equally dispicable ways. These are cases of folly riding while wisdom is forced to walk.
 - c. In our current society, folly reigns. Atheism, humanism, evolution, immorality, situation ethics, etc., are freely taught in public schools, but the great precepts of the Bible, and references to the God of heaven, are all expressly prohibited. A similar situation exists at other levels and in other settings in our society. These are also cases of folly riding while wisdom is forced to walk.
 5. Verses 8-9: "He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him. Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith; *and* he that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby."
 - a. The age-old principle of receiving what we give is stated here. One who digs a pit which he intends as a trap for another, will fall into it; one who tears down a hedge, thus exposing a neighbor's vineyard to damage by animals, will be aptly punished (he will be bitten by a serpent, literally or figuratively). The same principle is true of one who removes stones (as in tearing down a wall) or splitting wood (there is a personal danger to the man wielding the axe).
 - b. Galatians 6:7-8: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."
 6. Verse 10: "If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength: but wisdom *is* profitable to direct" (KJV). "If the ax is dull, And one does not sharpen the edge, Then he must use more strength; But wisdom brings success" (NKJ).
 - a. One who foolishly tries to chop wood with a dull instrument will have to expend far greater energy than if it had been sharpened first. Wisdom pays dividends.
 - b. "The illustration at the end of the last verse is continued. The 'iron' is the axe used in cutting wood; if this be blunted by the work to which it is put, and he, the laborer, has not sharpened the edge
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(Hebrew, the face, as in Ezek 21:1), what is the consequence? How is he to carry on his work? Then must he put to more strength. He must put more force in his blows, he must make up for the want of edge by added power and weight...Wisdom teaches how to conduct matters to a successful termination; for instance, it prompts the worker to sharpen his tool instead of trying to accomplish his task by an exertion of mere brute strength. The gnome applies to all the instances which have been mentioned above. Wisdom alone enables a man to meet and overcome the dangers and difficulties which beset his social, common, and political life" [Pulpit Commentary].

7. Verses 11-15: "Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment; and a babbler is no better. The words of a wise man's mouth *are* gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself. The beginning of the words of his mouth *is* foolishness: and the end of his talk *is* mischievous madness. A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him? The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city."
 - a. This is an allusion to the old practice of snake-charming. A snake does not have to be charmed before it will bite someone. As a snake will bite without being encouraged, so the babbler will attack when there is no cause. While the wise man speaks words that are gracious, the fool's words will destroy himself, as well as those he perceives to be his enemies.
 - b. This foolish babbler begins with foolishness and ends up in mischievous madness. He talks himself into many foolish and hurtful situations, where he injures innocent people and himself.
 - c. A fool will talk with a multitude of words about any subject, but he knows as little about any given subject as anyone else knows about the future. His ignorance is as unlimited as his willingness to talk. His ignorance is illustrated by the fact that he does not even know how to get to the city.

B. Ecclesiastes 10:16-20: Some More General Proverbs.

1. Verses 16-17: "Woe to thee, O land, when thy king *is* a child, and thy princes eat in the morning! Blessed *art* thou, O land, when thy king *is* the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!"
 - a. The great precepts which Solomon delivered to the world are not intended for only the common man; he addresses many of them to the leaders of a country. In this case, he pronounces a woe on the land which has a child for a king, and a blessing on another land whose king is the son of nobles.
 - b. Israel was greatly blessed by the godly king, Josiah. This lad began his reign when he was only 8 years old (2 Kings 22:1). He proved to be a wonderful blessing to the nation. Solomon's point in this passage seems, therefore, to be in reference to a king who was a *child in wisdom*, being essentially without understanding.
 - 1) Rehoboam is a good example (1 Kings 12). Because of his unwillingness to heed the counsel of the wise men around him, but rather gave his ear to the voice of his young companions, he drove the nation into a frightful division.
 - 2) The king and his princes Solomon has in mind are those who eat in the morning. Since there is nothing wrong with eating in the morning, he has a deeper point in mind. A wise king who is sincerely trying to lead the nation in the best way he can, will spend the most productive period of the day in discharging his duty; he will not misuse it by feasting.
 - c. A country is well blessed which has a son of nobles as its king. This king and his court will eat in due season; they will do so for the strength food provides; they will not do so for the purpose of conducting a drunken feast. This king is one who is wise, and who has the best interests of his nation as his chief aim.

2. Verse 18: "By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through."
 - a. Looking at another case where wisdom is absent, Solomon addresses the subject of slothfulness. Due to laziness, a building will be allowed to fall into disrepair. A house that is not lived in soon falls into this state. An automobile that is allowed to set up, unused and uncared for, will likewise disintegrate.
 - b. Why this is so may be difficult to grasp. The same thing happens to talents and skills; if they are not used, we lose them. If our muscles are not used, they begin to atrophy. If we do not keep our minds active, they lose their abilities. We can promote a longer and more useful life if we keep active, physically and mentally.
 - c. There is no better or faster way for a Christian to fall into spiritual decay than by being slothful. The Christian life, by its very nature, requires undying activity. We must carry our cross (our personal responsibilities to Christ) daily.
 - 1) Luke 9:23: "And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."
 - 2) Luke 13:24: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."
 - 3) John 9:4: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."
 - 4) James 2:14-26: "What *doth it* profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be *ye* warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what *doth it* profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent *them* out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."
3. Verse 19: "A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money answereth all things."
 - a. Money, properly viewed and wisely used, is a great advantage. While a feast can make for a happy occasion and wine can give merriment, money is able to answer many needs.
 - b. The reference to feasting and drinking is not intended to advocate anything sinful. Remember his statements in Proverbs 20:1 and 23:29-35. Also, keep in mind that there were some things which God overlooked during the dark, ignorant days of the Old Testament times (Acts 17:30).
 - 1) Proverbs 20:1: "Wine *is* a mocker, strong drink *is* raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."
 - 2) Proverbs 23:29-35: "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth

his colour in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, *shalt thou say*, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, *and* I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again."

- c. These gala occasions help to get the mind off the daily cares and toils of life; but they cannot remove our responsibilities and troubles.
 - d. Money can help in many ways: it can buy medical care which will perhaps give us good health and a long life; it can provide for proper housing and nourishment. But it has very definite limitations: it cannot procure happiness; it cannot give life to a dying man; if the essentials of life are not available, money will not sustain our lives until the crops are grown (i.e., gold and silver make poor substitutes for beans and potatoes!).
 - e. Money is not sinful of itself; loving money is severely denounced, however. "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and *before* Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall show, *who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom *be* honour and power everlasting. Amen. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:6-19).
4. Verse 20: "Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter."
 - a. Solomon gives a strong warning against cursing the king or the rich. He says that even though this cursing may be done in the most secret way and place, it is still possible for this evil act to be discovered. Instead, we are told to pray for, and be submissive to, those in authority.
 - 1) Romans 13:1-5: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore *ye* must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."
 - 2) 1 Timothy 2:1-2: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may
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lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

- 3) 1 Peter 2:13-17: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using *your* liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all *men*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king."
- b. He described the revealing of this sinful secret as a little bird telling on the offender. This is likely the source of our saying, "A little bird told me."
- c. One cannot hide the innermost secret from Almighty God (Heb. 4:13). These things he perceives as if they were done on an open stage, in the full sunlight. There will be many such things revealed in the Judgment which men thought were hidden. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13).
- d. The individual making the curse is harming himself greatly. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil" (Eccl. 12:13-14).
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ECCLESIASTES 11

A. Ecclesiastes 11:1-6: Various Gems of Wisdom.

1. Verse 1: "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days."
 - a. The allusion appears to be to the practice of spreading seed at the water's edge. "Blessed *are* ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth *thither* the feet of the ox and the ass" (Isa. 32:20).
 - b. Apparently, ancient farmers would sow their seed in shallow water, or on the mud as the waters receded, then led their livestock over the place to bury the seed in the earth. The Egyptians spread their seed on the Nile River floodwaters which spread out over the land for miles each year. As the waters receded, the seed was deposited in the fertile soil of the Nile floodplain. The resulting crops were renowned.
 - c. The point of the verse is evident. Although it could appear that the farmer was wasting his seed by sowing it on and near the water, in due season there would be a harvest. So those who sow spiritual seed in this life, although no harvest may be immediately seen, a full crop will be reaped.
 - d. Old and New Testament passages affirm this great truth. The principle applies to those who live the Christian life amid opposition and trouble; to those who steadfastly teach and preach the gospel; to those who help the needy.
 - 1) Psalms 126:5-6: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves *with him*."
 - 2) Luke 6:38: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."
 - 3) Luke 14:14: "And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."
 - 4) Galatians 6:9: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."
 - 5) Hebrews 6:10: "For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."
 - 6) Proverbs 19:17: "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again."
 - e. "The Midrash tells the following story: Rabbi Akiba sees a ship wrecked which carried in it one learned in the law. He finds him again actively engaged in Cappadocia. What whale, he asked him, has vomited thee out upon dry land? How hast thou merited this? The scribe learned in the law thereupon related that when he went on board the ship, he gave a loaf of bread to a poor man, who thanked him for it, saying: As thou hast saved my life, may thy life be saved. Thereupon Akiba thought of the proverb in Eccl 11:1" [Keil & Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament: New Updated Edition, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1996 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.].
 2. Verse 2: "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth."
 - a. This verse continues the thought introduced in verse one. Giving a portion of one's bounty to those in need may pay dividends in days to come. If we share with seven or even eight others, it may be that in the future we will find ourselves in their present state, and they or others will help us.
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- b. Matthew 7:1-5: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam *is* in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."
 - c. Luke 6:38: "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."
 - d. Galatians 6:9-10: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."
3. Verse 3: "If the clouds be full of rain, they empty *themselves* upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be."
- a. This statement fits the theme of verses one and two. The clouds fill up with rain, but they do not keep this earth-sustaining moisture; rather, they open their flood gates, and dispense rain without partiality upon the earth, for the benefit of all.
 - b. God's child must cultivate an attitude of unselfish giving. Material wealth we try to keep for selfish purposes, we ultimately lose anyway. Why not use it to help those who are in genuine need? The needy will be assisted, but the giver prospers even more.
 - c. The second clause in the verse teaches an excellent lesson: a tree will fall in the direction it leans in life; and after it falls, it cannot change the location where it came to rest. Thus, if we have a selfish bent in life, and do not aid the needy, after death we cannot change.
 - 1) "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4).
 - 2) "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27).
 - 3) "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Rev. 22:1; cf. Eccl. 10:9; 12:13-14).
4. Verse 4: "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap."
- a. Here Solomon teaches lessons on taking advantage of opportunities and trusting God to see to the outcome.
 - b. A farmer who spends too much time observing the weather, may be too fearful to plant his crop, thus have no harvest. He may be afraid that the elements will not be favorable to a successful yield. He must use his time and opportunity to plant, leaving the unforeseen to God, in whose way he walks.
 - 1) Proverbs 15:9: "The way of the wicked *is* an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness."
 - 2) Proverbs 20:4: "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; *therefore* shall he beg in harvest, and *have* nothing."
 - 3) Proverbs 22:13: "The slothful *man* saith, *There is* a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets."
 - c. The wise man may still be considering the proposition of aiding the needy in this passage, but the precept he gives fits many other cases. As we have opportunity to do good to the needy, to worship
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God, to teach the lost, to encourage the weak, and to restore the erring, let us seize those occasions, and trust God to work it out for the best. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:9-10).

5. Verse 5: "As thou knowest not what *is* the way of the spirit, *nor* how the bones *do grow* in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all."
 - a. The ASV has "wind" instead of "spirit." Compare: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). No one knows the way the wind will travel as it *winds* its way around the earth. No one knows the way the spirit enters the body, how it animates and clings to the body, uses the body, and finally leaves the body.
 - 1) Job 10:11: "Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews."
 - 2) Psalms 139:14-15: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvellous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, *and* curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth."
 - 3) Zechariah 12:1: "The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him."
 - 4) John 6:63: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life."
 - 5) James 2:26: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."
 - b. We cannot know the way of the spirit (or wind); we do not comprehend how the baby develops in the mother. And there are many other mysteries around us, commonplace things and events, but which man cannot always understand and explain. It is God who has designed the system by which babies are conceived, develop, and are born. What man has discovered about the universe is only a trace compared with the great abundance of things yet to be uncovered.
 - c. The writer appears to have in mind still the premise of helping the needy. If so, he teaches us that our assistance to the poor may not seem to mean anything to our own prosperity; but the outcome is in God's hands. Just because our eternal reward is not immediately forthcoming, does not mean it is mythical. In due season we will reap if we faint not (Gal. 6:9).
 - d. The precept applies with equal force to all of our obedient service and worship tendered to the Almighty. He will not forget.
 - 1) Matthew 10:42: "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."
 - 2) Hebrews 6:10: "For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."
 6. Verse 6: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both *shall be* alike good."
 - a. Solomon instructs us to use our hands in the morning and evening. That is, be active, diligent, and zealous in doing our duty in God's service. There is much to do, and little time in which to get it done. We cannot know what the full extent of our labors will be.
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- 1) Ecclesiastes 10:9: "Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith; *and* he that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby."
- 2) John 9:4: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."
- b. Many faithful men and women have served their Lord with steadfastness throughout their lives, and as far as outward appearances are concerned, their efforts were meaningless. Some have died in poverty, shunned by their fellow creatures, and perhaps their own brethren did not appreciate their true worth. But God's estimation of them has not diminished!
- c. An unbelieving farmer in a certain community boastfully asserted to his Bible-believing neighbor that God does not give Christians any special benefit. He claimed that he never prayed, never attended religious services, did not believe in the Bible or God; yet, he said, "My crops are just as bountiful as yours. You pray, you worship, you study the Bible, and my fields still produce just as much as yours." The Christian neighbor observed, "However, God does not pay out his full reward in October."
- d. God sends his rain and his sunshine upon the righteous and the unrighteous without any partiality. He loves his enemies just as he loves his friends. He blesses both in material ways in this life (Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:17; 1 Tim. 4:10), but he will bless only the righteous at the last day (Matt. 25:46; 2 Thess. 1:6-10).
 - 1) Matthew 5:44-45: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."
 - 2) Matthew 25:46: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."
 - 3) Acts 14:17: "Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."
 - 4) 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10: "Seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."
 - 5) 1 Timothy 4:10: "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."

B. Ecclesiastes 11:7-8: The Blessings of Light.

1. Verse 7: "Truly the light *is* sweet, and a pleasant *thing it is* for the eyes to behold the sun."
 - a. We all love and appreciate the light of the sun; it is a pleasant thing to see the sun, with its life-giving properties and its encouraging powers.
 - b. In the gloom of night our troubles seem to multiply and fill us with despair; but with the dawning of the sun, courage and hope are restored.
 2. Verse 8: "But if a man live many years, *and* rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of
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darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh *is* vanity."

- a. Solomon says, if a man lives for many years, and finds enjoyment while he lives, he needs to remember that he was born to die. Unless we die an untimely death by accident, disease, or violence, we will live a goodly number of years, but the last of which will be in decline. Our faculties become impaired; our bodies diminish in their strength and vitality; we cannot think as fast, or see and hear as well as before.
- b. Our declining years will be characterized, therefore, by sickness, weakness, and pain. There will likely be discouragement and sorrow, as we experience the loss of loved ones and personally face the reality of death. Earthly life is empty without a wholesome regard for and preparation for death and eternity.
- c. Therefore, Solomon admonishes, keep in mind the closing chapter of our earthly journey as we slowly make our way toward its final *amen*.

C. Ecclesiastes 11:9-10: The Joy of Youth.

1. Verse 9: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these *things* God will bring thee into judgment."
 - a. To the young man the wise man directs these comments. In the strength and vitality and confidence of youth, death and eternity seem so remote that they appear to be unreal. But even the young can die; and eventually all will die. God will bring us all into the Judgment.
 - b. It is right and good for the young to enjoy the strength of their youth, and rejoice in the advantages their youthful years provide them. Youth is a time of happiness and mirth.
 - c. But no one has any God-given right to indulge in sin. The piper must be paid. If we sow seeds of sin, we shall surely reap that awful crop! "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.⁸ For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7-8).
 - d. Forgiveness of sin is a prominent feature of the gospel. But the acids of sin leave scars that may never be healed. An infant conceived out of wedlock cannot be erased, even though its body may be destroyed in abortion. Its soul will ever exist. The young person who takes drugs (including alcohol) will retain some of its evil effects, if not on the body, then on the mind and emotions and spirit.
 - e. Attitudes are developed in youth that will follow us throughout our days on earth, and on into eternity. A rebellious attitude, hatred of the precepts of the Bible, a habit of evil thinking or evil speaking will become so much a part of us that we cannot rid ourselves of it completely. "As death finds us, so will the Judgment." It is better never to have experienced the evil of sin, than to try to overcome its effects.
 2. Verse 10: "Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth *are* vanity."
 - a. Still speaking to the young, the wise man advises that they remove sorrow from their hearts and rid themselves of evil. By keeping themselves from sin they would be able to remove sorrow from their hearts. Sin produces sorrow. Righteousness is able to develop happiness.
 - b. The devil has no truly happy old men; and the happiness of his youthful devotees is a sham. Happiness in this life can only be obtained by following God's will (Matt. 5:1-12). Since all accountable persons venture into sin (Rom. 3:23), for any of us to be happy we must give ourselves over to obeying God.
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ECCLESIASTES 12

A. Ecclesiastes 12:1-7: Remembering the Creator in Our Early Years.

1. Verse 1: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."
 - a. It is strange that remembering God should have to be taught to us, but it is a natural outgrowth of sin and selfishness for men to forget him. "And even as **they did not like to retain God in their knowledge**, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" (Rom. 1:28). In many cases our forgetfulness is due to inattention, but in the case of many others, it is a willful act. To remember involves more than having the conception in mind of the fact that there is a Creator; rather, it implies the need to devote one's self to following his word.
 - b. Having instructed the young in the preceding chapters, Solomon now calls on them to remember the Creator even during their youthful years. Youth is the best possible time to remember the Lord. This is the time when our minds are more pliable than they ever will be. After the weight of experience and years have taken their toll, our hearts may become calloused and set, impervious to teaching and change.
 - c. It is far better for one never to have known the way of sin, than to try to make the changes necessary to come back to God; the scars of sin often linger.
 - 1) Ecclesiastes 11:9-10: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these *things* God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore **remove sorrow from thy heart**, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth *are* vanity."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 14:20: "Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit **in malice be ye children**, but in understanding be men."
 - 3) 1 Timothy 4:2: "Speaking lies in hypocrisy; **having their conscience seared** with a hot iron."
 - 4) Ephesians 4:18: "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart."
 - 5) Hebrews 3:13: "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be **hardened** through the deceitfulness of sin."
 - 6) Hebrews 4:7: "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, **harden not your hearts.**"
 - d. Since God is our Creator, he owns us; we do not own ourselves. All too often, a person will spend his life selfishly, giving himself to the pleasures his strength can provide, and in his declining days turn to God, giving him only the dregs.
 - 1) Acts 17:26-28: "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."
 - 2) Romans 6:15-23: "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine

which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things *is* death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

- 3) 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."
- e. The past is gone and is irretrievable; there may be no future; the present moment is all any of us ever has. Since we have only the present moment to use, it is sensible that we use it to serve our Creator.
 - 1) 2 Corinthians 6:1-2: "We then, *as* workers together *with him*, beseech *you* also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation)."
 - 2) Hebrews 9:27-28: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."
 - 3) James 4:13-15: "Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye *ought* to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that."
 - f. The time comes when we will take no pleasure in the sins which enthralled us when we were younger. Of what interest is fornication to an ancient person? What dividend would a person dying of cancer, who is in the anguish of that horrible disease, see in carousing with the boys? The natural infirmities of old age destroy our interest in many of the sins of the flesh. However, some sins are perfected with the passing of years (greed; gossiping; cursing; lying).
 - g. The wise man's point is this: remember the Lord while we are young; serve him during our years of health and strength; and we will not end our earthly days regretting the foolishness of wasting our lives in sinful living, the habits of which will hold little joy for us in our old age.
2. Verse 2: "While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain."
 - a. The ASV gives a clearer statement of this verse: "Before the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the stars, are darkened, and the clouds return after the rain." He describes the "evil days" which closed the previous verse.
 - b. Thus, remember God before the evil days (the infirmities of old age) come when sin is no longer pleasurable; remember him while the sun, moon and stars give their light (the years of our healthy, productive life); remember him before these cease to give their light, and before the time comes when the sun does not return after the rain, when there are only more clouds instead of sunlight (when trouble and pain predominate).
 3. Verse 3: "In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be
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darkened."

- a. In this passage, Solomon gives a figurative description of the infirmities of old age. These are very illustrative of the "evil days" introduced in verse one. One of the ailments of old age is the trembling of the "keepers of the house." Our house is our body; the body's keepers are the hands. In old age, oftentimes we are afflicted with trembling, unsteady hands which have lost their skill. Our body is called a "house of clay" (Job 4:19), and a mere "tabernacle" (2 Cor. 5:1).
 - b. During our declining years, our legs and feet lose much of their former strength and abilities; they "bow themselves." In the days of our strength and health, our legs were strong and could take us up trees or over mountains, and could carry us for many miles, and gave us strength to lift great weights. But now in our old age, their strength has failed, and they now bend under a smaller weight.
 - c. The "grinders" could only be the teeth. With the advancement of years, most of us lose these grinders, thus their work cannot be done because few, if any, of them remain. However, we are well-blessed with modern inventions which make up, to some degree, for the absence of our natural teeth.
 - d. The last picture of verse three has reference to failing eyesight, a common ailment of the aged. Scientific investigation has given us the means to overcome many eye problems, but the cause of these ailments cannot be removed.
 - e. A dismal, depressing depiction is thus formed by the wise man, illustrating for us in grim detail, various old-age maladies. The point he is making is momentous: let us remember our Creator before the onset of these complaints; we cannot ignore them, but we can prepare for a better life in eternity, where these disorders will be disallowed.
 - 1) 1 Corinthians 15:50-58: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."
 - 2) Philippians 3:20-21: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."
 - 3) 1 John 3:1-3: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."
 - 4) Revelation 21:4: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."
4. Verse 4: "And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall
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rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low."

- a. Continuing the thought of the grinders (the teeth), Solomon says that the doors would be closed and the sound of their grinding would be low. With the teeth gone, and with the lips closed to keep the food in the mouth, the sound of chewing would be lessened. The lips are the doors.
 - b. He further describes old age as the time when one would rise up at the voice of a bird. Older people often sleep lightly; little things can wake them up. Even the sound of a little bird can arouse them from sleep.
 - c. The "daughters of music" is a reference to the voice apparatus. Young girls are known for their singing ability, so the word *daughters* is used as a representative of our voice. As we increase in age, our ability to sing and speak diminishes.
5. Verse 5: "Also *when* they shall be afraid of *that which is* high, and fears *shall be* in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets."
- a. Older folks are usually scared to climb, something they perhaps did adroitly in earlier years. But now they realize the danger of falling is greater, and more damage can be done to them by a fall than before. And we tend to be fearful of many things which had little effect on us when we were younger. In a time of widespread crime, many today are fearful of burglars, *et al.* Unexpected noises upset us unnaturally. We might be scared to live alone.
 - b. Solomon next speaks of the advancing old age as "the almond tree" flourishing. The blossom of almond trees is white, thus is an apt figure with which to picture the hoary head of the aged.
 - c. The grasshopper becomes a burden. This is intended to picture (1) the bent and wasted body of an old person, or (2) the weakness of the old person's body, which has so lost its former strength, that the weight of a small insect is burdensome.
 - d. The appetites of the flesh diminish with the advancement of age. A ninety-year-old is not as apt to eat as much food as a twenty-year-old.
 - e. Finally, the wise man introduces death, which transports us all into the long home of all men—eternity. The weakening of the physical body portends the approach of death. A statement of simple fact is presented in beautiful language: man goes to his long home and the mourners go about the street. This is the way things have been since Abel was slain by his wicked brother. Men are born; they grow up; they grow old; they die; they go to their long home; and their loved ones mourn their passing. Nothing is more natural; nothing is more common.
6. Verse 6: "Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern."
- a. Death is pictured as the loosing of the silver cord and the breaking of the golden bowl. It appears that the imagery is that of drawing water from a well, using a silver cord and a golden bowl. During life, we continually draw the water that sustained us; but at death, the silver cord is loosed and the golden bowl is broken, preventing us from drawing that life-giving water.
 - b. These are beautiful figures; and their preciousness is seen in the silver and gold used in the depiction. When death comes, the cord is loosed from the bowl (pitcher), and the wheel with which we drew the pitcher holding the water is broken.
7. Verse 7: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."
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- a. At the point of death, the ingredients which comprised the physical body begin to return to the earth; and the spirit returns to God who gave it. Scientific study has shown that the human body is made up of certain elements; when life is removed from the body, these elements go back to the earth.
- b. The spirit of the individual had been placed in him at his beginning (Zech. 12:1); being released from the body (Jas. 2:26), causing the body to die, it now returns to the hands of God. This does not say that the spirits of evil men go to heaven where God is; it simply states in the unique style with which Solomon writes that the spirit exits this world and enters into the place of keeping God has prepared for it—Sheol (Hades). "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost" (Luke 23:46; cf. 16.19-31).
- c. That the spirit is not man's breath is seen in the idea itself: what would God do with a breath? When Christ died, what was it about him that exited his body and entered into God's hands? It was his spirit—his eternal component.
 - 1) Numbers 16:22: "And they fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt thou be wroth with all the congregation?"
 - 2) Isaiah 57:16: "For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls *which* I have made."
 - 3) Zechariah 12:1: "The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him."
 - 4) Hebrews 12:9: "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto **the Father of spirits**, and live?"

B. Ecclesiastes 12:8-12: The Reliability of The Preacher's Words of Wisdom.

1. Verse 8: "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all *is* vanity."
 - a. The things he has discussed, the things that men are most often interested in, and things which occupy his time and energy on earth, are empty of eternal good. This has been a point that appears in Solomon's great book continually.
 - b. All human wisdom and activities will come to nought in the final analysis; only that which is done in obedience to God will last and bless.
 - 1) Isaiah 64:6: "But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."
 - 2) 2 Peter 3:10-14: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *Seeing then that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."
 - 3) Revelation 14:13: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

2. Verse 9: "And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, *and* set in order many proverbs."
 - a. Because of his wisdom, Solomon had sought out many useful proverbs with which to instruct the people. It has been his intention to offer something worthwhile to them.
 - b. 1 Kings 4:32: "And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five."
3. Verse 10: "The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and *that which was written was* upright, *even* words of truth."
 - a. He had searched out words which the people could accept to their own good, words which would be a delight to the hearers. He gave them words which were upright and true.
 - b. God's revelation is indeed profitable: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:15-17).
4. Verse 11: "The words of the wise *are* as goads, and as nails fastened *by* the masters of assemblies, *which* are given from one shepherd."
 - a. The Preacher's words were wise, and served as goads, to urge the people on to the right way of life, and finally to the proper long home. His wise words were as nails, thus would endure and withstand the ravages of time and trouble.
 - b. The "masters of assemblies" are "collectors of sentences" (in the ASV, margin). The reference is to those who collect and dispense wisdom. The true source of this wisdom is "one shepherd," an obvious allusion to God, the giver of all good things (Jas. 1:17).
 - c. "Words of the wise (those inspired with wisdom from above) (are) as goads—piercing deeply into the mind, evidently inspired words, as the end of the verse proves. Nails fastened—rather, 'and as nails fastened' (literally, planted. the plural feminine is treated as a masculine, and is joined with the masculine), are 'the masters of collections,' or 'participators in the collection,' thus joint-authors of the collected canonical Scriptures. Given from one shepherd....This assigns the reason of the goad-like power of the inspired words of the several authors of Scripture—namely, because they come from the Lord of all power" [Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1997 by BibleSoft].
5. Verse 12: "And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books *there is* no end; and much study *is* a weariness of the flesh."
 - a. There is no end to the books which human wisdom devises; while many of these can enlighten and instruct and help, yet many others of them are void of good, and many produce much evil.
 - b. There is much weariness to the flesh to try to learn all that such books contain. But the words which have been delivered through the wise man, from the One Shepherd, are words by which we are to be admonished and guided; they will not lead us astray; they will do us no harm; they will do us much good.

C. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: The Final Word of Wisdom.

1. Verse 13: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man."
 - a. When one seeks to condense into a few words the greatest duty of man, we would be hard pressed to
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surpass Solomon's statement here. What is the great conclusion? To fear and obey the God of heaven! This is the whole of man's needs.

- b. To fear God is to have such a deep reverence from him that one dreads the situation of ever doing anything that would displease him. We serve him because we reverence him; we love him; we seek to honor him; but it is never in our thoughts to bring any kind or degree of reproach to him. "Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35).
 - c. To keep his commandments is of course to be obedient from the heart to the doing of his will. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do" is the attitude we manifest toward God; the outgrowth of this disposition is the actual doing of God's will. "And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak; for thy servant heareth" (1 Sam. 3:10).
 - 1) Matthew 7:21-27: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."
 - 2) Acts 10:34-35: "Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."
 - 3) Romans 6:16-18: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."
 - 4) 1 John 2:3-5: "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him."
 - 5) 1 John 5:2-3: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."
 - 6) John 7:17: "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or *whether* I speak from myself" (ASV).
 - 7) John 14:15: "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (ASV).
 - 8) John 14:21-23: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him....If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (ASV).
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- 9) Revelation 22:14: "Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."
- d. This is the whole duty of man. *Duty* is supplied by the translators. Literally, the whole of man is to fear and obey God. Herein lies the greatest obligation, the most elevated privilege, and the most glorious endeavor. He is the Creator of all the universe; he is its Sustainer. When we see the grandeur and majesty of what he has created, we get a glimpse into his glorious nature.
- 1) Psalms 19: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. *There is* no speech nor language, *where* their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which *is* as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, *and* rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth *is* from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether. More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: *and* in keeping of them *there is* great reward. Who can understand *his* errors? cleanse thou me from secret *faults*. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins*; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."
- 2) Luke 12:4-5: "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him."
- 3) Romans 1:20: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."
- 4) Revelation 20:11-15: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."
2. Verse 14: "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil."
- a. Here is a grand announcement of the final Judgment. God will bring into that Judgment every secret thing, whether it was good or evil. This is a sobering thought! Everything that has ever been done will be shown openly then.
- b. Evil things not covered by the blood of Christ (see Heb. 8:12; 10:17; Rev. 1:5) will be placed on public display. Nothing can be hidden from view. God's sees and knows everything that transpires on earth: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13).
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- 1) Hebrews 8:12: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."
 - 2) Hebrews 10:17: "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."
 - 3) Revelation 1:5: "And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."
- c. At the Judgment, all who have ever lived will be present (Matt. 25:31-32). Those who have wronged us will be there; those we have wronged will be there; there will be no repercussions there if those wrongs have been righted here. All the evil will be exposed to full view of everyone, and will be punished or rewarded according to God's perfect standard: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak" (John 12:48-50).
- d. Every good thing will likewise be brought to light. There will be seen for the first time, the many good works which God's people have done through their earthly struggles. The things which they never got recognition for doing; things which were scoffed at as being insignificant and worthless; these will be shown to all, and will be blessed by the Creator.
- e. Those who are pleasing to God will have their connection with the God of heaven openly acknowledged and blessed. Many of his people suffer many things in this life. Many will have endured persecution and hatred at the hands of men. Heb. 11:36-40. The world was not worthy of these great ones, but God takes note of their true value, and will reward them accordingly:
- 1) "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matt. 10:42; cf. 25:31-46).
 - 2) "For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Heb. 6:10).
 - 3) "And others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:36-40).
3. With the evidence presented earlier in support of Solomon as the author of this book, we have information presented in this passage of the repentance of that great man. He learned before it was too late for him, that all of earth's treasures are worthless in view of God's eternal reward. Hell is too high a price to pay for sinful indulgences; heaven is too indescribably precious to forfeit for a life of ease on earth.
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Growing Old Gracefully

A. INTRODUCTION.

1. Great emphasis is placed on youth in our work.
 - a. This is good, for Christian young people will be the church of tomorrow and are expected to serve in the church today.
 - b. The future of the world, of the nation, of local society, and of the family lies in young people. In the future, the nature of our world, our nation, our society, and our family will be what the younger generation makes them.
2. But the percentage of older people in our nation is greater than it has ever been.
 - a. This is due to improvements in health care, better information about health, and an easier lifestyle. Previous generations had to work much harder, were not as well clothed or fed, and were subject to diseases and accidents which could not be adequately treated.
 - b. Many sound congregations have more older people than younger ones. The reasons for this are many:
 - 1) There is a general lack of interest in spiritual things in modern society.
 - 2) Many of those who have an interest in religious matters today are more concerned about being entertained, or having a social-club with a religious atmosphere.
 - 3) Respect for Bible authority for spiritual activities is at a very low ebb.
 - c. We must be concerned about the problems of growing old. Even teenagers will be old people some day, if they live long enough.
 - d. This study will address the prospect of growing old, the problems of growing old, and proper attitudes to develop for old age. The information to be presented will be useful to everyone, young and old.

B. WE MUST NOT BE AFRAID OF GROWING OLD.

1. Growing old is natural and is according to God's arrangement.
 - a. After sin entered into the human family, death was mandated as the penalty:
 - 1) Genesis 2:15-17: "And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."
 - 2) Romans 5:12: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."
 - 3) We do not know what our situation would have been on earth if sin had never been committed.
 - b. Can you remember a time when you did not know that you would die sometime? Can you remember a time when you did not know that you would grow old? One of the first great truths we learn about life is that it will inevitably end.
 - c. We do everything possible to postpone death. We try to eat properly, dress warmly in cold weather, protect ourselves from diseases, and try to avoid dangerous situations.
 2. Many try to forestall the effects of growing old.
 - a. Americans exercise vigorously, diet religiously, and spend billions on cosmetics, face lifts, and all kinds of health regimens and equipment. This is not to say that we ought not do any of these things,
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for we all want to look and feel our best.

- b. These things are done in an effort to retain the appearance of youth. An old man was asked whether any of his childhood wishes had been realized. He replied that one had: "When I was young, my mother pulled my hair as punishment; I wished at the time that I didn't have any hair."
 - c. An aged movie star is pitiable who tries to look like a twenty-year-old.
3. Many are fearful of growing old because death follows old-age.
- a. Many fear growing old because they fear death. A spiritually-mature person has no reason to fear death.
 - b. "To fear old age is like being afraid to look at the view after we have trudged carefully up the rugged mountainside. Age has been compared to the top of the mountain while youth is the valley and adulthood is the mountainside. The view from the top is always better and more revealing. To want to remain young would be like limiting our view to only what can be seen in the valley around us" (Raymond Elliott).
 - c. As a child of God matures in age and grows in faith, he is able to gain wisdom; he can see what is truly important; he has gained enough knowledge, maturity, and insight to be ready for death.
 - d. Instead of fearing death, he (or she) can happily anticipate passing into eternity where he will await the resurrection and the Judgment.

C. **WHAT MUST I DO TO PREPARE FOR GROWING OLD?**

1. Preparation for growing old begins in our youthful years.
 - a. Solomon, the world's wisest man, penned the following inspired counsel:
 - 1) Ecclesiastes 12:1: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."
 - 2) Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil."
 - 3) Proverbs 4:1,11-13: "Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding....I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths. When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble. Take fast hold of instruction; let *her* not go: keep her; for she *is* thy life."
 - b. Inspiration offers other information:
 - 1) Ephesians 6:1-3: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."
 - 2) Colossians 3:20: "Children, obey *your* parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord."
 - c. If we develop indifference to God's word when we are young, we are not apt to have a heart that is receptive to the gospel when we are older. Very few old men and old women are baptized.
 - d. If we maintain the over-confidence of youth, we may go through life thinking that accidents, health problems, and death only apply to the other person. This arrogant disposition may keep us from making preparations for old age and death.
 2. Develop good traits of character during youthful years.
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- a. Just because one has lived a long time does not mean that he has gained wisdom or has acquired good traits. A visitor to a community was told about a 100-year-old man who lived there. The visitor was impressed by the gentleman's attainment to that advanced age. The local replied, "Oh, he ain't much. All he's done is git old, and look how long it took him!"
 - b. The qualities of Christianity are not quickly or easily obtained; they must be diligently cultivated; and they are made strong only by use.
 - 1) Mercy: "Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Mat. 5:7).
 - 2) Love: "Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. 13:4-7).
 - 3) Kindness: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:31-32).
 - 4) Helpfulness: "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away" (Mat. 5:42).
 - 5) Patience: "In your patience possess ye your souls" (Luke 21:19).
3. Plan for old age.
- a. In the common things of life, many people lay good plans.
 - 1) Most of us make sound preparations and plans for retirement; we try to have a reasonable income to finance our needs when we are no longer able to work.
 - 2) Parents try to provide for the future of their children. "Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children" (2 Cor. 12:14).
 - b. But most people do not make plans for their spiritual welfare as they grow old.
 - 1) They have not obeyed the gospel.
 - 2) They have not overcome the fears that terrorized them during their younger years.
 - 3) Many have practiced covetousness through life and find this sinful disposition only stronger in old age. Some of our sinful tendencies desert us as we grow older; we might deceive ourselves into thinking we have mastered them. Other dispositions grow stronger with the passing of time.
 - 4) Many do not overcome the weaknesses of irritability, faultfinding, complaining, gossiping, wastefulness, or laziness.
 - 5) Many are self-centered when they are young, continue in that sinful disposition during adulthood, and perfect it in their old age.
 - c. Many people never learn happiness (contentment) when they are younger, and are sorely unhappy when they grow old. The devil has no truly happy old men! Happiness (contentment) is cultivated on the inside, and is not obtained from outward conditions. There are those with excellent health, fine families, good jobs, beautiful homes, many friends, and much money, who are still unhappy.
 - 1) Philippians 4:11-13: "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to
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suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

- 2) 1 Timothy 6:6-8: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."

D. ITEMS WHICH PROMOTE GROWING OLD GRACEFULLY.

1. Be physically active.

- a. It is obvious to everyone that inactivity leads to physical weakness, makes one an easy target for disease and accident, and can shorten our days. Physical activity promotes good health and strength, and gives us a sense of happiness and usefulness.
- b. "Bodily exercise profiteth for a little..." (1 Tim. 4:8, ASV).

2. Lead an active spiritual life.

- a. 1 Timothy 4:8: "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."
- b. Titus 2:1-4: "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that *they be* in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children."
- c. God blesses his faithful servants.
 - 1) Ephesians 6:1-4: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."
 - 2) 1 Peter 3:10-13: "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord *are* over the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord *is* against them that do evil. And who *is* he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?"

3. Keep your mind active.

- a. Our thoughts determine how we live.
 - 1) Proverbs 4:23: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life."
 - 2) Proverbs 23:7: "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he..."
 - 3) Matthew 15:18-19: "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."
 - 4) Matthew 12:33-37: "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by *his* fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."
 - b. What is in a man's heart determines the kind of person he is or will become. If we fill our minds with
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godly thoughts and motives, a godly person we will be. But the converse is also true: evil thoughts and motives will corrupt us.

- c. The “little voice” inside you is the real you; it is called the inner man, the soul, the spirit, the heart. What it says, plans, and purposes will determine your conduct, words, life, and eternal destiny. It will always be present, even though the body is dead. You cannot get away from your spirit for it is you.
- d. What we do not use, we lose. This rich truth applies to our muscles, our talents, and our mind. If we do not keep our mind active, it will lose some of its normal powers.

4. Maintain a positive attitude.

- a. If we fill our minds with negative, bitter thoughts we will inevitably talk and act accordingly. The dangers involved can be serious:
 - 1) We may lose our friends, for no one enjoys being around a bitter person.
 - 2) We can alienate our family.
 - 3) We might grow so morose that we lose our peace of mind.
 - 4) One who is bitter and negative cannot at the same time be content, a trait that each Christian is expected to maintain.
 - 5) We must avoid complaining too much about our health and personal problems.
- b. Just because one is a senior citizen does not mean it is too late to accomplish more.
 - 1) Cato was 85 when he began a study of the Greek language.
 - 2) Tennyson was 83 when he wrote “Crossing the Bar.”
 - 3) Verdi was 85 when he wrote “Ave Maria.”
 - 4) Abraham was 75 when he began his sojourn in Canaan (Gen. 12:4).
 - 5) Moses was 80 when he was called to lead Israel from Egyptian bondage.
- c. Elderly Christians can know they are still worth much to the Lord, especially during this time when apostasy is rending the body of Christ asunder.
- d. Even in the face of declining health, financial problems, and other difficulties, there may be a silver lining.
 - 1) Psalms 119:67: "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word."
 - 2) Romans 8:18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."
 - 3) Hebrews 12:11-13: "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed."

5. Be interested in other people.

- a. We are told to love our neighbor as we love ourselves (Mark 12:31); we are to be helpful to others.
 - 1) Galatians 6:10: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."
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- 2) James 1:27 "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world."
 - b. If we turn inward on ourselves, we are bound to think our problems are greater than anyone's problems. The greatest single problem of society is selfishness. This can afflict older people.
 - c. There is the danger of withdrawing from others and filling ourselves with self-pity. There are great advantages we have, despite our ailments and personal problems:
 - 1) Psalms 37:25: "I have been young, and *now* am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."
 - 2) Matthew 6:33: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."
 - 3) Philippians 4:13,19: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me....But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
 - 4) Romans 8:31-34: "What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth. Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."
 - 5) Philippians 3:20-21: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."
 - d. We must not allow loneliness or personal problems to destroy our peace of mind.
6. Have a healthy sense of humor.
- a. The Bible speaks of the value of laughter.
 - 1) Proverbs 17:22: "A merry heart doeth good *like* a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones."
 - 2) Proverbs 15:13: "A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken."
 - 3) Proverbs 15:15: "All the days of the afflicted *are* evil: but he that is of a merry heart *hath* a continual feast."
 - 4) Ecclesiastes 9:7: "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works."
 - b. The Bible reports some events that appear humorous to us.
 - 1) Elijah's statement to the prophets of Baal: "And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress *it* first; for ye *are* many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire *under*. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But *there was* no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he *is* a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, *or* peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked" (1 Kings 18:25-27).
 - 2) The story of Belshazzar's knees knocking because of fear: "In the same hour came forth fingers
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of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another" (Dan. 5:5-6).

- 3) The report of what the demon did to the seven sons of Sceva: "Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of *one* Sceva, a Jew, *and* chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded" (Acts 19:13-16).
- c. Someone needs to collect and put in a book many of the humorous stories that uplift and encourage. The stories and illustrations are manifold that have done this for us through the years. How dreary our life might otherwise be if we did not have an outlet for our God-given gift of laughter! Since we are made in God's image, the Father of our spirits must have a sense of humor.

E. CONCLUSION.

1. There is much to be said in favor of old age.
 - a. Proverbs 16:31: "The hoary head *is* a crown of glory, *if* it be found in the way of righteousness."
 - 1) Previous generations had high regard for old men and women, presuming that they had accumulated great wisdom with the passing of years.
 - 2) Old age does not guarantee wisdom, but does give opportunities for the acquisition of it. The white head is a crown of glory *IF* it has followed the way of righteousness (God's word).
 - b. As we draw near our departure from this world, if we keep our normal faculties to the end, our spiritual state ought to be at its zenith.
 - 1) Psalms 71:7-9: "I am as a wonder unto many; but thou *art* my strong refuge. Let my mouth be filled *with* thy praise *and with* thy honour all the day. Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth."
 - 2) Psalms 71:15-21: "My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness *and* thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers *thereof*. I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, *even* of thine only. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have showed thy strength unto *this* generation, *and* thy power to every one *that* is to come. Thy righteousness also, O God, *is* very high, who hast done great things: O God, who *is* like unto thee! *Thou*, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side."
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 4:16-18: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal."
 - 4) 2 Timothy 4:6-8: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid

up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day:
and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

2. The Christian life is the only life that is worthwhile—it benefits us in life, in death, and in eternity!
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