

Ecclesiastes: The Teacher's Reflections – Part 3 (c. 937t–932t BC)

Ecclesiastes 9–12

On Living and Dying

9:1 For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, *are* in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred *by* all *that is* before them.

2 All *things come* alike to all: *there is* one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as *is* the good, so *is* the sinner; *and* he that sweareth, as *he* that feareth an oath.

3 This *is* an evil among all *things* that are done under the sun, that *there is* one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness *is* in their heart while they live, and after that *they go* to the dead.

4 For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

5 For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

6 Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any *thing* that is done under the sun.

On Enjoying Life

7 Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.

8 Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.

9 Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that *is* thy portion in *this* life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.

10 Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do *it* with thy might; for *there is* no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

On the Paradoxes of Life

11 I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race *is* not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

12 For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so *are* the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.

On the Wisdom of the Poor

13 This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it *seemed* great unto me:

14 *There was* a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it:

15 Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man.

16 Then said I, Wisdom *is* better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom *is* despised, and his words are not heard.

On Wisdom and Folly

17 The words of wise *men are* heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools.

18 Wisdom *is* better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good.

10:1 Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor: so *doth* a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom *and* honor.

2 A wise man's heart *is* at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left.

3 Yea also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth *him*, and he saith to every one *that* he *is* a fool.

On the Folly of Rulers

4 If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences.

5 There is an evil *which* I have seen under the sun, as an error *which* proceedeth from the ruler:

6 Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place.

7 I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth.

On the Need for Wisdom in Work

8 He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.

9 Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith; *and* he that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby.

10 If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength: but wisdom *is* profitable to direct.

11 Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment; and a babbler is no better.

On Wise Speech and Thought

- 12 The words of a wise man's mouth *are* gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself.
 13 The beginning of the words of his mouth *is* foolishness: and the end of his talk *is* mischievous madness.
 14 A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him?
 15 The labor of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city.

On the Importance of Wise Leadership

- 16 Woe to thee, O land, when thy king *is* a child, and thy princes eat in the morning!
 17 Blessed *art* thou, O land, when thy king *is* the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!
 18 By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.
 19 A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money answereth all *things*.
 20 Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.

On the Need for Diversification in Labor and Investment

- 11:1 Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.
 2 Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.
 3 If the clouds be full of rain, they empty *themselves* upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.
 4 He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.
 5 As thou knowest not what *is* the way of the spirit, *nor* how the bones *do grow* in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.
 6 In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both *shall be* alike good.

On the Pleasures of Youth

- 7 Truly the light *is* sweet, and a pleasant *thing it is* for the eyes to behold the sun:
 8 But if a man live many years, *and* rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh *is* vanity.
 9 Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these *things* God will bring thee into judgment.
 10 Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth *are* vanity.

On Serving God Before Old Age Comes

- 12:1 Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;
 2 While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:
 3 In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened,
 4 And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low;
 5 Also *when* they shall be afraid of *that which is* high, and fears *shall be* in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:
 6 Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.
 7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

Theme Repeated

- 8 Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all *is* vanity.

Epilogue

- 9 And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, *and* set in order many proverbs.
 10 The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: *and that which was* written *was* upright, *even* words of truth.
 11 The words of the wise *are* as goads, and as nails fastened *by* the masters of assemblies, *which* are given from one shepherd.
 12 And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books *there is* no end; and much study *is* a weariness of the flesh.
 13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man.

14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil.

The Death of Solomon (932t BC)

1 Kings 11:41–43	2 Chronicles 9:29–31
<p>41 And the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, <i>are</i> they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon?</p> <p>42 And the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel <i>was</i> forty years.</p> <p>43 And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.</p>	<p>29 Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, first and last, <i>are</i> they not written in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer against Jeroboam the son of Nebat?</p> <p>30 And Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years.</p> <p>31 And Solomon slept with his fathers, and he was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.</p>

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