

# Ecclesiastes

## Lesson 5 (7:15-9:12)

### 1. The value of practical wisdom (part 2, 7:15-8:1).

- a. The Preacher declares that he has seen everything in his days of vanity because he searched diligently for sources satisfaction and wisdom.
  - i. The righteous man may die in all manner of circumstances (tragedy, violence, sickness, too young).
  - ii. The wicked man, by contrast, may have his days prolonged under the sun.
  - iii. There is little to no correlation between righteousness and long life, or wickedness and meeting an early death.
- b. The Preacher concludes, do not be overly righteous for the wrong reason of hoping to extend your life.
- c. Likewise, the wicked and the foolish have no guarantee that their lives will be prolonged.
- d. There simply is no natural correlation between longevity and character except if a man's character creates direct earthly consequences for his actions.
- e. The Preacher's conclusions thus far have excluded God. However, the one who fears God will escape consequences.
  - i. He should make better choices and thereby escape the consequences of making sinful decisions on earth.
  - ii. Fear of God (faith) also provides an ultimate escape in eternal life because of God's grace.
- f. The wise person is strengthened by gaining more wisdom.
- g. Wisdom is to be relied upon more than having ten powerful men by your side.
- h. Men can and will fail, for there are no perfectly just men on earth who always do good and never commit sin.
- i. Wisdom does not fail in the way sinful men fail; therefore, it is good for men to seek wisdom.
- j. Do not take to heart everything people may say.
  - i. Eavesdropping may lead to overhearing a servant cursing you, which they would likely never speak directly to you.
  - ii. The man who hears others cursing him is also guilty of cursing others, so avoid hypocrisy when responding (or not) to what is heard.
- k. The Preacher declares the abundance of wisdom he has gained, yet he is still not wise.
  - i. Seeking wisdom never has an end, for such a goal will always be unattainable.
  - ii. Who can possibly learn all the wisdom, especially the deep truths that few if any can know?
  - iii. The Preacher was committed to learning wisdom and to avoid folly, foolishness, and madness but he never finished discovering wisdom.
- l. Avoiding the enticing woman.
  - i. She is more bitter to the soul than death.
  - ii. Her heart lays snares, nets and fetters as a trap for weak and foolish men.
  - iii. However, the man who escapes her lures will please God.

- iv. The sinner will become trapped by her for he does not seek to please God.
- v. In his cynicism, the Preacher believes perhaps there is one man in a thousand who will make the right choice, but he has not found a woman who can be trusted.
- m. God made man upright, but that doesn't last because of sin (free moral agency).
  - i. Despite being made upright, men seek out wicked schemes continually.
  - ii. The wise man understands and interprets what is right, denies his sinful heart the pleasure of its sinful schemes, and seeks to please God.
  - iii. This kind of wisdom makes the face of a righteous man shine and uplifts his countenance.

## **2. Wisdom for the subjects of the king (8:2-9).**

- a. The Preacher, who is also the king of Israel, instructs his audience to obey the king in honor of their oath to obey God.
- b. The king is subject to God and will answer to Him for the way he uses his authority.
- c. Likewise, those subject to the king will answer to God for the way they obeyed the king who was established by God to rule over them.
- d. Subjects should not approach the king in haste or without considering how the king will respond to their petition.
- e. No subject should approach the king with an evil petition that does not honor God, the king's authority, or the king's responsibility to God.
- f. As king, he has the power to do whatever pleases him so petitions must be constrained by that inescapable truth.
- g. The king's words have power; whatever he decrees becomes reality within the limits of his power and authority.
- h. When the king issues a decree, no one subject to the king is permitted to challenge his authority to do as he pleases.
- i. Those who abide by the king's command will be spared harm from not obeying his regulations.
- j. Obedience to the king demands proper discernment of how to live under the king's authority.
- k. Failing to obey the king brings misery that increases over time.
- l. The man given to disobedience does not listen to the counsel of others who warn him of the consequences of his actions.
- m. No one has power over the destiny of their own spirit once death separates the body from the spirit.
- n. The Preacher declares that there is no end to the war that rages between the flesh and the spirit to either do man's will or to submit to God's will.
- o. Wickedness can never accomplish anything good and those who engage in wickedness will be judged for their deeds by God.
- p. Despite his role as king, the Preacher declares that one man rules over another to his own hurt, harm or calamity.
  - i. God originally established a theocracy for Israel, not a monarchy, but they demanded a king instead of God's Lordship over them.

- ii. A human king will always be tempted to abuse the power he has over his subjects, which is something God never does.
- iii. Because of his higher levels of authority, the king will have many things to answer for to God.
- iv. The common man will never face the same judgment as a king.

### **3. Perfect justice comes with death, not in life (8:10-9:12).**

- a. The death of the wicked is not always a result of their hypocrisy in putting on an air of holiness.
- b. Nevertheless, the wicked will die, and their deeds will be forgotten.
- c. Justice in this world is not swift and sometimes does not come at all in this life.
- d. This delayed justice emboldens the wicked to increase in their evil deeds.
- e. Sinners seem to get away with hundreds of sins and may even live a long, wicked life.
- f. However, the Preacher is confident that God will hold the wicked accountable.
- g. Likewise, those who fear God should expect things to go well for them after death when they enter into eternity.
- h. Justice in this life is often vanity, or completely unsatisfying to the soul.
  - i. The consequences befitting the wicked may fall upon the righteous man.
  - ii. The favor befitting the righteous may fall upon the wicked man.
- i. Since these injustices cannot be perfectly corrected, there is nothing better to do in life than to eat, drink, and be merry whenever the opportunity allows.
- j. This simple attitude honors God who gives life to those under the sun.
- k. More observations and understandings of wisdom from the Preacher.
  - i. The Preacher was so committed to discovering wisdom that he deprived himself of sleep day and night.
  - ii. Man will never be able to discover all the work of God done under the sun.
  - iii. The problem is not a lack of diligence or motivation, but that God's works are more numerous and mysterious than man can ever hope to comprehend.
  - iv. However, the works done by the righteous and the wise are all in God's hands; He receives the honor and glory from the righteous and wise because they are working according to His will.
  - v. Love and hate are experienced by all men regardless of their own conduct, whether righteous or wicked.
  - vi. The same fate comes to both groups somewhat equally.
    - 1. Group 1: Righteous, clean, offers sacrifices, makes and keeps an oath
    - 2. Group 2: Wicked, unclean, does not offer sacrifices, fear his oaths.
  - vii. Death comes to all men.
  - viii. However, the righteous who is joined to all living (in heaven) has hope of joining them in eternity.
  - ix. A living dog (eternal life of the faithful) is better than a dead lion (fiercely wicked man while he lived who must face God's judgment).
  - x. The living know that death awaits them, but the dead know nothing (too late to make a better choice for eternity).
  - xi. The death of wicked removes all hope of enjoying the rewards of their evil deeds.

- xii. Everything the wicked labored for perishes with them.
  - 1. Love
  - 2. Hatred
  - 3. Envy
  - 4. Their share of anything done under the sun,
- xiii. Therefore, the righteous should go and eat and drink with a merry heart for God accepts works done in obedience to Him.
- xiv. The righteous should rejoice that God has made their garments white and that He will anoint their heads with oil.
- xv. This truth should cause the righteous to live joyfully with his wife all the days of his vain life which God has given to him under the sun.
- xvi. Such is the portion God has appointed to the righteous in life.
- xvii. Whatever the righteous understands he is to do should be done with all their might in the hope that God offers them.
- xviii. These opportunities will be gone once death comes, so the righteous should avail themselves of these blessings now.
- xix. Be aware that most things in life in the fallen world are not fair, logical or predictable.
  - 1. The race is not always won by the swiftest competitor.
  - 2. The battle is not always won by the strongest competitor.
  - 3. Abundance (bread) does not always go to the wisest person.
  - 4. Men with the greatest skill are not always favored with great honor.
  - 5. Rather, time and chance play big roles in the outcomes of all things.
- xx. Further, man generally does not know when his death will come.
  - 1. The fish did not know his time was up until he was caught by the net.
  - 2. The bird did not know his time was up until he was caught in the snare.
  - 3. Likewise, the sons of men are snared in an evil time where life and death are unpredictable without any guarantees.
  - 4. Death comes suddenly for most men under the sun.
- xxi. Therefore, living in obedience to God in righteousness is essential for no one truly knows when his life will end and come to face God for all the deeds he has done.