

ECCLESIASTES 6:8-12

The Book of Ecclesiastes Chapter Six (Part Two)

Dr. Luther Smith Jr.

Review From Last Week

Qoheleth in his statement here seems to suggest that a poor outlook is not relegated to a certain social class or status, ethnicity or sex. That all people have this perspective.

Qoheleth is once more underscoring the importance of focusing on the good (tov) things in one's life and to live intentionally. That a person cannot hold on tightly to riches and that a person's personal satisfaction ought to be found in the good things (as those things that are defined by God).

Ecclesiastes 6:8 NASB95

For what advantage does the wise man have over the fool? What advantage does the poor man have, knowing how to walk before the living?

Advantage

יוֹתֵר (yotare)

- This Hebrew word occurs 8 times in the Hebrew Scriptures.
- This Hebrew word occurs 7 times in the Book of Ecclesiastes.
- "More," "over," or "better."
- This word emphasizes an increase in quality or an addition.
- Depending on the context it can be used as an *adverb* (more), *noun* (advantage), or *conjunction* (moreover).

An Interesting Observation: Qoheleth used the Hebrew word יוֹתֵר (yotare) in the context of the same subject in a previous chapter in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Cross-Reference: Ecclesiastes 2:14-16.

Ecclesiastes 6:8 NASB95

For what advantage does the wise man have over the fool? What advantage does the poor man have, knowing how to walk before the living?

Poor

עָנִי (ani)

- This Hebrew word occurs 79 times in the Hebrew Scriptures.
- This Hebrew word occurs only once in the Book of Ecclesiastes.
- "Poor," "afflicted,"
- This may underscore a person's lack of resources or describes a person who has suffered holistically.

Walk

הָלַךְ (halak)

- This Hebrew word occurs 500 times in the Hebrew Scriptures.
- This Hebrew word occurs 17 times in the Book of Ecclesiastes.
- "Go," "walk," (figurative vs non-figurative).
- This word is in the *Qal* (active) stem.

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Cross-Reference: Ecclesiastes 2:14-16.

Qoheleth's Conclusion: *Qoheleth* presented these rhetorical questions to the congregation of the nation of Israel as a literary device to underscore his point that the wise man has an advantage (or profit) over the fool and the poor man, even in his position, can recognize how they ought to live.

Ecclesiastes 6:9 DSV

What the eyes look upon is qualitatively better than what the soul goes after. This also is useless and a striving after wind.

Qoheleth's Conclusion: In terms of living on the land having a proper outlook it is better (the perspective of God) to focus from on reality, rather than “chasing dreams” in life. *Qoheleth* in a sense has told the congregation of Israel already.

Ecclesiastes 6:10 NASB95

Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he.

What does this statement mean?

Breaking Down Qoheleth's Statements

Whatever has come to be has already been named...

- *Qoheleth* underscored this concept in previous statements in the book of Ecclesiastes.
 - Ecclesiastes Chapter 1:4-11

Cross-References: Ecclesiastes 3:14-15, 6:10.

Breaking Down Qoheleth's Statements

...and it is known what man is...

- *Qoheleth* also underscored this concept in previous statements in the book of Ecclesiastes.
 - Ecclesiastes Chapter 3:18-21

Cross-References: Ecclesiastes 6:6, 9:10.

Ecclesiastes 6:10 NASB95

Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is, and that he is not able to dispute with one stronger than he.

Dispute

דִּין (*din*)

- This word occurs in the Hebrew Scriptures 24 times.
- This word occurred once in the book of Ecclesiastes.
- “judge,” “contend,” or “plead.”
- To strive in a rivalry or against difficulties or struggles.

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One Stronger

תָּקַף (*taqap*)

- This word occurs in the Hebrew Scriptures 4 times.
- This word occurred twice in the book of Ecclesiastes.
- “prevail,” “overcome,” “stronger.”
- This word is in the *hiphil* stem (is causative).

Some thoughts about this statement

The statement that Qoheleth made does not use the Hebrew word God (אֱלֹהִים/*elohim*) to refer to the “stronger man,” however this statement emphasizes God and his establishing of reality. Just as a person cannot overtake (or contend) with a man that is stronger than he, a person cannot override reality itself..

Ecclesiastes 6:11 NASB95

For there are many words which increase futility. What then is the advantage to a man?

Qoheleth had a statement similar to this in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Cross-References: Ecclesiastes 5:3, 10:12-13

Qoheleth’s Observations: Once more *Qoheleth* at the end of this statement uses a rhetorical question as a literary device to emphasize his previous point, that multiplying words (not using their words intentionally) at the end of the day does not yield any advantage for a person.

Ecclesiastes 6:12 NASB95

For who knows what is good for a man during his lifetime, during the few years of his futile life? He will spend them like a shadow. For who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun?

He will spend them

עָשָׂה (*asa*)

- This word occurs in the book of Ecclesiastes 59 times!
- This word is a verb.
- “Do,” “make,” “wrought,” “commit,” “keep.”
- This word is in the *Qal* (active) stem.
- This word is in the *yiqtol* (imperfect).

Shadow

צֶל (*sel*)

- This word occurs in the book of Ecclesiastes 4 times.
- “Shadow,” “shade.”
- Derives from Hebrew root word צָלַל (*salal*), which means “to darken” or “to be dark.”
- This could be used figuratively or non-figuratively.

Cross-Reference: Psalm 144:4.

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Some Final Thoughts: *Qoheleth* continued in this chapter to inform the congregation of Israel about the reality of death (Ecc. 6:6, 12), and how short life is (Ecc. 6:12). Based upon these facts, a person ought to have the proper perspective of life as they live on the land and how to live intentionally with the life that they have.

Qoheleth's Observations: *Qoheleth* once more underscored through rhetorical questions as a literary device to underscore the finite quality of physical life of humankind. No one can tell a man what comes after him because they eventually pass away.

End Chapter Six