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Ecclesiastes 8

(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 8.

(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 8:1-17** ¹ Who is like the wise? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom makes his face shine, and the hardness of his face is changed. ² I say: Keep the king's command, because of God's oath to him. ³ Be not hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand in an evil cause, for he does whatever he pleases. ⁴ For the word of the king is supreme, and who may say to him, "What are you doing?" ⁵ Whoever keeps a command will know no evil thing, and the wise heart will know the proper time and the just way. ⁶ For there is a time and a way for everything, although man's trouble lies heavy on him. ⁷ For he does not know what is to be, for who can tell him how it will be? ⁸ No man has power to retain the spirit, or power over the day of death. There is no discharge from war, nor will wickedness deliver those who are given to it. ⁹ All this I observed while applying my heart to all that is done under the sun, when man had power over man to his hurt. ¹⁰ Then I saw the wicked buried. They used to go in and out of the holy place and were praised in the city where they had done such things. This also is vanity. ¹¹ Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil. ¹² Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him. ¹³ But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God. ¹⁴ There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity. ¹⁵ And I commend joy, for man has nothing better under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun. ¹⁶ When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how neither day nor night do one's eyes see sleep, ¹⁷ then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out.

The glory of wisdom: makes the face shine and changes the hardness of the heart.

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Wisdom and kings: do not stand against a king because whatever they please, they do, and their word is supreme. Whoever keeps the king's command will not know his wrath, those who are wise will know the proper time, and the just way to change a thing.

The day of death: no man or woman knows how to retain life or has power over the day of death.

Delayed punishment: because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of men and women is fully set upon doing evil, but just because life is prolonged and judgment delayed it does not mean they will be granted eternal life.

The world is not just: there are righteous people who suffer because of the deeds of the wicked and there are wicked people who are blessed, because of the deeds of the righteous. This is also a vanity that takes place on earth.

Good and evil deeds: though a sinner has no fear of God and does evil and his life is prolonged it will not be well with them because God will not prolong their life, but for those who fear God (referring to those who do what is good and right) it will go well, meaning God will prolong their life (i.e., raise them to eternal life).

Injustice on earth: there are righteous people to whom evil happens because of the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked people who benefit because of the deeds of the righteous this also is vanity that takes place on earth.

Man's lot in life: the only good thing a person separated from God has is to work, eat and drink and be joyful, for the few days God has given them to live.

God's ways on earth: cannot be found out neither can the work of God that is done under the sun be discovered no matter how much a person may study or how much time they spend seeking they will not find it out. Even though a wise person claims to know God's ways under the sun they cannot find it out. This is because there are too many contradictions and exceptions to the general rules and laws of an event or a thing to work out God's way on earth.

After observing the world around him the author of Ecclesiastes concludes the only good thing a man or woman who denies God has in this life is to work, eat, drink and be joyful, for the few days God has given them to live under the sun.

- There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity. ¹⁵And I commend joy, for man has no good thing under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun. (Eccles. 8:14-15).

The writer is saying that bad events happen to the righteous, who according to our sense of justice do not deserve to be afflicted with hardships, grief and sorrow, and that good things happen to the wicked who do not deserve fortune and prosperity. Because of these observations the author of Ecclesiastes determines, "all is vanity on earth," we would say, "the earth is full of injustices." After observing these apparent injustices, he concludes that the best thing for those who chose to live without God, is to work, eat, drink and be joyful, all the days of their life that God has given them on earth, because when they breathe their last breath there is no more, but the darkness of the grave. (Eccles. 8:14-15).

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.
