

Ecclesiastes: Eat, Drink And Be Merry

Alan Yeater

Text: Eccl. 8:15

Introduction:

- I. “There is no joy in Mudville.” Ecclesiastes is the best news around for baffled modern men struggling to make sense of things in Mudville. “It is the book for men who want to live *again-now*.” It is the book for working men who tire of the boredom of routine. It is also the thinking man’s book. It explores his questions such as, “Who am I and why am I here?”
- II. Many people think that the writer of Ecclesiastes is agreeing with a depressing and pessimistic view of life. They think that all this book is saying is that life is vain, worthless and hopeless. But look at the big picture of the message. Indeed the writer affirms the vanity of life without God, “*but he does not recommend life without God. There is an alternative...*” (Eccl. 12:13).
- III. The *whole book* is an argument that it is God who gives life and the ability to enjoy it and that *apart from Him* life is meaningless.
- IV. This study of Ecclesiastes provides a biblical definition of the relationship between Christ and culture.
- V. Themes:
 - A. “**Fear God**” (3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12 – 13; 12:13)
 1. There is no textual indication that these instructions were a later addenda so that the reader might consider this an “inspired” book. This theme runs throughout the text even though the focus is “life under the sun.”
 - B. “**Eat and drink and make your soul enjoy good of its labor, for it is a gift of God**” (2:24; 3:12-13; 3:22; 5:18 – 19; 8:15; 9:7-9)
 1. This is no Epicurean sentiment, but rather the appropriate response to God’s gift and providence (Kaiser 17).
 2. “There is good in our life here upon the earth.” We should consider that a blessing from God. The enjoyment of work (3:22), the enjoyment of food and drink (5:18 – 20), and the enjoyment of youth (11:9-10) are all gifts from God, “but remember that these things are not what life is really about. *Life is about having a relationship with God*” (12:13) and He will judge (12:14) (Waldron 197).

Body:

- I. **First Discourse (1:2-2:26)**
 - A. There is nothing in life on the earth that can be depended upon for joy and fulfillment.
 - B. Authorship: “son of David, king in Jerusalem” (1:1,12)
 1. This book claims to come from the pen of one who was “wise” (12:9). What he wrote was “words of truth” (12:10), written correctly. We will approach the book from this vantage point. (Kaiser 15)
 3. Note: See Waldron for a brief evaluation of the arguments for authorship. (Waldron, 194–195)
 - C. **(1:2-11)** Remember that Solomon is not merely speaking of life, but of life without God.
 4. What is the advantage or *profit*? (cf. 1:3; 2:11; 3:9, 5:9,11,16)

5. What do we have to show for having lived?

D. **(1:12-18)** “Man is trapped by the difficulty of the problem and his own divinely implanted hunger to know” (Kaiser 54). Of all creatures, man is the one who asks, “Why?”

1. The wisdom here is not the wisdom of those who fear God. It is the wisdom under the sun. To seek and explore. He does not leave a stone unturned in his quest to discover all that has been done under heaven (Kidwell 32).
2. Nothing in all of God’s creation, except man, concerns itself with the “why” of the activities of our world. (*Ibid*).
3. Perspective: “Life under the sun” (29 times; 34 when including “under heaven” or “on earth”)

E. **(2: 1-11) The Pursuit of Pleasure and Wealth**

1. Solomon employs the use of a monologue (cf. Psa. 42:5,11; Lk. 12:19) (Kaiser 55)
2. 2:1 Enjoy – cf. consider with goodness – note center column reference NASB
3. 2:3 What good is there? In:
 - a. Pleasure (2:2f)
 - b. Wine
 - c. Works: houses, horticulture (planting, gardens, fruit trees), ponds, forests
 - d. Ownership of things: slaves, huge flocks and herds, hard assets: gold, silver, jewels
 - e. Entertainment: singers and concubines
 - f. Rank: great and increased – fame and popularity
4. 2:9b Wisdom stood with me – Stood back and looked at self
5. 2:10 Every pleasure my heart desired
 - a. Heart was pleased – my reward for my labor, yet not fulfillment
 - b. He denied himself no gratification, no matter how foolish.
 - c. Can’t say: If only he had done something differently, this could have worked.
 - d. With all his wisdom, and with unlimited resources, he found that these things could not give him peace and happiness. (Leon Mauldin)
6. 2:11 “The pile up of terms conveys bitter disillusionment” (Eaton 68)
 - a. “Man’s quest for the real profit of life seemed hopeless when the likes of Solomon had had such unprecedented opportunities to test every conceivable benefit to be derived from the good and projects of this world and had been left unsatisfied.” (Kaiser 57)
 - b. William James: “The great use of life is to spend it for something that outlasts it” (Callaway 173).

F. **2:12-17 Evaluation: Wisdom and Folly**

1. Value of wisdom. It is vastly superior to things, yet this advantage is not a permanent one. Even the wise man dies. (Kaiser 58)

- a. Again, we must remember this is *wisdom under the sun, not the wisdom which is from above*.
 - b. The preacher “brutally applies the principle stated in v. 14 to himself and thus throws into doubt the whole wisdom enterprise” (Longman 98).
2. 2:14 Fate “is entirely neutral and has no sinister nuance” (Eaton 69) (cf. 3:19; 9:2,3)
 3. Wisdom under the sun led Solomon to say: “So I *hated* life” (2:17; cf. Job 3:3-13; Jer.20:14-18)
 - a. The preacher is not advocating suicide (9:4-6) (Longman 100)
 - 1) “Hate” [*sane*’ /saw **na**y/]
 - a) James Strong: “A primitive root... 146 occurrences; AV translates as ‘hate’ 136 times, ‘enemies’ three times, ‘enemy’ twice, ‘foes’ once, ‘hateful’ once, and translated miscellaneously three times. 1 to hate, be hateful. 1A (Qal) to hate. 1A1 of man. 1A2 of God. 1A3 hater, one hating, enemy (participle) (subst). 1B (Niphal) to be hated. 1c (Piel) hater (participle). 1c1 of persons, nations, God, wisdom.” (*Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*, H8130)
 - a) Gerard, Van Groningen: “(*sane*’) *hate, to be hateful*. Derivatives... (*sani*’) *hated, held in aversion* (Deut 21:15)...(*sin*’a) *hate, hatred*.” (*TWOT*, #2272, 2:879)
 - 2) *Evil* – (grievous NASB); Longman believes this to be an indictment of moral evil against God (Longman 100). I disagree. See 6:1 for further comment.
 - b. Note: If wealth and wisdom are dead-end trails, perhaps the real value is in saving for others.

G. 2:18-23 Evaluation of Human Labor

1. Limited value of physical labor (cf. Mt. 16:26) View in Eccl. is “life under the sun”
2. 2:18: Hate to leave it behind
3. 2:19: Who knows how it will be handled?
4. 2:12-23: The preacher has focused on “two major issues: (1) the utter impartiality of death which strikes both wise and fool alike, and (2) one’s inability to determine how an heir might use one’s accumulated and hard-earned goods” (Ogden 47).
5. “The real issue for him was not between work and rest but, had he known it, between meaningless and meaningful activity...the very toil which tyrannized him was potentially a joyful gift of God” (Kidner, 35).

H. Conclusion: 2:24-26 Here is the answer to the dilemma about labor’s value.

1. Three good reasons for seeing a major turning point at 2:24 (Eaton 72-73).
 - a. God is scarcely mentioned in 1:1-2:23
 - b. A difference in the way wisdom is viewed [man’s acquisition 1:16] versus [God’s gift 2:26]
 - c. Previous section ended in a picture of physical and mental anguish, but in 2:24-3:22 we see enjoyment (2:25), beauty (3:11), God’s gifts, security and joy (3:13-14)

2. “Having exposed the bankruptcy of our pretended autonomy, the Preacher now points to the God who occupies the heavenly realm, and to the life of faith in him” (Eaton 73).
3. “Nothing better” (2:24; 3:12, 22; 8:15) in the “life under the sun” perspective. “Sentiments expressed in a variant form in 5:18 and 9:7-10” (Ogden 48).
 - a. “Enjoy” – “look upon the good” (Longman 108)
 - b. Note: (vs. 25) alternate reading “apart from Him” in place of “more than I.”
 - c. Without *Him* – study context (vs. 26) *Him* points to God (cf. 6:2)
 - d. God is the giver of satisfaction and joy (Kaiser 59)
 - e. “The conclusion of 2:24-26: The purpose of life cannot be found in any one of the good things found in the world. All the things that we call the “goods” of life – health, riches...slip through man’s hands unless they are received as a gift from God and until God gives man the ability to enjoy them and obtain satisfaction from them.” (Kaiser 59)
 - f. God enables us to have enjoyment, wisdom, knowledge and joy.
 - g. Instead of complaining about what you do not have, thank God for what you do have and enjoy it (Wiersbe).
 - h. “There is nothing good in man that he should eat and drink, etc.” [Literal vs. 24 in Hebrew.] That is to say, the power to enjoy life is not inherent in man. (Mott 64)
 - i. Who can have enjoyment without *Him* (cf. 6:2) (Whybray, 63-64).
6. Man’s Dependence on God for the Ability to Enjoy Life (2:24-26)
7. Three gifts from God to the one who is good: wisdom, knowledge and joy.
4. Paraphrased: “So far as his work is concerned, there is no guarantee that a man will be able to eat and drink and enjoy the good things his labor brings him. This is a gift God gives. Who can eat or enjoy any blessing apart from God? To the man who pleases Him, God gives true wisdom and knowledge; but to the sinner He gives hard labor, to gather and heap up wealth that it may be given to the one who pleases God.” (Waldron 201)
8. “This and similar passages are not teaching that you must enjoy whatever task you have. They are teaching that man cannot assure himself of good, or joy, for what he does. These are gifts from God.” (Waldron 201) (cf. Jas. 1:17)
5. Conclusion: “Here then is the antithesis of secular pessimism. The Preacher has held before his readers two ways of life: the vicious circle of a pointless world, temporary pleasures, fruitless work, futile wisdom, inevitable death, versus an enjoyable life taken daily from the hand of God” (Eaton 76).

II. Second Discourse (3:1-5:20)

A. Overview:

1. 3:1-15: The Principle: God has a plan that works out “in His time.”
2. 3:16-4:16: The Facts: The facts are that there are apparent contradictions that need to be examined.
3. 5:1-17: The Implications: We must be cautious in evaluating these facts lest we deny the existence of God’s providence (Kaiser 61).

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4. 5:18-20: The Conclusion “Man can understand the plan enough to see that God is in charge, but he can never understand it all, so that in the end he must depend upon God” (Waldron 196).
- B. 3:1-15: Man in relation to an Overruling Divine Providence
1. Note: This is written to individuals; not churches or nations.
 2. 14 pairs of opposites in verses 2-8 (Longman, n.p.) THINGS OF WHICH LIFE CONSISTS. Antithetical sentences. Things that cannot be governed and ordered by man. Controlled by laws/circumstances/changes. We must keep this in mind when we plan/make goals/aims.
 3. 28 times the word “time” is used to impress us with choices and personal accountability.
 4. 3:4: Time to laugh, dance – it is appropriate to enjoy happy times (11:9-10)
 5. 3:9: What *profit* (cf. 1:3; 2:11; 5:9,16; 7:11) The answer comes in 3:12. A positive conclusion arises out of negative observations (Whybray, 74).
 6. 3:11: Remember that God does things “in His time.”
 - a. This verse talks of “a deep-seated desire, a compulsive drive...to know the character, composition, and meaning of the world...and to discern its purpose and destiny” (Kaiser 66).
 - b. We cannot see the big picture of divine providence. This limitation often frustrates our ability to make sense of what we see. Should we therefore, live fretfully and frustrated since there are things we cannot understand? No! The answer is in 3:14, 17.
 - a. Beautiful. v. 11
 - 1) God has chosen to allow these things to exist to meet the ultimate purpose of God for men to fear Him.
 - 2) Even when there are bad times, and sufferings, and injustices, there are lessons to learn, and the wise man will grow in his sense of dependency upon God.
 - 1) “This is life.”
 - b. Also He has put eternity in their hearts...KJV: he hath set the world in their heart
 - 1) Comparative readings:
 - a) NASB: “He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.”
 - b) NIV: “He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.”
 - 2) Hebrew *olam* – 4 views summarized 1) eternity 2) world 3) course of the world, and 4) knowledge or ignorance (Longman 120)
 - a) “Eternity” [‘*owlam*, ‘*olam* /o **lawm**/]
 - 1] James Strong: “...439 occurrences; AV translates as ‘ever’ 272 times, ‘everlasting’ 63 times, ‘old’ 22 times, ‘perpetual’ 22 times,

‘evermore’ 15 times, ‘never’ 13 times, ‘time’ six times, ‘ancient’ five times, ‘world’ four times, ‘always’ three times, ‘always’ twice, ‘long’ twice, ‘more’ twice, ‘never + 408’ twice, and translated miscellaneous six times. 1 long duration, antiquity, futurity, for ever, ever, everlasting, evermore, perpetual, old, ancient, world. 1A ancient time, long time (of past). 1B (of future). 1B1 for ever, always. 1B2 continuous existence, perpetual. 1B3 everlasting, indefinite or unending future, eternity.” (*Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*, H5769)

7. 3:12: “Nothing better” than to rejoice and do good
 - a. “Enjoyment, not worldly accumulations, is the principle end to be sought.” (Kaiser 61)
8. 3:13: “gift of God” to see good in your labor – eat and drink
9. 3:14: God has so designed the timing of things on earth so that “men should fear Him.”
 - a. “The one who fears God dreads nothing more than God’s disfavor. Such a worshiper wants nothing more than to know the living God intimately and submit to His will. And God Himself wants to be known and obeyed by man; accordingly, He has shut man up to the enigma of life, yet given him an unquenchable hunger to know how it all, from the simplest to the most profound, fits with everything else” (Kaiser 68).

C. 3:16-22: The Problem of Injustice in the World

1. Six facts (3:16-4:16) which appear to argue against the claim that God will work everything out “in His time.”
 - a. There is unrighteousness in the halls of justice (3:16-17)
 - b. Men and beasts alike die (3:18-21)
 - c. Men are oppressed (4:1-3)
 - d. Men are rivalrous (4:4-6)
 - e. Men are isolated (4:7-12)
 - f. Popularity is temporary (4:13-16) (Kaiser, 69)
2. 3:16-22:
 - a. Even when he saw injustices, knew that God would judge.
 - b. For there is a time for every purpose and work.
 - c. Fate is the same for man and beast with regards to the flesh (v. 19).
 - d. *Dust* was not spoken of the soul, but rather of the body (v. 20).
 - e. Verse 21 is a conclusion from observation of *life under the sun*.
 - f. 3:22: “nothing is better” (cf. 2:24; 3:12) Be happy in your activities.

D. 4:1-3: **The Sad Lot of the Oppressed** (cf. Psa. 73:1 – 17; Eccl. 12:14)

1. 4:1: Oppression.. For the moment, leaves out all comfort and hope that they might derive from a higher source. This is life viewed with its oppression apart from the things another life has to offer. Makes this life of little value. Life has absolutely no worth for the man who seeks his good things under the sun. Considering earthly values apart from the heavenly.

2. 4:2: Praised dead cf. 2:17. Solomon's own experience.
 - c. Rising suicide rate among youth today, with affluence. Climbed 131% from 1961 to 1975.
 - d. For anyone who wishes to put an estimate upon life as it is with all its oppression and its injustice, apart from the things that another life and world have to offer, there is but one possibility, and that is, that such life is a possession of rather doubtful value: the dead are to be praised rather than the living, because life is so miserable. This is not a cynical attitude but the expression of a sober truth. Life has absolutely no worth for the man who seeks his good things "under the sun" (Leupold, 104).
3. 4:3: Who has not seen the evil work that is done under the sun...
 - e. To charge Koheleth with being "completely wanting in hope of a future life" overlooks the force of "under the sun" (v.1). Nor is Koheleth involved in a self-contradiction as might at first appear when one reads 9:4 and 11:7ff., for he is here pointedly thinking of the situation which he has sharply outlined: men living without recourse to higher values (*Ibid.*104-105).

E. 4:4-6: Value and pitfalls of labor

1. 4:4: Rivalry between men in labor
2. 4:5: Fool folds his hands
3. 4:6: Value of rest versus constant labor
 - a. Note: It is discouraging when one is envied for trying his best. We are sometimes tempted to give up and simply do nothing. We must not be intimidated by the jealousy of others so that we do nothing (Waldron 203).

F. 4:7-12:

1. 4:8: Workaholic – no one he's willing to share with.
2. 4:9-12: Companionship far outweighs wealth in terms of benefits.
 - a. Note: Most problems for men revolve around work, money or women.

G. 4:13-16: Vanity of the Quest for Position

H. 5:1-7: Warning against Vanity in Religion

I. 5:8-9: Comfort in view of Oppression

J. 5:10-20: The Vanity of Riches (cf. 10:19) "Money is the answer to everything."

1. Three drawbacks to wealth: 1) it cannot satisfy 2) it attracts dependents 3) it disturbs one's peace (Eaton 102)
2. 5:10: Lovers of money will not be satisfied with it.
 - f. The idea that wealth leads to unhappiness runs counter to traditional wisdom teaching (Whybray, 99).
3. 5:11: Consumption grows at the same rate as income.
4. 5:12: The laboring man sleeps better than the rich man who stuffs himself.
 - g. "full stomach" NASB or "abundance" (KJV, NKJV, NIV)

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- h. “Either his physique or his cares keep him awake” (Eaton 102).
 - 5. 5:13-17: The grievous (sickly) evil of greed and covetousness
 - a. 5:13-14: Hoarding riches to the owner’s hurt
 - 1) Bad investments -lose it all
 - 2) “The guarding of wealth entails anxiety and care” (Longman 166).
 - b. 5:15: You can’t take it with you. Hoarded wealth leads to vexation, sickness and anger.
 - 3) Ogden reminds us “as one enters or leaves the world, one’s material possessions have no significance” (Ogden 84).
 - c. 5:16: “Evil” see 5:13; 9:3; 10:5 and comment at 6:1.
 - 4) Comment: “Most men are born bald, with no teeth and with a big stomach.” Most die the same way (Melvin Curry).
 - 5) What a man has in his hand at birth is what he will take with him at death (Eaton 103).
 - 6) Solomon illustrates the statement of Jesus that life does not consist in the abundance of things a man possesses (Lk.12:15).
 - 6. 5:18-20: Good life – what is good? Similar to conclusion in (2:24-26; 3:12, 22)
 - a. 5:18: Eat, drink and enjoy – that is your reward (Not deserved, but God-given).
 - b. 5:19: Rejoice in your work (labor)
 - c. 5:20: When we focus on the good in life and keep our eyes on God, we tend to forget or at least minimize the bad things that have occurred.
 - 7. Note: there is no mention of God in 5:13-17, but rather an *under the sun* perspective. The preacher reminds us there is another perspective that gives meaning to life.
 - 9. What *profit* (3:9) is there in life? From the darkness of chapters 4-5:17 comes the practical advice to enjoy what God gives.
 - K. **Conclusion 3:1-5:20.** “Man must get enjoyment, not possessions. And that capacity to enjoy, no matter how great or how small, is a gift from God. It is much better to receive wealth as a gift from God, along with the God-given ability to enjoy it, than to see wealth as an end in itself...How sad that men can spend all their days working and sweating to receive the enjoyment that God offers as a gift if men will seek it in the manner that He, in His excellent and beautiful plan, has chosen to give it” (Kaiser 77).
 - 10. Every pursuit of man is futile if God is excluded.
 - 11. Only God’s work endures, so that only He can impart true value to man’s life and service.
 - 1. Augustine: “Thou has made me for Thyself, and my heart will not rest until it rests in Thee.”
 - 2. Jensen: The Feast of Tabernacles was the Jew’s most joyous feast of the year. Why do you suppose they chose to read Ecclesiastes, with its many pessimistic portions, at that feast?

III. Third Discourse (6:1-8:15)

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- A. Overview: 6:1-8:15 is the central portion of the whole argument. Two conclusions from the first two sections (the gifts and plan of God) will be applied to the apparent inequities of life.
1. 6:1-7:15: Proper evaluation of man's outward assets helps explain apparent inequalities in life.
 2. 7:16-29: Careful evaluation of one's character may explain apparent inequalities.
 3. 8:1-14: Righteous government, human and divine, removes a large proportion of the inequalities facing men.
 4. 8:15: Conclusion
 5. Overview: "Often, when men see the inequalities of life, and the seemingly unfair variations in divine providence, they say, 'How can there be a God?' ... Solomon deals effectively with these objections." (Waldron 204)
- B. **6:1-6: Problems of Wealth- A prevalent evil among (upon) men**
1. "Evil" [*ra'* /rah/]
 - a. James Strong: "...663 occurrences; AV translates as 'evil' 442 times, 'wickedness' 59 times, 'wicked' 25 times, 'mischief' 21 times, 'hurt' 20 times, 'bad' 13 times, 'trouble' 10 times, 'sore' nine times, 'affliction' six times, 'ill' five times, 'adversity' four times, 'favoured' three times, 'harm' three times, 'naught' three times, 'noisome' twice, 'grievous' twice, 'sad' twice, and translated miscellaneously 34 times. 1 bad, evil. 1A bad, disagreeable, malignant. 1B bad, unpleasant, evil (giving pain, unhappiness, misery). 1C evil, displeasing. 1D bad (of its kind-land, water, etc). 1E bad (of value). 1F worse than, worst (comparison). 1G sad, unhappy. 1H evil (hurtful). 1I bad, unkind (vicious in disposition). 1J bad, evil, wicked (ethically). 1J1 in general, of persons, of thoughts. 1J2 deeds, actions. 2 evil, distress, misery, injury, calamity. 2A evil, distress, adversity. 2B evil, injury, wrong. 2C evil (ethical). 3 evil, misery, distress, injury. 3A evil, misery, distress. 3B evil, injury, wrong. 3C evil (ethical)." (*Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*, H7451)
 2. Note: Usage must be determined by context (cf. 5:1, 13, 14, 16). Here in chapter 6:1 it is best translated bad, not in a moral sense, but rather in the realm of misery and distress. "One of the bad things I have seen is for God to give a man riches and wealth and honor, and then not give him the ability to enjoy his blessings" (Waldron 205)
 3. 6:2: Man is wealthy, but can't enjoy it (cf. 2 Chronicles 1:11-12).
 - a. A foreigner? (stranger KJV, NIV) takes them away
 - b. Or, his hoarding of his riches keeps him from enjoying them.
 - a. Overview: Of what long term value is a long life and many children?
 4. 6:3: Lack of contentment – being satisfied with good things
 5. 6:4-5: Miscarriage is better than never learning contentment
 6. 6:6: Enjoy – (lit. see) good things, if you don't, even if you live 1,000 years twice, of what profit is it?
- C. **6:7-9: Learn contentment – enjoy what you see. Longevity alone does not satisfy.**
1. Note: It is not the possessions that count, but rather the ability to enjoy them (cf. 1 Tim. 6:6-11).
- D. **6:10-12: Limitations make the pursuit of Riches a Useless Venture**
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1. 6:12: “Who knows what is good for a man during his lifetime”? God does (Deut.6:24)
 - a. Prosperity is not necessarily what is best for us. It may be that which plunges us “into ruin and destruction.” (1 Tim. 6:9)
2. The preacher goes on in chapter 7 to answer the question “what is good” asked in 6:12.

E. 7:1-10: Some Things Better (Proverbial Units cf. 12:9f)

1. The early proverbs deal with death or suffering. The first half of chapter 7 asks the question: “Will the life of faith survive hard and troublesome time when...days of adversity come?”... “The second half of the chapter moves from the crookedness of life (13) to that of mankind (29)” (Eaton 108).
2. In seeking to live life “under the sun,” the Preacher saw that some things are “better” or of greater value to a person than others.
3. Please note that most, if not all of what holds real value cannot be bought with money.
 - a. What is better? (1-4)
 - b. What is better? (5-7)
 - c. What is better? (8-10)
4. 7:1-4: What is of Real Value?
 - a. 7:1: Good Name – Death of the righteous – die in the Lord (Rev. 14:13)
 - b. 7:2: Sorrow better than laughter – sad face – happy heart. Joy is not tied to happenings.
 - c. 7:3: Mourning – greater value than pleasure and laughter
5. 7:5-7: Better to listen to the rebuke of a wise man.
6. 7:8-10: Patience and waiting until the end of a matter is better.
 - a. Note: Perhaps verses 11 – 14 should be grouped with 7:1 – 10.

F. 7:11-29: The Search for Wisdom

1. 7:12-14:
 - a. 7:12: Wisdom – more valuable than money – yet both serve as protection
 - b. 7:14: Happy in prosperity – consider what is valuable during times of adversity- Remember that God made both prosperity and adversity. (Prov. 30:8)
2. 7:15-19: “Solomon is not saying that one can be too righteous in the sense of pleasing God and actually doing His will. He is referring to the effort some make to go beyond what is required” ...Col. 2:20-23 (Waldron 206).
3. 7:20-22: Do not expect too much of other people. Remember your own transgressions.
4. 7:23-25: The preacher reminds us of the goal of his investigation (cf. 1:17). He is coming to the realization that the world has no real answers.
5. 7:26-29: In Proverbs, Solomon also warns against the immoral woman. His general point is that people, although made upright, turn to wickedness and this causes many of their problems. Solomon’s personal experience was that he had found very few upright men and not one among a thousand women was godly. A harem of seven hundred

pagan wives and 300 hundred concubines would not be the best place to look for a worthy woman (Waldron 207).

- a. 7:29: Teaches a valuable principle regarding our spiritual condition upon entering the world. See also (Ezekiel 18).

G. 8:1-15: The wise man's relation to Government, Wicked Rulers and Injustice.

1. Note: God has designed that many apparent inequalities are alleviated through righteous government. The wickedness a nation experiences is often the result of corrupt government, which arises from a corrupt people (Waldron 207).
 2. 8:2-8: How a wise man responds to governing authorities
 3. 8:9-13: Evil apparently goes unpunished. Delayed sentencing diminishes the deterrent effect. Attention is turned away from the victim. We must remember that no one ultimately, *gets away* with evil.
 4. 8:14: Life is not fair (cf. Psalm 73). Who said that life under the sun would be fair?
 5. 8:15: How should the wise respond? "Nothing good" except to eat, drink and be merry (cf. 2:24; 3:12, 22, 5:18). This is the reward of labor (toils). "commended pleasure" -Translated "praised joy" (Whybray)
- H. Summary: The preacher says that the child of God can acknowledge that there are things that he doesn't understand about events in this world. But he is given enough insight to trust God that He knows what He is doing. Based upon this awareness he can commit himself to the Lord and enjoy the blessings that come from God.
- I. "God commends enjoyment as one of His most excellent gifts to the men and women who fulfill the previously mentioned condition of fearing Him...God really intended that men should come to a proper enjoyment of the good material gifts placed in this world by Him, and that the gifts should be a source of constant satisfaction when the things and the users are properly related to the Giver Himself." (Kaiser 79)

IV. Fourth Discourse (8:16-12:14)

A. Overview:

1. "No new material is introduced in this last section. Solomon ties up the loose ends and draws his grand conclusion" (Waldron 196).
 2. 8:16-9:9: As long as there is "life under the sun" man will never discover "every work of God." Don't allow these mysteries to reduce our enthusiasm for life.
 3. 9:10-11:6: Even though questions remain we must work with all our might because we will give God an account of our deeds.
 4. 11:7-12:8: Daily reminders of our death and the prospect of meeting our Creator should infect all God-given joy and actions. (Kaiser, 92)
- B. 8:16-17: Remember: man cannot know or discover all the work of God on the earth, and men are in the hand of God. God does not tell us everything about how He works.
- C. 9:1-6: "No one can tell just by God's treatment of particular individuals whether they are objects of God's love or hatred" (Kaiser, 94)
12. Job well knew the cruelty added to his own hurt by the suggestions of his friends that he was definitely the object of God's wrath and judgment. Such narrow-minded reasoning would suggest that all suffering is the result of personal sin. That is unbiblical.

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13. Some suffering is:
- a. *Educational* (Job 34:32; 35:11; 36:10, 15, 22)
 - b. *Doxological* to God's glory (John 9:1-3)
 - c. *Probationary* (Habakkuk's anxious waiting for God's long-suffering retribution to take effect)
 - d. *Revelational* (Hosea learned the pain and isolation felt by God due to adultery)
 - e. *Sacrificial* (Christ, the Suffering Servant, bore pain because of the sins of others (Isa. 42, 49, 53). (Kaiser, 95)
 - 1) Note: It is painfully unfair when men hastily make judgments concluding that another is necessarily suffering as a result of the personal guilt of sin.
2. 9:2-6: Everyone is going to die regardless of his conduct in life. This is a bad (evil) thing.
- a. One (event, thing, fate, destiny) is used here as that which is common to all (cf. Numbers 16:29). Death is not a friend; death is an enemy (1 Cor. 15:26). "The time of trial is over for them. The text does not say that the dead are conscious of nothing anywhere. It says that they do not have any more portion in life under the sun (9:5-6).
3. 9:7-9: How should the wise respond to these grim truths?
- f. "The tendency to brood and to mope about has to be resisted in the lives of those who fear God, take life as a gift from His hand, and receive God's plan and enablement to enjoy that life" (Kaiser 98).
 - a. 9:7: Eat and drink with a cheerful heart -bread and wine - the staples of life
 - 1) *Wine* here is (Hb. *Yayin*, same as Prov.20:1; 23:29-35)
 - b. 9:8: Clothes be white all the time – cleanliness and lack of toilsome labor ?? Oil on head indicates wealth and personal hygiene. In (Rev.3:4-5; 19:8) "white garments" indicate purity and victory. In the context of Eccl. 9:8 "white garments" represent joy and festivity (Kaiser, 99).
 - c. 9:9: Enjoy (see, experience) life with your wife (woman whom you love) all the days of your life. This is your reward from God for life under the sun (cf. Heb. 13:4).
 - 2) Note: "wife" (Heb. *ishshah*) TWOT AV – translated-wife 425 times, woman 323 times. In context "wife" is the better translation.
 - 3) The joy of marriage is a gift from God (Proverbs 18:22).
 - 4) Note Psalm 127 and 128: Author Solomon, Note vanity and fear of the Lord.
 - 1) Note: This is a wonderful, cheerful message reminding us that even though we don't know everything and things don't always work out fairly we can still enjoy the pleasures God provides. The message is don't make pleasure your god, but wholeheartedly enjoy, without guilt, the good gifts of God.
4. 9:10-12: Work hard but remember that "time and chance overtake them all."
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- a. Note: “Time and events happen to them all” (Kaiser 103). God has ordained that things don’t always work out according to strength and power. We cannot fathom all the factors. This compels us to learn to depend upon God for success.
5. 9:13-18: Points regarding the benefits of wisdom. “Wisdom is the highest of earthly qualities, and the least appreciated” (Waldron, 210).
- D. 10:1-20: Elaboration of the preceding thoughts with regard to Wisdom**
1. 10:19: Money is the answer to everything (NASB)
- E. 11:1-6: Work now, don’t merely watch the weather**
1. Great advice! Even though we cannot know how everything will work out, work hard, pursue your options and be generous to others. Don’t wait until the perfect time to launch out. It will never come. Keep trying and you will succeed.
2. Thus Solomon has repeatedly coaxed, urged, argued, pressed and begged us as wise men and women to get off the dead center of attempting to outguess God and His works...It is enough to know that God also is at work. That small amount of admitted mystery will not hinder us from becoming active in life to the glory of God. (Kaiser, 116)
- F. 11:7-8: Rejoice all your days**
1. 11:7: Perspective: see the good – see the light
2. 11:8: Rejoice all your years – remember, there will be dark days
- G. 11:9-12:8: Rejoice, remove, remember**
1. 11:9: Rejoice – heart be pleasant during young manhood
- g. Follow your heart’s desires within the limits of God’s approval (cf. 12:1)
- h. This is no *carte blanche* nor is it a contradiction of (Numbers 15:39b).
- i. “Your one life will soon be past, and only what is done for Christ...will last. So have fun. Rejoice and delight yourself in the thrill of living.” (Kaiser, 117)
- j. “Fun is not a four letter word.” (Cindy Yeater)
- k. Enjoy your youth but remember two things: One, you will be judged for everything you do, even while your young. Two, youth will not last, enjoy it while you have opportunity.
2. 12:1: Don’t wait until your life is nearly over to “remember your Creator.” Be wise and learn the lessons while you’re young, because physical life will not last.
3. 12:8: “By repeating the statement made in 1:2, Koheleth lets us know he has written his essay and is ready to draw his conclusion. It is that life is empty and meaningless – without God” (Waldron, 212).
- H. 12:9-12: Author’s Commendation of His Message**
1. Note: Solomon fits the description given (cf. 1 Kings 4:31-32).
- I. 12:13-14: Conclusion to the joyful life**
1. “The conclusion of the matter is this: Fear God and keep His commandments, for in this the whole of man’s existence is summed up. Because God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil” (12:13-14).

2. “All of our life is encompassed by the great plan of God. The child of God has a world view from God. He knows what life is all about. He does not understand everything about life, but he knows where he comes from and where he is going. He knows that life has a purpose, and that the backdrop of life is the divine plan...To him there is a goal for which he strives, an end for which he longs: to be with God eternally, and to share life with Him forever” (Waldron, 212).

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