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Ecclesiastes 7

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Ecclesiastes 7.

(A brief overview of the main topics).

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

Ecclesiastes is a brilliant book that gives an overall view of human life on earth, but in having said that, a spotlight should be shone upon the truth that there will always be individual exceptions and contradictions to the general laws that apply to the collective observations of the human population as a whole. God has designed the universe this way so that no human whether righteous or wicked can find out their future or know what will happen to them tomorrow (Eccles. 7:14). Ecclesiastes contains reflections of an elderly man called, "the Preacher" as he considers questions concerning meaning in life. The Preacher looks back and sees the futility and brief, passing of life and its meaningless (i.e. the vanity of it) even if it is spent chasing after the good things this life can offer, including wisdom, work, pleasure, and wealth, the Preacher comes to this conclusion because no matter how satisfying these things maybe for a time death is certain to end this satisfaction and the enjoyment of them. The sentiment of the following two verses echo throughout the book:

- By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return (Gen. 3:19).
- The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit (the life) returns to God who gave it (Eccles. 12:7).

The book concludes that only by living life with reverence and holy respect toward God the Creator and doing-good to others does life make sense. This is because those who live in this manner can enjoy God's good gifts on earth and will be delivered from death to eternal life and rewarded for the good, they have shown toward others.

Vanity: the word vanity comes from the Hebrew word (*hebel*). From Strong's Concordance it means emptiness, something fleeting and short lived and carries the idea of something being transient, brief and passing or of something unsatisfactory and meaningless.

The Preacher: based on the following words of verse one:

- The Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem (Eccles. 1:1)

And the following words of chapter two:

- I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. ⁵I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. ⁶I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. ⁷I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. ⁸I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the children of man. ⁹So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem (Eccles. 2:4-9).

It is traditionally accepted by most that "the Preacher," is Solomon during the tenth century B.C.

NOTE: for information of people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

- **Ecclesiastes 7:1-29**¹ A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of birth.² It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart.³ Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad.⁴ The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.⁵ It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools.⁶ For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fools; this also is vanity.⁷ Surely oppression drives the wise into madness, and a bribe corrupts the heart.⁸ Better is the end of a thing than its beginning, and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.⁹ Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the heart of fools.¹⁰ Say not, "Why were the former days better than these?" For it is not from wisdom that you ask this.¹¹ Wisdom is good with an inheritance, an advantage to those who see the sun.¹² For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of money, and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it.¹³ Consider the work of God: who can make straight what he has made crooked?¹⁴ In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him.¹⁵ In my vain life I have seen everything. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evildoing.¹⁶ Be not overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise. Why should you destroy yourself?¹⁷ Be not overly wicked, neither be a fool. Why should you die before your time?¹⁸ It is good that you should take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand, for the one who fears God shall come out from both of them.¹⁹ Wisdom gives strength to the wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city.²⁰ Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.²¹ Do not take to heart all the things that people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you.²² Your heart knows that many times you yourself have cursed others.²³ All this I have tested by wisdom. I said, "I will be wise," but it was far from me.²⁴ That which has been is far off, and deep, very deep; who can find it out?²⁵ I turned my heart to know and to search out and to seek wisdom and the scheme of things, and to know the wickedness of folly and the foolishness that is madness.²⁶ And I find something more bitter than death: the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her.²⁷ Behold, this is what I found, says the Preacher, while adding one thing to another to find the scheme of things—²⁸ which my soul has sought repeatedly, but I have not found. One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among all these I have not found.²⁹ See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.

A good reputation: a good name is better than precious ointment. To have a name amongst those who are wise and good is better than precious ointment which in these countries was very fragrant, acceptable, useful and of great price and value.

The day of birth and of death: the day of death is better than the day of birth. If this statement is referring to this life only and not eternal life as many passages in this book are to be understood, then it may be true of all seeing this world is so full of vanity, hardship, troubles, misery, sorrow and suffering it is a more desirable thing to go out of it than to come into it.

Mourning and feasting: it is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart (meaning they will think about the lusts and vanities of this world, by which most are ensnared and destroyed; and be more thoughtful to seek after the everlasting happiness which God offers to them in his word.

Laughter and sorrow: sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of face the heart is made glad, this can carry the following two ideas: -

1. When the sadness of the outward countenance is not hypocritical, but serious and real, arising from proper reflections on things in the mind and the heart is drawn away from vain, carnal, and sensual things; and is engaged in the contemplation of spiritual and heavenly ones, it is of great advantage to the heart and life is made joyful.

2. The heart can be made glad by the outward severity of the countenance of a faithful friend correcting our faults, when we receive the corrections in love, and confess our faults, and amend them the heart is made better.

Laughter and mourning: the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth (meaning laughter jollity and merriment). Mourning here can be mourning over sin, or because of sadness seated in the heart. Mourning is better than laughter because the heart of the wise in the house of mourning is frequently, meditating upon serious things, such as death and judgment, the vanity of this life, and the reality of God and of eternity. Whereas the heart, mind and affections of a fool are wholly set upon feasting, jollity, and merriment, because they regard only their present delight, and consider not how dearly they may pay for it in the future.

Accepting corrections: it is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools. The corrections of the wise will guide us on the right path and protect us from trouble (providing we receive them), whereas the praises of fools will only puff up our egos and pride.

Bribes: corrupts the heart. The reason for this is obvious.

Foolishness of anger: be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the bosom of fools. There are two types of anger, unrighteous anger and righteous anger.

1. Unrighteous anger is anger that is rooted in self, it is about power over others, controlling others or inflicting harm and hurt upon others.
2. Righteous anger has nothing to do with self nor is it about uncontrolled emotions it is about being angry because people are being treated cruelly and oppressed for the gain of others it is about being angry over injustices.

Obviously the righteous and wise will do all they can to seek out a peaceful and right way to change injustices, but if anger seizes a man because he sees four men forcing a young girl against her will into their car and he at great risk to his own life races over and uses whatever force he can to rescue her from a terrible fate that is righteous anger. There is no benefit to him, but the girl will be forever thankful. Righteous anger is about doing-good toward others and protecting others whereas unrighteous anger only leads to hurt, harm and destruction.

Reflecting on the past: do not say, "Why were the former days better than these?" For it is not from wisdom that you ask this. The expression, "That former times were better than present ones," is a common opinion, it is not wise for the following two reasons:

1. It implies complaining against God for bringing us into the world during an age when it is full of evil and shows a lack of gratitude for what is good.
2. If a proper and wise search was done it would show that the former times were no better than the present; and that there has always been bad men, and bad things done; frauds, oppressions, and violence, troubles, struggles, hurts and sorrow and that everything that can be complained of now could be found in the former ages.

Wisdom protects: the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it. This is of course because wisdom will always guide us in the right path and always lead us away from trouble.

God's ways: consider the work of God: who can make straight what he has made crooked? In this context the work of God does not refer to creation, but to God's wise, just, and powerful government over all affairs and over the course of events which God orders and controls. This proverb can refer to the following two ideas:

1. To Adam and the results of his fall that followed, meaning that no one can alter the course of things, nor stay the hand, nor stop the providence of God: if calamities famine, pestilence, or the sword; or poverty should be in the world, there is no frustrating his designs that he has purposed in his eternal plans and providence and His eternal wisdom and eternal foresight.
2. That there is a hand of God overruling all actions, either affecting them for good, referring to events which are straight, (i.e., in accordance with our expectation), or permitting them for bad referring to events which are crooked (i.e., which by their seeming inequality baffle our ability to understand).

Wisdom and strength: wisdom gives strength to the wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city. This is because wisdom:

- Teaches us not to be quick in resenting affronts, but to forgive.
- Shelters and protects us from many troubles.
- Gives spiritual life and inner strength.
- Guards and guides us to God and eternal life in everlasting glory. In contrast to this worldly riches and power only bring joy for a moment and their end is the darkness of the grave. Rulers of a city no matter how powerful cannot lengthen human mortal life whereas wisdom can.

Prosperity and adversity: in prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider that God has made the one as well as the other, so that no one will know their future.

Righteousness, evil and death: there is a righteous person who perishes before their time in their righteousness and there is a wicked person who prolongs their life in their evildoing.

The Preacher says that the balance of life is: -

- To not make yourself overly righteous.
- To not make yourself too wise.
- To not make yourself overly wicked.
- To not make yourself a fool.

He then goes on to say that a person who does these destroys themselves?

All righteous people sin: surely there is not a righteous person on earth who does good and never sins. John in the New Testament confirms this statement, he wrote:

- If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (1 John 1:8-10).

Gossip and rumours: do not take to heart all the things that people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you. Your heart knows that many times you have yourself cursed others.

A Dangerous Woman.

The man who pleases God escapes the woman: -

- Whose heart is full of snares (i.e., feminine charms).
- Whose heart is a net (i.e., sensuality that leads to destruction).

- Whose hands are fetters (i.e., they take their victims captive and make them prisoners).

The man who lives to honour and please God will not be taken by the lures of the dangerous woman, but the sinner will be.

God created man: God made humans upright but they have sought out many schemes.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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