

**Ecclesiastes: The Teacher's Reflections – Part 3 (c. 937t–932t BC)****Ecclesiastes 9–12****On Living and Dying**

9:1 So I reflected on all this, attempting to clear it all up. I concluded that the righteous and the wise, as well as their works, are in the hand of God; whether a person will be loved or hated—no one knows what lies ahead.  
2 Everyone shares the same fate—the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the ceremonially clean and unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not. What happens to the good person, also happens to the sinner; what happens to those who make vows, also happens to those who are afraid to make vows.  
3 This is the unfortunate fact about everything that happens on earth: the same fate awaits everyone. In addition to this, the hearts of all people are full of evil, and there is folly in their hearts during their lives—then they die.  
4 But whoever is among the living has hope; a live dog is better than a dead lion.  
5 For the living know that they will die, but the dead do not know anything; they have no further reward—and even the memory of them disappears.  
6 What they loved, as well as what they hated and envied, perished long ago, and they no longer have a part in anything that happens on earth.

**On Enjoying Life**

7 Go, eat your food with joy, and drink your wine with a happy heart, because God has already approved your works.  
8 Let your clothes always be white, and do not spare precious ointment on your head.  
9 Enjoy life with your beloved wife during all the days of your fleeting life that God has given you on earth during all your fleeting days; for that is your reward in life and in your burdensome work on earth.  
10 Whatever you find to do with your hands, do it with all your might, because there is neither work nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom in the grave, the place where you will eventually go.

**On the Paradoxes of Life**

11 Again, I observed this on the earth: the race is not always won by the swiftest, the battle is not always won by the strongest; prosperity does not always belong to those who are the wisest, wealth does not always belong to those who are the most discerning, nor does success always come to those with the most knowledge—for time and chance may overcome them all.  
12 Surely, no one knows his appointed time! Like fish that are caught in a deadly net, and like birds that are caught in a snare—just like them, all people are ensnared at an unfortunate time that falls upon them suddenly.

**On the Wisdom of the Poor**

13 This is what I also observed about wisdom on earth, and it is a great burden to me:  
14 There was once a small city with a few men in it, and a mighty king attacked it, besieging it and building strong siege works against it.  
15 However, a poor but wise man lived in the city, and he could have delivered the city by his wisdom, but no one listened to that poor man.  
16 So I concluded that wisdom is better than might, but a poor man's wisdom is despised; no one ever listens to his advice.

**On Wisdom and Folly**

17 The words of the wise are heard in quiet,  
more than the shouting of a ruler is heard among fools.  
18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war,  
but one sinner can destroy much that is good.  
10:1 One dead fly makes the perfumer's ointment give off a rancid stench,  
so a little folly can outweigh much wisdom.  
2 A wise person's good sense protects him,  
but a fool's lack of sense leaves him vulnerable.  
3 Even when a fool walks along the road he lacks sense,  
and shows everyone what a fool he is.

**On the Folly of Rulers**

4 If the anger of the ruler flares up against you, do not resign from your position,  
for a calm response can undo great offenses.  
5 I have seen another misfortune on the earth:  
It is an error a ruler makes.  
6 Fools are placed in many positions of authority,  
while wealthy men sit in lowly positions.

7 I have seen slaves on horseback  
and princes walking on foot like slaves.

#### **On the Need for Wisdom in Work**

8 One who digs a pit may fall into it,  
and one who breaks through a wall may be bitten by a snake.  
9 One who quarries stones may be injured by them;  
one who splits logs may be endangered by them.  
10 If an iron axhead is blunt and a workman does not sharpen its edge,  
he must exert a great deal of effort;  
so wisdom has the advantage of giving success.  
11 If the snake should bite before it is charmed,  
the snake charmer is in trouble.

#### **On Wise Speech and Thought**

12 The words of a wise person win him favor,  
but the words of a fool are self-destructive.  
13 At the beginning his words are foolish  
and at the end his talk is wicked madness,  
14 yet a fool keeps on babbling.  
No one knows what will happen;  
who can tell him what will happen in the future?  
15 The toil of a stupid fool wears him out,  
because he does not even know the way to the city.

#### **On the Importance of Wise Leadership**

16 Woe to you, O land, when your king is childish,  
and your princes feast in the morning!  
17 Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobility,  
and your princes feast at the proper time—  
with self-control and not in drunkenness.  
18 Because of laziness the roof caves in,  
and because of idle hands the house leaks.  
19 Feasts are made for laughter, and wine makes life merry,  
but money is the answer for everything.  
20 Do not curse a king even in your thoughts,  
and do not curse the rich while in your bedroom;  
for a bird might report what you are thinking,  
or some winged creature might repeat your words.

#### **On the Need for Diversification in Labor and Investment**

11:1 Send your grain overseas,  
for after many days you will get a return.  
2 Divide your merchandise among seven or even eight investments,  
for you do not know what calamity may happen on earth.  
3 If the clouds are full of rain,  
they will empty themselves on the earth,  
and whether a tree falls to the south or to the north,  
the tree will lie wherever it falls.  
4 He who watches the wind will not sow,  
and he who observes the clouds will not reap.  
5 Just as you do not know the path of the wind,  
or how the bones form in the womb of a pregnant woman,  
so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.  
6 Sow your seed in the morning,  
and do not stop working until the evening;  
for you do not know which activity will succeed—  
whether this one or that one, or whether both will prosper equally.

**On the Pleasures of Youth**

- 7 Light is sweet,  
and it is pleasant for a person to see the sun.
- 8 So, if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all,  
but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many—  
all that is about to come is obscure.
- 9 Rejoice, young man, while you are young,  
and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth.  
Follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes,  
but know that God will judge your motives and actions.
- 10 Banish emotional stress from your mind,  
and put away pain from your body;  
for youth and the prime of life are fleeting.

**On Serving God Before Old Age Comes**

- 12:1 So remember your Creator in the days of your youth—  
before the difficult days come,  
and the years draw near when you will say,  
“I have no pleasure in them”;
- 2 before the sun and the light of the moon and the stars grow dark,  
and the clouds disappear after the rain;
- 3 when those who keep watch over the house begin to tremble,  
and the virile men begin to stoop over,  
and the grinders begin to cease because they grow few,  
and those who look through the windows grow dim,
- 4 and the doors along the street are shut;  
when the sound of the grinding mill grows low,  
and one is awakened by the sound of a bird,  
and all their songs grow faint,
- 5 and they are afraid of heights and the dangers in the street;  
the almond blossoms grow white,  
and the grasshopper drags itself along,  
and the caper berry shrivels up—  
because man goes to his eternal home,  
and the mourners go about in the streets—
- 6 before the silver cord is removed,  
or the golden bowl is broken,  
or the pitcher is shattered at the well,  
or the water wheel is broken at the cistern—
- 7 and the dust returns to the earth as it was,  
and the life’s breath returns to God who gave it.

**Theme Repeated**

- 8 “Absolutely futile!” laments the Teacher,  
“All of these things are futile!”

**Epilogue**

- 9 Not only was the Teacher wise, but he also taught knowledge to the people; he carefully evaluated and arranged many proverbs.
- 10 The Teacher sought to find delightful words, and to write accurately truthful sayings.
- 11 The words of the sages are like prods, and the collected sayings are like firmly fixed nails; they are given by one shepherd.
- 12 Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. There is no end to the making of many books, and much study is exhausting to the body.
- 13 Having heard everything, I have reached this conclusion:
- Fear God and keep his commandments,  
because this is the whole duty of man.
- 14 For God will evaluate every deed,  
including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

### The Death of Solomon (932t BC)

1 Kings 11:41–43	2 Chronicles 9:29–31
<p>41 The rest of the events of Solomon’s reign, including all his accomplishments and his wise decisions, are recorded in the scroll called the Annals of Solomon.</p> <p>42 Solomon ruled over all Israel from Jerusalem for forty years.</p> <p>43 Then Solomon passed away and was buried in the city of his father David. His son Rehoboam replaced him as king.</p>	<p>29 The rest of the events of Solomon’s reign, from start to finish, are recorded in the Annals of Nathan the Prophet, the Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and the Vision of Iddo the Seer pertaining to Jeroboam son of Nebat.</p> <p>30 Solomon ruled over all Israel from Jerusalem for forty years.</p> <p>31 Then Solomon passed away and was buried in the city of his father David. His son Rehoboam replaced him as king.</p>

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