Introduction:

The Hebrew word Koheleth was translated by the Greek Septuagint translation to Ecclesiastes which means “one who speaks in the assembly.” The English word “Preacher” is used throughout the text of the book in place of the Hebrew (Koheleth). The book sets out to answer the question found at 1:3, “What profit hath man of all his labor wherein he labors under the sun?”

Author and Date of Writing

Some believe the author of Ecclesiastes to be anonymous. Keil and Delitzsch contend that the author is a man living in the Persian Empire (i.e., anywhere from 464 to 332 BC) in Palestine and dwelling near the temple of God (cf. Eccl. 4:17; 8:10). Some believe the author of Ecclesiastes to be one who merely claimed to be Solomon. Most believe, however, that the book was written by Solomon. The author of Ecclesiastes claims to be the “son of David” (Eccl. 1:1 and applied to Solomon at II Sam. 12:24). He is the “king in Jerusalem” (Eccl. 1:1 and applied to Solomon I Kings 1:43). The author of Ecclesiastes is one of “great wisdom” (Eccl. 1:16 and applied to Solomon at I Kings 3:5-15). Furthermore the author of Ecclesiastes was one of great wealth (Eccl. 1:16; 2:7-9 and applied to Solomon at I Kings 10:23) and a builder of great structures (Eccl. 2:4-11; I Kings 6 all; 9:17). It seems very clear that Solomon is the true author of this book and thereby dated between 970 and 930 BC.

Contents of Book

Solomon had set out to “apply his heart to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven:” (Eccl. 1:13; 8:9). Solomon wanted to know the “reason” for all things (Eccl. 7:25) and to “Lay to my heart even to explore” (Eccl. 9:1). His objective was to find the answer to the question posed at Ecclesiastes 1:3, “What profit hath man of all his labor wherein he labors under the sun” (see also Eccl. 3:9; 5:16). Man lives a life (some short and some long) (Eccl. 2:16; 3:2; 8:12-14; 11:8), labors for sustenance (Eccl. 2:11), experiences heartaches, sorrows, pain, and sickness (Eccl. 5:17; 7:4, 10), suffers oppressions (Eccl. 4:1ff), seeks out things such as wisdom (Eccl. 1:13), pleasure (Eccl. 2:1), and happiness (Eccl. 2:3). All these things occur in life yet Solomon’s quest is to answer the question of why and what profit can come of these things? The Preacher said, “For what hath a man of all his labor, and of the striving of his heart, wherein he labors under the sun?” (Eccl. 2:22 see also 3:9). Solomon eventually concludes that the endeavor of attempting to understand why things happens is itself a vain exercise because no man can know God’s providential ways (Eccl. 8:16-17). The book bears out the fact that the “profit” sought after is not earthly but rather eternal.

Ecclesiastes is a book that sets out to record Solomon’s observations in life. He has observed that some live good and others live evil yet good and bad things happen to all (i.e., there is no divine preferential treatment toward the righteous or discrimination against the unrighteous) (see Eccl. 9:1ff; 2:14; 8:12-13). Furthermore, the Preacher takes note that righteous men suffer as wrong doers and evil men live a peaceful life (Eccl. 8:14). The preacher has observed some “evil” things in life. That is, things that are unnatural, just not right, or do not seem fair and further identified as “error” at Eccl. 10:5. He considered it evil that a man may labor diligently all his life and gain wealth and wisdom yet when he dies his portion goes to a sloth and a fool (see Eccl. 2:21). Again, the preacher notes that it is an evil thing for a man to gain much riches only to have them taken away by an “evil adventure” so that he has nothing to leave his son (Eccl. 5:13-14). The Preacher considered it evil that a man comes into the world naked, works hard and gains much, yet then dies not being able to take anything with him (Eccl. 5:15-16). Then again Solomon considered it an evil thing to be blessed with riches yet die too soon to enjoy them (Eccl. 6:1-2). Furthermore the Preachers sees evil when the wicked are viewed with dignity while the rich sit in low places and princes walk rather than ride (Eccl. 10:5-7). Solomon observes the fact that a righteous man may find himself suffering serious sickness, early death, sorrows due to the loss of a loved one,
an unfortunate event that causes him to lose his life’s savings and all simply because he is a man upon the earth. Such a one does not suffer because of evil or good but rather all events happen to all walks of life (Eccl. 9:23). The point is that anything can happen to anyone at any given moment (Eccl. 9:2). The Preacher wants to know why that is.

These thoughts cause a man to contemplate the same question that Solomon poses. What profit is there in all of these events under the sun (Eccl. 1:3; 2:22; 3:9)? Ecclesiastes leaves its readers with a real picture of life. The rich suffer as do the poor. The righteous man experiences calamity just as the wicked. Solomon reveals to us that through all our experiences on earth God’s providential hand is there (see Eccl. 9:1). The Lord is playing an active role in all of humanity’s life (Eccl. 6:1-2). He has no preference, prejudice, or discrimination when it comes to allowing calamity and prosperity in a man’s life (Eccl. 9:2, 11). Solomon reveals that there is no way for man to know what the hand of God will do next in one’s life (Eccl. 7:14; 8:16-17; 11:5). Man cannot predict (Eccl. 7:10) nor change (Eccl. 7:13) God’s providence. Solomon’s advice for man is to thereby work hard upon this earth, even though a calamity may befall us (Eccl. 11:6).

Though “all is vanity” and man cannot calculate or predict God’s providence we can nonetheless understand that there is a purpose to all events in this life. Man is being proved while walking through this life (Eccl. 3:18; 8:14; I Pet. 1:6-7; James 1:2-3). Let all humanity know that as we experience calamity, adversity, wealth, happiness, love, and all that life throws at us God is watching our reactions and knows the very thoughts of our mind (see Deut. 31:21b; 32:18-19; Jer. 23:24-25). The wicked and foolish will experience great sorrows as a reaction to calamity because their hope is in this world (II Cor. 7:10). The Christian ought to say as Job, “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah” (Job 1:21 see also II Cor. 4:16-18; Heb. 10:32-39). A secondary purpose found in the vain things of life is joy. Though all is vanity not all is without purpose (see Eccl. 3:1). God intends man to enjoy the blessings of this life while we are among the living (Eccl. 2:24; 3:12-13; 5:18-20; 8:15; 9:7-9).

Conclusion

Ecclesiastes gives us a panoramic view of life itself. We are born into this world and experience pleasures, heartaches, love, hatred, desires, wealth, and calamity. The entirety of life does not last long at all (James 4:14). When the end comes one may truly say that “all is vanity” (Eccl. 1:2; 2:17; 4:4; 9:9; 11:8; 12:8). The word vanity means to be worthless. Why would Solomon conclude that all things done under the sun are “vanity?” The book of Ecclesiastes positively infers that the profit the Preacher searches for and contemplates is eternal value. To attempt to gain some eternal value from any of the earthly things mentioned in this book is truly to grasp after the wind (Eccl. 1:14). He thereby concludes that the whole duty of man, while living this short and vain life, is to “fear God and keep his commandments” (Eccl. 12:13; see Deut. 5:29; 6:2; Rev. 14:6-7 as compared to Jn. 15:5-10). All of life is likened unto a race wherein man is proved by fiery trials (see I Cor. 9:24ff). Those with a “perfect” approach to life will patiently endure the calamity of life and grow stronger day by day (see Phil. 3:13-15; James 1:2-4). While God authorizes that there is “no better thing under the sun than mirth” (Eccl. 8:15) He also warns man to be mindful of judgment and eternity (Eccl. 3:16-17; 11:9; 12:14; Rev. 20:13). The message of Ecclesiastes is that there is no eternal profit in the things done under the sun; however, man should enjoy this life while being mindful of God’s laws, eternity, and judgment. What will God see in you and where will you spend your eternal existence?
Themes in Ecclesiastes

- A search for profit (i.e., satisfaction and fulfillment in this life) (Eccl. 1:3; 2:22; 3:9)
- Solomon concludes that “all is vanity” in relation to eternal value (Eccl. 1:2; 2:17; 4:4; 9:9; 11:8 and 12:8) yet not without immediate purpose (Eccl. 3:1).
- God’s gift to man is to enjoy the fruits of his labor (Eccl. 2:24; 3:12-13, 22; 5:19; 8:15; 9:7-9; 11:8-9).
- Things the preacher observed: The Preacher saw that all works man does on earth has no lasting satisfaction (Eccl. 1:14). The preacher had observed that all labors of life are “weary” (Eccl. 1:8) and “a sore travail” (Eccl. 1:13; 3:10). He has observed that things crooked cannot be made straight (Eccl. 1:15). He saw that wisdom excels folly (Eccl. 2:13). The preacher observed that, “In the place of justice, that wickedness was there...” (Eccl. 3:16-17). The preacher “saw” that that there is nothing better than that a man enjoy the fruit of his labors (Eccl. 3:22). The preacher “saw” the tears of them that are oppressed by the powerful (Eccl. 4:1). Solomon concludes that such a quest in life (i.e., to gain wisdom in the since of knowing the “reason” of things is a vain exercise because there is so much that simply cannot be understood; i.e., God never intended man to know / see Eccl. 8:16-17).
- Obtaining peace of mind: in relation to the vanity of weary and sore travail (just enjoy the fruit of labors / 2:24; 3:12-13, 22). In relation to finding wickedness in places where justice and righteousness should prevail... God will judge the wicked (see Eccl. 3:16-17). The sinner who performs wicked acts “a hundred times and prolong his days” such a one will not escape the long arm of God’s justice (Eccl. 8:12).
- Death is the great equalizer with the wealthy and the educated (Eccl. 2:14-16), animals and man (see Eccl. 3:19-20).
- Dreams (inability to sleep at night due to thinking about the days events) is vanity (i.e., will not bring one any lasting profit [1:3] and is thereby vanity (Eccl. 2:22-23; 5:7, 12). Riches and more business are vanity (Eccl. 5:10-11)
- True profit comes of fearing God (see Eccl. 3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12; 12:13-14)
- Things that are vain: Everything (Eccl. 1:2; 12:8), mirth (Eccl. 2:1), labor (Eccl. 2:11), materialism (Eccl. 5:10), the righteous who suffer as though he did wrong and the wicked experience prosperity (Eccl. 8:14), youth (Eccl. 11:10), etc.
- Providence of God: God has an active part in man’s life (Eccl. 6:1-2). God does not discriminate when working in man’s life (i.e., calamity comes to all) (see Eccl. 9:2, 11). These providential works of God cannot be predicted, known, or calculated (Eccl. 7:14; 8:16-17; 11:5). God’s providence cannot be changed by man (Eccl. 7:13) except it be by prayer and His will (Rom. 8:26-28).
- The identity of the fool: he is a sinner (Eccl. 5:1), lacks understanding (Eccl. 2:14; 10:3), slothful in work habits (Eccl. 2:21; 4:5; 10:15), known by the multitude of words (Eccl. 5:3; 10:12-14), possesses little integrity (Eccl. 5:4-5), lacks self control (Eccl. 6:8), does not consider the seriousness of life (everything is a joke / Eccl. 7:4-6), seeks profit from this world (Eccl. 7:5), a lover of money rather than reason (Eccl. 7:7), known by their outburst of anger (Eccl. 7:9).
- The identity of the wise: The wise are bothered by sin (Eccl. 7:4, 19-20), rebuke the erring (Eccl. 7:5), patient in adversity (Eccl. 7:8, 14), not soon angry (Eccl. 7:9), understands and interprets truth (Eccl. 8:1), walks in paths of righteousness (Eccl. 10:2-3).
Outline of Ecclesiastes

I. Are the endless cycles of labor, life, death, and nature all there is to our Existence? (1:1-11)

A. “The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; vanity of vanities, all is vanity” (1:1-2).
   1. The evidences examined in the introduction clearly point to Solomon being the author of Ecclesiastes (i.e., “the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem”).
   2. Solomon’s wealth, world honor, and access to all things of the earth caused him to conclude that “all is vanity.” The word “vanity” = “lack of usefulness, worth, or effect; worthlessness or futile” (AHD 1337).
   3. The book of Ecclesiastes will bear out the fact that all things pertaining to this life are worthless and futile as far as eternity is concerned.

B. “What profit hath man of all his labor wherein he labors under the sun?” (1:3).
   1. The preacher raises the question that this book seeks to answer. What “profit” (benefit, gain, or returns) is there to be found of life’s labors?
   2. One may say that there is much profit. One receives retirement, ease in old age, groceries, stability of life, pleasures in recreation and so forth. Yet as we answer such a question with these words we slowly realize that the preacher has under consideration something far more than simple life in this world.

C. “One generation goes, and another generation comes; but the earth abides for ever. The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, and haste to its place where it arises. The wind goes toward the south, and turns about unto the north; it turns about continually in its course, and the wind returns again to its circuits. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place whither the rivers go, thither they go again” (1:4-7).
   1. If one seeks to find usefulness, worth, benefit, gains, or some sort of return from a life that comes and then is gone where is it. Generation after generation there are people born, they live, and then die. When one dies the wind continues to blow in its circuits and rivers continue to run to the sea.
   2. What return is there for a man or woman under such an endless cycle of life? When I die things will continue as they have always been. My particular life and death is meaningless in the realm of the ongoing cycles of life on earth. When I die things will go on in this earth. I had my time and my time ended. So where is the return for me? Is this life all that there is to our existence?
   3. The agnostic (someone who believes that there can be no proof of the existence of God but does not deny the possibility that God exists) may be satisfied with birth, life, and death yet the Preacher is questioning whether this life is all there is. What return is there for me in all my labors under the sun?
   4. To this point it seems that the underlying question of eternal existence is considered. Is there something that exists beyond this world that will convey a return for what I have done on this earth?

D. “All things are full of weariness; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing” (1:8).
   1. Once again the Preacher uses the term “all things” (see also verse 2 where he said “all is vanity”).
   2. What ever is vanity (worthless and without return) at verse three is the “all things” of verse 8. To this point the Preacher has identified labor as that which is depicted as vain (see study # 1; Things that are Vain).
   3. Man participates in labor, life, death, and the observance of the natural elements of the earth we live in. The participation in these things is “weariness” in that they appear to perpetually move forward without stoppage. They are not hindered by my participation. They existed without me, with me, and they will continue to exists as the earth remains. The human mind and language can scarcely put into words a description of such endless process. We see and hear
these events our whole life yet nothing really changes or is new. The process marches forward as it always has.

E. “That which hath been is that which shall be; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun” (1:9).

1. The preacher examines events (labor, life, death, and natural occurrences of the earth) of times past that shall recycle again under a different generation. People today will toil in labor, experience life (i.e., joy, riches, passions, desires, goals, etc.), they will die, and all the while the earth continues to do the things of nature (i.e., the sun continues to rise, plants grow and die, water flows through rivers, erosion occurs, etc.).

2. The Preacher concludes thereby that in all reality “there is no new thing under the sun.” The only “new” that exists in the world of labor, life, death, and nature is found within the individual who now finds self participating in life. Though it is new to him it is not new to the existence of time.

F. “Is there a thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? It hath been long ago, in the ages which were before us. There is no remembrance of the latter generations that are to come, among those that shall come after” (1:10-11).

1. One may say that Aids is a new disease that has not always been around. Another may say that the game of baseball is new in that past generations did not know the game. Such thought is missing the point of the Preacher however.

2. The Preacher is looking to the answer to his question... “What profit hath man of all his labor wherein he labors under the sun?” (1:3). The “all things” of the chapter are efforts of labor. The “all things” are labor and may include the days of our life, death, and natural occurrences of the earth. The ages before us were filled with the exact same toil of labor, life, death, and natural occurrences. People have always lived and done these things in the human experience. If we pull one person out of this endless cycle can we find any profit that extends past the endless cycles of labor, life, death, and nature for that person’s toil?

II. The Preacher seeks out wisdom concerning labor, life, death, and nature (1:12-18):

A. “I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven: it is a sore travail that God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith” (1:12-13).

1. The author of Ecclesiastes has been identified as the “Preacher,” “son of David” (1:1), and now the “king over Israel.” These facts add up to Solomon.

2. The Preacher wanted answers to “all that is done under heaven.” The “weariness” that man has no words for of Eccl. 1:8 is that which is a “sore travail that God hath given to man.” Research is generally wearisome and rigorous in the exertion of energy.

3. The Preacher acknowledges that “God hath given” man the task of finding answer to life’s questions through rigorous investigation (see I Pet. 3:21).

B. “I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind” (1:14).

1. All there is to labor, life, death, and nature have been observed through rigorous research by the Preacher and he has concluded that wisdom in these things is “vanity and a striving after wind.” To gain an understanding heart of wisdom in the issues of life is a worthless and futile exercise of striving after the wind.

2. Again, one may asks when one understands all things of this life what real (eternal) benefit or return can I expect from this? The Preacher wants to know “what profit (benefit, return, gain) hath man of all his labor wherein he labors under the sun?” (Eccl. 1:3).

C. “That which is crooked cannot be made straight; and that which is wanting cannot be numbered” (1:15).

1. As one gains an understanding of the events “under the sun,” such as labor, the conclusion is that those things that are shall always be. There will always be those who deal dishonestly and those who deal honestly. There will always be those who work hard and those who are lazy sloths. There will always be those who save and those who spend. Then again, we must realize
that God’s providence will always be. Suffering, laughter occur to all without our control of the timing thereof.

2. The point is that my understanding of these things will change nothing because these things will always be. Things that are crooked and lacking in man’s life will always be. An example of this would be that there will always be poor people who need help. If I gave every dime I had to change this it would not settle the ever present state of poverty.

D. “I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I have gotten me great wisdom above all that were before me in Jerusalem; yea, my heart hath had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also was a striving after wind” (1:16-17).

1. The preacher, after much toil of gaining wisdom regarding the things done under the sun, looked within his own mind and concluded that he had obtained his objective of understanding. He had properly distinguished wisdom from its true opposite (i.e., madness and folly). Wisdom understands and madness and folly are equated with ignorance and carelessness.

2. The conclusion to said observations is that the ability to distinguish wisdom from folly has no real and lasting returns (i.e., profit [1:3]). The preacher realizes that such an endeavor has left him feeling unsatisfied and still hungry for something that is missing in his life.

E. “For in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increases knowledge increases sorrow” (1:18).

1. How is it that “in much wisdom is much grief and sorrow?”

2. To have insight and knowledge of all the things crooked that cannot be made straight is to know all the inevitable pain, suffering, hardships, and success that comes with life itself. Some will live their lives in ease while others experience extreme heartaches and hardships. Some men are very evil and some are very good. The grief associated with wisdom is found when one realizes that nothing can be done to change these tendencies of life. There will always be heartache and joy among those who labor under the sun. To have knowledge of these facts can be somewhat disheartening when peering into the real lives of people. This peering is not a mere casual observation but a real understanding of the hardships some are going through. It is heart wrenching to know that so many people live, make foolish decisions, spend their lives in prison while their children go fatherless and we could look to a multitude of other examples of such things.

Chapter 2

I. The Preacher seeks out Pleasure as a labor that may possibly give him Satisfaction (2:1-3):

A. “I said in my heart, Come now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also was vanity” (2:1).

1. God proves man’s heart with heartaches, suffering, and hardships (I Pet. 1:6-7) that He might know whether man will continue to keep His commandments and turn to Him for help (see Deut. 8:2-3, 16). The preacher proved his own heart with “pleasure” to see whether this would bring him the “profit” (Eccl. 1:3 / i.e., returns or satisfaction in life) he so desperately desired.

2. The preacher quickly concludes that pleasures did not bring him profit as far as lasting satisfaction within his soul.

B. “I said of laughter, It is mad; and of mirth, What doeth it?” (2:2).

1. Laughter may be deduced as madness when one considers the understanding of the events under the sun. So much suffering and hardships can lead no man to smile. Yet, there are things of this world that make us laugh. What satisfying quality does laughter have when the reality of things being crooked and unable to be straightened exists?

2. The Preacher seems to turn his head away from wisdom to seek pleasure in something in this world. Once he finds it; however, it does not satisfy this inner craving of the soul. True happiness is not found in laughter and mirth (lightheartedness and gladness).
C. “I searched in my heart how to cheer my flesh with wine, my heart yet guiding me with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what it was good for the sons of men that they should do under heaven all the days of their life” (2:3).

1. Still searching for true satisfaction and happiness of heart in this life the preacher turned from seeking out wisdom to seeking out various pleasures. The preacher drank wine yet tempered the state of drunkenness with wisdom (he did not allow himself to get so drunk as to lose sight of reality).

2. He tried his hand at reckless abandonment of folly (living ignorant of the realities of life). Folly is to “lack good sense, understanding, foresight, an act or instance of foolishness... action or behavior considered immoral or criminal... evil; wickedness” (AHD 520).

3. The preacher’s quest for profit, satisfaction, fulfillment, and happiness in life continued to evade him in the endeavors of pleasure. Though pleasures can satisfy man’s immediate needs and desires it has no eternal value.

II. The Preacher seeks out Building Great Structures to satisfy his craving for something profitable, satisfying, and fulfilling in his life (2:4-6):

A. “I made me great works; I built me houses; I planted me vineyards; I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruit;” (2:4-5).

1. Finding no lasting profit (satisfying and fulfilling) in wisdom and pleasures the preacher turns to building.

2. To view the finished work of one’s hands is indeed intriguing to the soul. To stand back and view one’s house, vineyard, garden, and landscaping is fulfilling yet is it really.

B. “I made me pools of water, to water therefrom the forest where trees were reared;”

1. The preacher tried his hand at forestry. He sought to grow trees for harvest and made pools of water to cause the trees to thrive rather than go thirsty.

2. Though the preacher did all these things and could see with his eyes the fruit of his labor it did not satisfy that insatiable hunger to be satisfied fully within. There continued to be something missing in his inner being.

III. The Preacher seeks out Riches to satisfy his craving for something profitable, satisfying, and fulfilling in his life (2:7-11):

A. “I bought men-servants and maid-servants, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of herds and flocks, above all that were before me in Jerusalem: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the treasure of the kings and of the provinces; I gat me men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men, musical instruments, and that of all sorts” (2:7-8).

1. Finding no real lasting profit of satisfaction in wisdom, folly, pleasure, and buildings the preacher searches out satisfaction in the things of this world.

2. The preacher bought all the luxuries of life that money can buy to find that illusive satisfaction of his inner being.

B. “So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced because of all my labor; and this was my portion from all my labor” (2:9-10).

1. The endeavor to accumulate riches and things of this world were not hindered. The preacher gained all that a man can gain and there was nothing kept from his desires.

2. The fruits of the preacher’s labors caused him to rejoice within his heart (i.e., he found pleasure and happiness in these luxuries). He concluded that he had labored and earned the things that he had now accumulated. Would this satisfy the inner hunger of his search for profit and satisfaction in life?

C. “Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do; and, behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun” (2:11).

1. The real “profit” (see Eccl. 1:3) (i.e., true satisfaction in the returns one’s endeavors produce) was not to be found in accumulating the goods of this world.
2. While the preacher admits to experiencing joy in these things it did not produce the inner satisfaction he was searching for. The emptiness and void within his mind continued to gnaw at his inner being.

IV. The preacher reasons that Wisdom is superior to Folly yet even this conclusion does not bring him inner contentment (2:12-17):
A. “And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that comes after the king? Even that which hath been done long ago. Then I saw that wisdom excelled folly, as far as light excels darkness. The wise man’s eyes are in his head, and the fool walks in darkness: and yet I perceived that one event happened to them all” (2:12-14).
1. The superiority of wisdom over folly is compared to the dominant trait of light over darkness. Light always defeats darkness.
2. The preacher observes that the world is filled of both wise and foolish (this will always be). The preacher observes a similarity; however, between the wise and foolish. Hardships, heartaches, pain, and happiness is experienced by all. The wise, through their accumulation of understanding, are not immune to the hardships and neither do they monopolize joys in life.
3. The preacher sees that the brevity of life is the great equalizer to the wise and foolish alike.
B. “Then said I in my heart, as it happens to the fool, so will it happen even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then said I in my heart, that this also is vanity. For of the wise man, even as of the fool, there is no remembrance for ever; seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. And how doth the wise man die even as the fool!” (2:15-16).
1. Both wise and fool are subject to disease, sorrows, and death. What profit is it in death to have spent one’s life gaining wisdom when the wise are just as subject to life as the fool?
2. The preacher concludes that he is really not any better off than the fool when it comes to the end of one’s days. He asks, “why was I then more wise?”
C. “So I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun was grievous unto me; for all is vanity and a striving after the wind” (2:17).
1. When looking at the big picture of life (i.e., wisdom, pleasure, labor, and riches) it is an endeavor of striving after the wind (i.e., a fruitless endeavor; one can no more catch the wind as to gain satisfaction and profit from striving after and attaining the things of this life).
2. If there is no satisfaction and profit under the sun the preacher concludes that he “hates life.” How can I love something that brings me no lasting satisfaction or profit?

V. The Preacher hated life and Labor (2:18-23):
A. “And I hated all my labor wherein I labored under the sun, seeing that I must leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet will he have rule over all my labor wherein I have labored, and wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity” (2:18-19).
1. The preacher hated life because it did not reward the wise and monetarily successful with soul reaching satisfaction and fulfillment. The preacher now concludes that he hates all the labor that he participated in because it only produced riches that will be enjoyed by the one who shall receive his inheritance after he has left this life. What good then did his labors do him? It bothers the king that it is entirely possible that the one who ascends to the throne of Jerusalem after him will only be a fool. What if the new king is a fool? The fool then will have possession of all the wise king’s labor and consequential items that illustrated the king’s wisdom.
2. To look at life and death in this light it is concluded that labor is vain (i.e., useless). Why work so hard to get gains that you will not be able to take with you in death? A foolish son may scatter all that you had accomplished. Labor is thereby hated by the preacher because it will not sustain one into eternity.
B. “Therefore I turned about to cause my heart to despair concerning all the labor wherein I had labored under the sun. For there is a man whose labor is with wisdom, and with knowledge, and with skillfulness; yet to a man that hath not labored therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil” (2:20-21).
1. When the preacher considered the fact that his riches gained in labor would only be left to another it caused him despair. The labor (i.e., monetary worth and accumulation) was gained by the tireless efforts of the wise yet the one inheriting the sum did not spend one moment in labor, contemplation, or planning to attain these things.

2. The hard working and industrious cannot but scarcely deal with such a thought. Indeed, “this also is vanity and a great evil.” If hard labor and wisdom are used to gain the goods of this world yet given to the un-industrious fool then such a life of labor does not profit one. It seems evil to give a non-industrious man one’s life long industry of labor.

C. “For what hath a man of all his labor, and of the striving of his heart, wherein he labors under the sun? For all his days are but sorrows, and his travail is grief; yea, even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity” (2:22-23).

1. The wise and industrious worker labors hard and gains much in this world yet his days are no different than the slothful fool in that he experiences the same sorrows and grief. While the industrious work hard and the foolish laze ball does nothing they both experience grief. Here is a man who even works through the night rather than sleeping. His mind is preoccupied with planning and working out the details of his endeavors while the fool sleeps soundly.

2. If the industrious die as the fool and have no real returns for a life of hard work then it must be that such a life is “vain” (useless and without real profit and satisfaction). The preacher concludes that there will be no one to reward the dead for a life of hard work. When you and I die so do our part in our earthly accomplishments.

VI. The preacher concludes that it is better to enjoy life now while there is life in the Body (2:24-26):

A. “There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good in his labor. This also I saw, that it is from the hand of God” (2:24).

1. If it be that there is no lasting satisfaction to be found in a life of wisdom and hard labor then the preacher concludes that man should partake of his possessions and enjoy them while among the living. Once one is gone their accumulation of possessions will mean and benefit them nothing. “There is nothing better” in the realm of participating in the things of this earth.

2. While God commends the industrious and wise He also ordains that man partake of his earthly blessings with a joyous spirit (enjoy them now for after you are gone they will have no significance in your eternal existence).

B. “For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I? For to the man that pleases him God gives wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he gives travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind” (2:25-26).

1. If it be that man enjoys the labors of his industrious life then no one can measure up to the preacher for he has gained much through industry and wisdom.

2. The preacher has mentioned three things now that God gives man. First, God gives man the weary exercise of searching out wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven (Eccl. 1:13). Secondly, God has given man the authority to enjoy the labor of his hands (Eccl. 2:24). Thirdly, God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to the man that pleases Him (i.e., illustrates fear in his life through obedience) (Eccl. 2:25-26). The preacher knows that the man who is industrious and willing to toil for wisdom will certainly attain it. The sinful and slothful will not obtain wisdom, knowledge, or joy because it is not their objective and thereby God does not grant it to them. God rather gives it to the man that “pleases” Him. Here we find that it “pleases” God that I would search out wisdom, knowledge, and consequential joyful living.

3. Astonishingly, the preacher then states, “This also is vanity and a striving after wind.” The preacher is looking for something in life that will give returns, satisfaction, and self fulfillment. He now states that not even searching out wisdom, knowledge, and joy of labors will fill this need. Though God grants these good gifts to the man or woman who diligently searches them out they are not the gifts that truly fulfill. Apparently this verse teaches us that God expects the Christian to be industrious and enjoy the consequential success yet not to place one’s eternal hope in this. This very principle will continue to be developed throughout this book. Work hard and enjoy the monetary gains of your efforts. If, however, your labor and rewards are all you look to you will be sorely disappointed. There is more to this life than the here and now!
The Preacher is desperately looking for satisfaction and fulfillment in life. He terms this quest “profit” at Eccl. 1:3. The Preacher tries many things to have this gnawing emptiness met. The Preacher tries to find fulfillment in this life through various labors such as wisdom (Eccl. 1:12-18), pleasure (Eccl. 2:1), laughter (Eccl. 2:2), drinking (Eccl. 2:3), careless living (Eccl. 2:3), building structures (Eccl. 2:4-6), the luxuries of life (Eccl. 2:7-10), the exertion of energy to distinguish wisdom from foolishness (Eccl. 2:12-16) and then concludes that all labors as such are worthless. The preacher sees worth, satisfaction, and fulfillment of life to be that which would bring an eternal profit. Things which satisfy man temporarily in this life have no lasting value (Eccl. 2:10-11). Said conclusion brought the preacher to understand that death was the great equalizer between the wise and foolish, rich and poor (Eccl. 2:15-16). The preacher consequentially proclaims, “So I hated life.” He had worked so hard to obtain wisdom yet he shall die like the fool. The preacher also considered all the hard work he engaged in that produced wealth yet when he dies he cannot take one penny of it with him. The preacher again concludes, “So I hated all my labor wherein I labored under the sun, seeing that I must leave it unto the man that shall be after me” (Eccl. 2:18). The grand conclusion to this point of the study is that since all die alike and thereby wisdom and riches have no eternal value it is better that man enjoy the accumulation of wisdom and wealth now while among the living. The preacher concludes that this (i.e., enjoy what one has now) is “from the hand of God” (i.e., what God ordains that man does while here on this earth) (Eccl. 2:24). God thereby ordains that man enjoy the fruits of his labor and wisdom gained. The inference to this point is that God desires man to work hard, gain wisdom, and enjoy the fruits thereof. That which man is to understand; however, is that these things will not be profitable in eternity.

Chapter 3

I. A Time and Purpose exists for all Labors of Life (3:1-15):

A. “For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven:” (3:1).

1. The Preacher has concluded that all man’s labors and endeavors in this life (the “all things” of Eccl. 1:8, 13, 14) are worthless in respect to eternal satisfaction and fulfillment. God has thereby ordained that man work hard and enjoy the fruits of his labor (see Eccl. 2:24).

2. There is purpose; however, to all things that happen in our lives. Solomon does not reduce purpose while identifying unsatisfying and unfulfilling matters. God would not have us sit in a corner of the world in a dejected state of mind due to our conclusion that nothing of this immediate life can fulfill our eternal needs.

B. “a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace” (3:2-8).

1. Though nothing of this life of labor brings man any eternal satisfaction or fulfillment (i.e., profit) there are things that nonetheless occur by God’s will.

2. People are born and die, plant crops and harvest them, kill during times of war and for punishment of the civil disobedient. There are times to heal the sick and wounded. People tear down and build things up, cry and laugh, experience sorrows and joy and so forth. The point is that there are events of life that happen not because we wanted them to or because we did not want them to but they happen because this is the natural order of our world and lives.

3. Mankind participates in things such as embracing each other, gathering and throwing things away, sewing, speaking, loving and hating.

4. Solomon appears to be learning to differentiate eternal value from gift of a mortal life of toil.

C. “What profit hath he that works in that wherein he labors?” (3:9)
1. The Preacher reiterates the question posed at chapter 1:3. After contemplating the events, times, and seasons of the things of this life he once again asks the thematic question of the relevancy and eternal value of labor.

2. By God’s providence these events and emotions happen in man’s life and there is not one way that you or I can straighten that which is crooked (i.e., change in any way God’s providential purpose for man while on this earth / see Eccl. 1:15).

D. “I have seen the travail which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith” (3:10).
1. The preacher had observed that all labors of life are “weary” (Eccl. 1:8) and “a sore travail” (Eccl. 1:13). He has also observed that these events occur by God’s providential will.
2. This tiresome toil of labor is God’s gift to man that he may exercise himself (i.e., stay busy) (see Eccl. 1:13 and here).
3. Events transpire in their appointed seasons by the will of God and man wearily exercises himself in participation in these labors of life. These events have no lasting profit yet they are God’s gift to man to participate in.

E. “He hath made everything beautiful in its time: also he hath set eternity in their heart, yet so that man cannot find out the work that God hath done from the beginning even to the end” (3:11).
1. The Preacher has concluded that all things have their time and purpose (see verses 2-8). By the sovereign will of God and through His providential care for humanity these events take place.
2. Three observations are thereby made by the Preacher:
   a. First, the “beauty” of the events under discussion is found in the purpose and temporal achievements made. Everything seems to fall in place at the proper time (even the unpleasant things such as war and sorrows).
   b. Secondly, while the KJVB translates the Hebrew word owlam as “world” many other translations (i.e., the ASV, RSV, NKJB, NASV, NIV) translates more accurately as “eternity.” God has created each individual with an inner knowledge that enables him to have an understanding or yearning for “eternity.” Man, by nature, exhibits this truth by having inner feelings of dissatisfaction with the things of this life. Not only so but God has given man the inner ability to know right from wrong (Rom. 2:14-15) and determine divine design from personal observations of the universe (Rom. 1:20ff). Man personally observes and knows innately that homosexuality (Rom. 1:26-27) and marring the distinctive lines of male and female (I Cor. 11:14) goes against the divine design of God’s creation (see study # 2; the Nature of Man).
   c. Thirdly, though man is created with this nature of understanding and perception he nonetheless has no clue as to the direction God takes to accomplish His sovereign and providential care for man. Whether one looks to the past or future no man can identify the direction God will providentially take.

F. “I know that there is nothing better for them, than to rejoice, and to do good so long as they live” (3:12).
1. The Preacher returns to his original conclusion that man ought to just enjoy the fruit of his labors rather than driving himself mad trying to figure out God’s providential moves throughout history (see Eccl. 2:24).
2. Said enjoyment from one’s labors is God’s gift to man. The Preacher writes, “And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy good in all his labor, is the gift of God” (3:13). The preacher has mentioned three things now that God gives man. First, God gives man the weary exercise of labor concerning all that is done under heaven (Eccl. 1:13). Secondly, God has given man the authority to enjoy the labor of his hands (Eccl. 2:24; 3:13). Thirdly, God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to the man that pleases Him (i.e., illustrates a diligent work ethic and fear in his life through obedience) (Eccl. 2:25-26).
3. Notice that at Ecclesiastes 2:24 and 3:13 God intends for man to enjoy the fruits of his labors and states, “there is nothing better for them...” The best thing for man to do is work hard and enjoy the fruits of his labors. This is God’s purpose and gift for man while on earth. A lesson can be learned here in relation to how God’s gifts work. The man or woman who works hard and receives compensation shall enjoy the fruit of their labor. The sloth will not work and...
thereby neither shall he receive any joy for his labors. God’s gifts belong to those who work (see study # 3; Gifts from God!)

G. “I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it; and God hath done it, that men should fear before him” (3:14).

1. Interestingly, after the Preacher concludes that there is a time and season for all things according to God’s sovereign providence and that these events are beautiful he states, “I know”... that man should be happy, work hard, and enjoy the fruits of one’s labors (Eccl. 3:10).

2. Here at verse 14, once again, the Preacher states, “I know...” The preacher gained this knowledge like anyone else in this world; i.e., by nature, that is, God providentially put within man the ability to discern eternity, right, wrong, and deity (Eccl. 3:11). Secondly, the preacher gained this knowledge by personal observation (Eccl. 3:10; i.e., he said, “I have seen”). Man by nature knows things that are confirmed by personal observation. He knows of eternity and that one should enjoy the fruit of their hard labors. It is no wonder then that revelation is so appealing to the mind of man. Revelation reveals that which man knows by nature (see study # 2).

3. Now, the Preacher states by personal observation and nature that God’s work is everlasting. The preacher has taken notice of the things crooked that cannot be made straight and that by divine design of choice in the world all things continue to happen and happen again throughout history. I cannot change any one aspect of God’s sovereign will in respect to how the world operates. This, by the way, brings in the intrinsic value of prayer. While it is true that God’s will is for things to continue as they always have man can alter providence through the act of prayer if it be God’s will else what value would prayer have? Yet even this is likely to be a part of God’s sovereign providence over man in that He allows for these adjustments in providential history.

H. “That which is hath been long ago; and that which is to be hath long ago been: and God seeketh that which is passed away” (3:15).

1. The thoughts of Ecclesiastes are appealing to the mind of man because they settle well within the confines of our human nature. Man’s innate abilities are divinely given and thereby we freely accept these divine thoughts. As we ponder eternity and creation so Ecclesiastes identifies as divine natural ways of the human mind.

2. Once again the Preacher indicates the cycles of life. He has said that there is nothing new under the sun (see Eccl. 1:9-10). Labor continues to exists, events of life continue in a crooked and straightened manner, man continues to ponder eternity, and joy and happiness is the result of hard labors. These things have been, they are currently, and will always be as long as the earth exists.

II. Eternal Consequences to Just and Unjust Living (3:16-22):

A. “And moreover I saw under the sun, in the place of justice, that wickedness was there; and in the place of righteousness, that wickedness was there. I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work” (3:16-17).

1. The Preacher has made many observations in life that has caused him to question the profit of anything in this life. The Preacher saw that all works man does on earth has no lasting satisfaction (Eccl. 1:14). He has observed that things crooked cannot be made straight (Eccl. 1:15). He saw that wisdom excels folly (Eccl. 2:13). Here, the Preacher observes another thing, “In the place of justice, that wickedness was there...” If ever there were a place that justice and righteousness should prevail it would be among positions of authority. Authority is found in government offices, business, and churches. Rather than acting just and right many authoritative men were unjust and unrighteous. This bothered the preacher as it does all right thinking men and women.

2. The Preacher has been able to come to peace of mind in relation to the vanity of labor and nature in that he has divinely concluded that God gives man the authority to enjoy the passing pleasures that come with hard work. Now the Preacher concludes that he may have peace of mind, in relation to crooked authoritarians, by the knowledge that God will judge both the just and unjust in His own time (see study # 4; The Day of Judgment).
B. “I said in my heart, It is because of the sons of men, that God may prove them, and that they may see that they themselves are but as beasts” (3:18).

1. Solomon reasons within his heart that God allows the injustice and unrighteous acts of man to continue so that He may “prove them.” Man, by nature, knows of eternity and thereby deity (see Eccl. 3:11; Rom. 1:20). Man, by nature, knows the difference between right and wrong (God hath instilled this within man) (see Rom. 2:14-15). When man, by nature, goes against God’s created design for him he ought to be somewhat pricked in the heart (i.e., it ought to bother him because he acts against his inner natural since of ought) (see Acts 2:37) (see study # 2).

2. When man acts in unjust or unrighteous ways (i.e., he sins) God is looking to see what is in his heart (i.e., will the man allow the inner natural feelings of guilt to change him back to the course God had created him for / see Eph. 2:10 / or will he violate his conscience and walk in sin?). The Lord is watching (see Deut. 8:2; 13:1-4) (see study # 5; God Proves Man). The objective of God allowing such injustices is so that unjust men may, when they work against their natural bent, feel guilty and turn back to God (II Cor. 7:9-10). Man must recognize that he is no different than “beasts” in that death comes to all and then there will be no turning back to clear the conscience (see study # 2).

C. “For that which befalls the sons of men befalls beasts; even one thing befalls them: as the one dies, so dies the other; yea, they have all one breath; and man hath no preeminence above the beasts: for all is vanity” (3:19).

1. The Preacher brings out the natural commonality between man and beast and that is that they live and one day die. Respecting life and death man has no “preeminence” (superiority) above animals.

2. Death is the great equalizer with the wealthy, educated, and now even animals and man (see Eccl. 2:14-16). The Preacher reminds us of his previous conclusions, based upon these equalizing facts, and that is that all is thereby vanity (i.e., without eternal fulfillment and satisfaction).

3. To choose satisfaction in this life or to not allow one’s natural creative ways to thwart sinful living is to bring one’s self upon the level of an animal that lives and dies and has no hope in anything else (i.e., they are “but as beasts” Eccl. 3:18) (see study # 2).

D. “All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knows the spirit of man, whether it goes upward, and the spirit of the beast, whether it goes downward to the earth?” (3:20-21)

1. The physical body of man and animals eventually returns from the dust that it came (Gen. 3:19; Ps. 104:29; 146:4).

2. The Preacher now brings up a more important issue and that is the eternal abode of the spirit of man and animal. While man may live righteous or ungodly he nonetheless will eventually suffer the same fate as animals; i.e., death. Yet the time spent in this life as righteous or sinful will determine the eternal abode of the soul. The question of whether or not animal’s souls go to heaven is not in consideration here. The eternal consequences of one’s decisions of right or wrong are under discussion.

E. “Wherefore I saw that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him back to see what shall be after him?” (3:22).

1. Solomon has on two previous occasions said that “there is nothing better” for a man to do than to enjoy the works of his hands (see Eccl. 2:24; 3:12). Herein is the Preacher’s conclusion to life itself. God intends that we enjoy the fruit of our labors (see Eccl. 2:24).

2. Those who determine to live lives of sin rather than justice and righteousness better live it up because this will be all that they have to enjoy. Those fearful of God and consequently righteous in living; however, shall enjoy the fruit of their labors now and the fruit of their just living into eternity (see Eccl. 3:14).
Thoughts to this point of the study:

Though all things done under the sun are indeed vain (Eccl. 1:2), in relation to eternal existence, they nonetheless have purpose (Eccl. 3:1). Solomon speaks of man’s “portion” while among the living as being the joy produced from labor (Eccl. 2:10, 24; 3:13, 22). The measure of satisfaction, fulfillment or “profit” (Eccl. 1:3; 3:9) that a man receives in this life must be looked at as temporal in nature and thereby enjoyed (Eccl. 3:20-22). To set one’s hope of fulfillment and satisfaction in this life is to live as a beast (Eccl. 3:16-18) and be eternally disappointed (Eccl. 3:14).

Chapter 4

I. The Preacher Observes Oppression (4:1-3):
   A. “Then I returned and saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and, behold, the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter” (4:1).
   1. There are many things the preacher has observed in life:
      a. All man’s labor has no lasting “profit” (Eccl. 1:14).
      b. All man’s labor is “wearisome” (Eccl. 1:8) and “a sore travail” (Eccl. 1:13; 3:10).
      c. Things that are crooked cannot be made straight (Eccl. 1:15).
      d. He saw that wisdom excels folly (Eccl. 2:13).
      e. The preacher has seen that often times in places where justice and righteousness ought to be the prevailing thought that wickedness is present (Eccl. 3:16-17).
      f. He has also seen that there is “nothing better” for a man to do than to enjoy the fruit of his labor while on this earth (Eccl. 3:22).
      g. Now, the preacher sees “oppression” by those of power (Eccl. 4:1ff).
   2. The preacher observes that some people are oppressed and have no hope of comfort from the distress of the powerful.

   B. “Wherefore I praised the dead that have been long dead more than the living that are yet alive; yea, better than them both did I esteem him that hath not yet been, who hath not see the evil work that is done under the sun” (4:2-3).
   1. The hardships that people experienced at the hands of powerful people and nations were so severe that the Preacher “praises the dead.” The observance of ill treatment was so severe that the preacher concludes that dead people have it better than those living and experiencing hardships at the hands of the powerful.
   2. As the Preacher continues to observe the current distress he concludes that it would be even better to not have been born into all this suffering.

II. The Vanity of having more than the Fool through one’s Labor (4:4-6):
   A. “Then I saw all labor and every skilful work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind” (4:4).
   1. Solomon continues to observe his surroundings. He sees something else in the realm of vanity. Many people are workers who have obtained their skill by diligence and training (i.e., education and effort). While it is better to gain knowledge and skill than sloth and foolishness this can still result in “vanity and a striving after wind.”
   2. The man of diligence and skill has greater knowledge and consequential possessions than his less industrious and unskilful neighbor. The neighbor thereby “envies” the skillful worker. Said event is all vanity in relation to eternity. Envy is a trait of the worldly. Possessions are the coveted “portion” of the envious fools of the world. Interestingly, those who work hard, gain wisdom, and enjoy the fruit of their labors will be envied for their possessions gained through diligence.
   3. A man may thereby enjoy the fruits of his labor only to be envied by those of the world. Though wisdom excels folly the wise and skilful worker is equated to the one who envies by death (see Eccl. 2:13-14).
B. “The fool folds his hands together, and eats his own flesh. Better is a handful, with quietness, than two handfuls with labor and striving after the wind” (4:5-6).

1. The fool “folds his hands together” to sleep rather than to work (see Prov. 6:6-11; 24:30-34). They “eat” their “own flesh” in that they react to fleshly desires rather than allowing wisdom to guide their every move. Here we find two ends of the spectrum of labor and rewards. The man of skill and diligence has plenty due to his work ethic and knowledge while the slothful man has nothing.

2. Solomon concludes that those who work hard to gain “two handfuls” (i.e., they are seeking after profit, satisfaction, and fulfillment through hard, skilled, and diligent labor) would be better off not working so hard for gain and leading a quiet and content life. Which is better, striving after the wind by gain and having the world envy you or making less living a quiet and peaceful life? Again, the underlying thought is that those who seek fulfillment in this world will only find sorrow and disappointment (see study # 6; Materialism).

3. Solomon had indeed said that man should work diligently and enjoy the fruit of his labors (see Eccl. 2:10, 24; 3:13, 22); however, this joy is not found in the fact that one has obtained the world’s goods and riches but rather a spirit of contentment and quiet disposition that knows that there is indeed an eternal place awaiting those who fear God (see Eccl. 3:11) (see study # 7; How to Obtain true Joy in this Life).

III. The Alone man who seeks out the Riches of this World (4:7-12):

A. “Then I returned and saw vanity under the sun. There is one that is alone, and he hath not a second; yea, he hath neither son nor brother; yet is there no end of all his labor, neither are his eyes satisfied with riches. For whom then, saith he, do I labor, and deprive my soul of good? This also is vanity, yea, it is a sore travail” (4:7-8).

1. Solomon also examined the man who was all alone in this world. This man had no wife, son, or brothers. This man worked extremely hard yet never obtained satisfaction with riches. He wanted more and more. Here is a man who had no other to support or please. He was not taking time away from anyone through his diligent labors.

2. The Preacher concludes that such a life is vain (i.e., without profit of true happiness) because his heart is set on obtaining satisfaction in this world. Said objective is “striving after the wind” (see Eccl. 1:14, 17; 2:11, 17, 26; 4:4, 6) (theme of this study).

B. “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falls, and hath not another to lift him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have warmth; but how can one be warm alone? And if a man prevail against him that is alone, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (4:9-12).

1. To reason that being alone in life will yield greater riches and personal achievement is to fail miserably. There will be times in a man’s life when they are discouraged or in bad health (i.e., a fall). To deal with these issues alone can be unbearable but to have a partner, such as a wife, is to have one who will comfort and pick you up when you fall.

2. When the alone man goes to sleep at night he is all alone but the married couple have each other to warm and comfort. The married with a child have a strong threefold cord that can withstand others who oppose them whereas the alone man stands with no one. Said thought is said of having friends as well.

3. The preacher concludes that a life choice of solitude for the sake of gaining more in this world is indeed a vain exercise of grasping in the wind.

IV. The Vanity of going from Rags to Riches for the sake of Profit (4:13-16):

A. “Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king, who knows not how to receive admonition any more” (4:13).

1. Solomon, through observation and wisdom, states that a young man who has nothing in this world is “better” off than a foolish king who “knows not how to receive admonition any more.”

2. Sometimes powerful positions go to people’s heads. They begin to think to highly of themselves. Such a state of mind rejects any instructions from others.
B. “For out of prison he came forth to be king; yea, even in his kingdom he was born poor. I saw all the living that walk under the sun, that they were with the youth, the second, that stood up in his stead. There was no end of all the people, even of all them over whom he was: yet they that come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and a striving after wind” (4:14-16).

1. The foolish king had forgotten his origin. He had been in prison, poor, and yet beloved of the people for his ability to lead.
2. His day in the sun of glory had arose and fallen. He is now replaced with another who has gained the people’s trust and admiration.
3. Solomon concludes that such a life of rags to riches for the sake of obtaining that elusive profit that fulfills and satisfies is nothing more than “a striving after wind.”
4. Sometimes people today do all within their power to obtain positions of high authority only to find that this to cannot satisfy one’s inner feelings of fulfillment. Indeed, it is striving after the wind.

Chapter 5

I. Admonition to Pray with a Careful Heart of Forethought (5:1-7):

A. “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God; for to draw nigh to hear is better than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they know not that they do evil” (5:1).

1. The idea of “keeping one’s foot” is to contemplate or consider the reason that you do such a thing. The Preacher calls upon his audience to make sure that they go to the “house of God” for the correct purpose.
2. Solomon states that going to the house of God to hear the word of God is better than going for other reasons. The fool may go to the house of God to make sacrifices yet have no spiritual interest in what he or she is doing (see I Sam. 15:22ff). Where there is no interest, hearing, or heeding the word of God there is evil doing. Here is one without true conviction (see study # 8; Faulty Worship).

B. “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few” (5:2).

1. The Preacher instructs based upon his experiences, observances, and of course inspiration. To let words precede thought is to be “rash with thy mouth.” We may say, in such cases, “I have put my foot in my mouth.” To carelessly speak is to care less about others. Solomon instructs his audience to not be so hasty to desire much talking. When a man’s words are few he is more involved in thinking than talking. Such a one is less likely to say things that hurt others or put oneself in a jam.
2. The thrust of this verse; however, is a man’s communication with God. When going to the house of God man ought to consider their purpose (Eccl. 5:1) and know that God is in heaven and we upon earth. When I pray to God my words should be few and well thought out. Jesus had talked about this during his Sermon on the Mount. The Lord said, “And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not therefore like unto them: for your Father knows what things ye have need of, before ye ask him” (6:7-8).

a. When I consider the sovereign creator of the universe who dwells in heaven I tremble at the thought of communicating with Him. I ought to display a spirit of fear and reverence to God.

b. The Christian approaches God in prayer considering His view of sin (i.e., it is an abomination to Him [cf. Lev. 18:26-27] and He abhors it [Lev. 20:22-23]) (see study # 9; Prayer).

C. “For a dream comes with a multitude of business, and a fool’s voice with a multitude of words” (5:3).

1. The Preacher has observed that when one has placed hope in this life they lay in bed at night thinking about the days affairs and business rather than having quiet and peaceful sleep (see Eccl. 2:22-23). He now compares said vain activity with the fool who speaks many words.
2. A man that busies self with the affairs of this life in dreams is likened unto the fool who busies himself with the affairs of this life in a multitude of words.

D. “When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou vowest. Better is it that thou should not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay” (5:4-5).

1. The “free-will offering” of making a vow to God is discussed at Deuteronomy 23:21-23. God did not require such an offering. Those who so desired to make known to the Lord their high desire to serve Him were permitted and blessed.

2. When one makes a vow or promise to God they are bound to keep it. If one were to fail to keep their vow to God it would be required of them (i.e., it is sinful). Solomon, like Moses, concludes that it would be better not to make a vow than to make it and not keep it.

E. “Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thy hands?” (5:6).

1. To allow words to go before thought in making rash vows to God is to tolerate the tongue to cause the flesh to sin. Remember, to not keep a vow was to sin.

2. Not only is the Preacher’s OT audience not to suffer the tongue to do such a thing but they are also not to go before the priest (messenger or angel) and exclaim, “I have made an error in making such a vow.” If such occurs God will certainly be angry and “destroy the work of thy hands.” The point is very clear. To make a vow to God was serious and those who did so rashly and unable to perform such vows were viewed as sinners and due punishment (see study # 10; Sins of the Tongue).

F. “For in the multitude of dreams there are vanities, and in many words: but fear thou God” (5:7).

1. To lie in bed at night with a mind full of dreams regarding the business of the day is certainly vanity. A loss of sleep through busy dreams is vanity in the since that all the thoughts and plans regarding the affairs of this life will not bring eternal satisfaction and profit to man (see Eccl. 1:3).

2. Using a multitude of words, in relation to the affairs of this immediate life, are just as vain. A high count of words about worldly affairs will not dictate true and lasting satisfaction.

3. What does give lasting, true, and eternal profit or satisfaction? The Preacher writes, “But fear thou God.” The fear of God will bring lasting satisfaction and profit. Here, for the second time (see Eccl. 3:14), the Preacher has given a clear answer to his question of Ecclesiastes 1:3. What activity in this life will bring everlasting satisfaction? Will it be me putting my trust in the riches of this life? Can I find true and eternal satisfaction in attaining great education, labor, the glory of this world, or socially good times? While it is true that God’s gift to man is to enjoy the fruit of one’s labor in the here and now (Eccl. 2:10, 24; 3:13, 22), this is not where we will find lasting profit (satisfaction). Lasting satisfaction can only come by “fearing God.”

4. What does the Preacher mean by the words, “But fear thou God” and how is that one may achieve this task? To “fear” God is to keep His commandments (cf. Deut. 5:29; 6:1-3; Titus 3:8; I Pet. 1:17). My obedience is thereby evidence of my fear of God much like obedience is evidence in my faith (cf. Jn. 3:36; Heb. 11:1ff) and love (Jn. 14:15, 23) of God (see study # 11; Fear God).

II. The Vanity of looking for lasting Profit in Riches (5:8-17):

A. “If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and the violent taking away of justice and righteousness in a province, marvel not at the matter: for one higher than the high regards; and there are higher than they. Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field” (5:8-9).

1. Solomon had painfully observed the oppression of people at Ecclesiastes 4:1-3 and concluded that it is better to be dead or not yet born than to suffer such things. Here, the Preacher gains comfort in the fact that such oppressors will give answer to people of even higher authority than they. Sometimes it is hard for morally good people to witness the mistreatment of others simply because of their race or economic standing. When injustices occur we may gain comfort in knowing that there are higher authorities that will eventually see to it that justice prevails (see study # 12; Solomon’s Observations).
2. Secondly, the Preacher had observed the fact that there was injustice and sin at high places that should have exercised just and right behavior (see Eccl. 3:16-17). He gained comfort in the fact that he knew by faith that God would one day judge these sinful and unfair people (see study # 12).

3. Through all these observations the Preacher also concludes that it is better to have a king, even if oppressive and sinful, than to have no king at all. Without a system of government there would be no control over violators of the law. Better to live with a lack of justice from the government than no justice whatsoever in the absence of government. It may be that such a verse helps us when voting in a modern day presidential race. We often may vote on the lesser of many evils. Better to have a man serve as president than to have no government at all.

B. "He that loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loves abundance, with increase: this also is vanity" (5:10).

1. Here the Preacher helps us distinguish between right and wrong when it comes to having things in this life. To "love" silver and to “love” abundance is to err. It is referred to as “vanity.” Man’s love ought to be directed at God by keeping His commandments in fear (see Jn. 14:15). There is nothing wrong with having possessions; however, if my love, confidence, and hope are place therein I am going to be seriously disappointed in eternity (see study # 6).

2. The apostle Paul would later write, “But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (I Tim. 6:10).

C. “When goods increase, they are increased that eat them; and what advantage is there to the owner thereof, save the beholding of them with his eyes?” (5:11)

1. Work begets more work. When one has much goods the demands for sustaining such goods grows. Increasing productivity of a product means hiring more laborers. Hiring more laborers means more health insurance, workman’s compensation forms, vacations, scheduling, etc. One comes to be very busy with the things of this life.

2. The Preacher asks, “What advantage is there to the owner thereof?” What lasting benefit is there in a simple observance of one’s success? Once again the lesson is that we ought not look for satisfaction in this life’s goods.

D. “The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much; but the fullness of the rich will not suffer him to sleep” (5:12).

1. Why is it that the laboring man has sweet rest at night but the rich man does not? The premise to this argument has been well established in this study. The man who has set his heart (i.e., his love and his desire for satisfaction in earthly goods) upon the world has a mind preoccupied with the things of this life so much that he cannot sleep at night for thinking about it all (see Eccl. 2:23; 5:3, 7).

2. It follows then that the one who works hard in this life and looks for profit in God will sleep well at night because his cares and concerns are not for the things of this world.

E. “There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept by the owner thereof to his hurt: and those riches perish by evil adventure; and if he hath begotten a son, there is nothing in his hand” (5:13-14).

1. A severe evil exists when a man has placed his trust in his riches and then looses them by some unfortunate event. He now has great sorrows because he had things stored up for his son yet now it is all gone. The son has nothing and the father has nothing.

2. When one places all their hopes in the riches of this life they are left hopeless at the loss of them. Job was a very rich man who lost all that he had (including his children). When all was lost Job shaved his head and worshipped God. He then said, “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly” (Job 1:20-22). Job’s response indicated that his trust, though he was wealthy, rest in the Lord (see study # 13; Trust in the Lord).
F. “As he came forth from his mother’s womb, naked shall he go again as he came, and shall take nothing for his labor, which he may carry away in his hand” (5:15).

1. Herein is a great and penetrating statement of wisdom found in the Word of God. Those who seek profit and lasting satisfaction from the things of this world ought to consider death. When one dies he can not take one thing that he worked so hard to obtain with him.

2. When we leave this earth we leave all things behind. We came into the world naked and so shall we leave in relation to possessions (see Job 1:20-22 above) (see study # 13).

G. “And this also is a grievous evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that he labors for the wind? All his days also he eats in darkness, and he is sore vexed, and hath sickness and wrath” (5:16-17).

1. When a man has lived out his life and the day of death comes he may look back over his life of seeking after profit from the things of this world and conclude that it was indeed vain. When he leaves this world in death he will take not one thing with him. He had placed his trust and hope in this life and this life was now ending (see Eccl. 2:12-17) (see study # 14; Life and Death).

2. Can a man not see that eternity exists? Of course he can. God gave all such ability (see Eccl. 3:11). What will be left for a man who has lived only for the life we have? Now that life is over so are this man’s dreams and aspirations. All that he lived for has ended yet his existence has not. Now what? Truly such a one has “striven for the wind” (theme of this study).

III. God’s gift to man in the here and now is his Portion in this Life (5:18-20):

A. “Behold, that which I have seen to be good and to be comely is for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy good in all his labor, wherein he labor under the sun, all the days of his life which God hath given him: for this is his portion” (5:18).

1. Solomon has personally observed many things in this study. He continues to conclude from his personal observation that man is to “eat and drink, and to enjoy good in all his labor…” The man or woman who looks to lasting satisfaction through a fear of God and eternity shall have peaceful sleeping hours (Eccl. 2:23; 5:3, 7). The man or woman who sees that God will judge the unjust shall have peace of mind (Eccl. 3:16-17). The observation of the poor being oppressed can be hurtful to the human mind yet the godly shall have comfort in knowing that there are always higher governing officials who shall put an end to this injustice (see Eccl. 4:1-3; 5:8). The man who observes the fact that physical life will end and spiritual life will continue on shall not set his hope of gaining profit in this life (see Eccl. 5:14-17) (see study # 12).

2. The ultimate profit in the here and now comes in the form of simply enjoying the fruit of one’s labors. Solomon has repeatedly referred to this as man’s immediate “portion” in this life (see Eccl. 2:10, 24; 3:13, 22) (see study # 3).

B. “Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labor – this is the gift of God. For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answers him in the joy of his heart” (5:19-20).

1. Note that to some men God has “given riches, wealth, and power to eat thereof.” Some have riches and wealth and some do not. What ever portion one has been blessed with in this life one should learn to “rejoice” in it and recognize that it is the “gift of God” (see Eccl. 3:13) (see study # 3). We find then that the God fearing man has peace and rejoicing in this life yet looks for “profit” into eternity by fearing God and keeping His commandments.

2. Once this life is over one has no part in it again. One’s wealth and sorrows are past. He has had his time to enjoy the temporary gifts of God and so rejoiced in them. Eternity now lies before all.

Chapter 6

I. A Self Imposed or Unfortunate Loss of one’s Portion in this Life (6:1-6):
A. “There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is heavy upon men: a man to whom God gives riches, wealth, and honor, so that he lacks nothing for his soul of all that he desires, yet God gives him not power to eat thereof, but an alien eats it; this is vanity, and it is an evil disease” (6:1-2).

1. Solomon considers the man that God blesses with gifts of “riches, wealth, and honor, so that he lacks nothing for his soul of all that he desires...” Said blessings of riches, wealth, and honor may have come by inheritance, hard labor with the talents the man has, or it may be that investments have paid great dividends.

2. The “evil disease” of this blessed man is that, under the current scenario, he is unable to enjoy these gifts from God due to an “alien” (foreigner) partaking of them. Though God gave the man these gifts God did not permit the man to partake of them in this case. Interestingly, in the previous chapter, Solomon mentions man’s “portion” in this life that God intends for him to enjoy has His gift to man (see Eccl. 5:18-19). Solomon states that God gives this man “power to eat thereof and take his portion” (Eccl. 5:19). Chapter six verse two reveals that God does not give this “power” to all. These thoughts infer God’s active part in man’s life (i.e., His providence = “divine direction / divine intervention” AHD 997) (see Eccl. 3:14) (see study #15; Providence).
   a. Recall that God’s gift to man is the physical portion that we are to enjoy (see Eccl. 3:13; 5:18-19). Here, that physical portion included riches, wealth, and honor...
   b. Solomon considers the man that God has given these gifts to; however, the man cannot enjoy them because an alien has invaded, killed, or stolen his goods. It seems somewhat sad that such a man that God blessed had no pleasure in those blessings. Indeed, it is an “evil disease.”
   c. The question of God’s providence cannot be solved for we know not the secret things that God does in our lives. Did he choose to bring this “alien” upon me to prove me? Did he allow this alien to take of my sustenance to save him? Why did God permit this to happen? These are questions of providence that we can only respond to be saying, “the Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:20-22).

B. “If a man beget a hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul be not filled with good, and moreover he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he:” (6:3).

1. To further illustrate the point that an evil disease exists where a man cannot enjoy his portion God has given him Solomon speaks of one who has many children.
2. Children are indeed a blessing from God (see Psalms 127:3-5; Prov. 17:6) as is attaining great age (see I Kg. 3:10-14). What if; however, the blessed man did not cherish God’s blessings of children and great age (i.e., “his soul be not filled with good”)? What if his interest lie other places? He lives his long life not enjoying the blessings of God and is thereby stricken with the “evil disease” of verse 2 in that he has not joyously partaken of his portion in this life. The “good soul” is thereby one who is content with God’s blessings and looks for true profit through obedience to God’s word; i.e., a fear of God (see Eccl. 5:7) (thematic).
3. Solomon said that at his death it would have been better to be “untimely born” (i.e., born dead / not have existed).

C. “for it comes in vanity, and departs in darkness, and the name thereof is covered with darkness; moreover it hath not seen the sun nor known it; this hath rest rather than the other: yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, and yet enjoy no good, do not all go to one place?” (6:4-6).

1. The “it” of verse 4 appears to be the man who lives his life with much of God’s blessings yet does not enjoy them because his “soul is not filled with good.” This man’s life comes in vanity and departs in darkness (i.e., comes and goes quickly as a shadow that appears and disappears). His name is soon forgotten. This man has not enjoyed the sunshine of God’s blessings. He is thereby looked upon as having a vain existence. He ends up in the same dark place as all humanity (i.e., the grave of Sheol).
2. While others just like him; i.e., those who God blessed with various material things, enjoyed their life on this earth he was miserable due to having a soul that was filled with no good
things. His mind was consumed with things other than enjoying God’s blessings. Said man may not have been content with such things as he had and thereby spent his time and energies trying to gain more until one day he dies and never enjoyed the good things that God did give him.

3. There seems to be two issues discussed in the first six verses. First, the evil disease of one who has experienced an untimely death or theft that takes away his ability to enjoy God’s blessings. Secondly, there is the man who does not consider, with a spirit of contentment, the blessings God has given him and thereby he spends his time and efforts in gaining more. With each of these two examples we find a man that ends up in the grave, as everyone else, sort of cheated out of life’s enjoyments and portion that God gives to all.

II. Admonition to not allow Desires to get out of Control (6:7-9):

A. “All the labor of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled” (6:7).
   1. The fruit of one’s labor is to be enjoyed by man... it is his portion in this life (see Eccl. 3:13). Solomon considers one who has received the blessings of God (i.e., the portion from his labor), “yet the appetite is not filled.”
   2. Here is a man that is not satisfied with his portion in this life. He wants more. This man’s appetite for riches, wealth, and honor has gotten the better of him.

B. “For what advantage hath the wise more than the fool? Or what hath the poor man, that knows how to walk before the living?” (6:8)
   1. Solomon observes that the wise and poor have no real advantage over the fool because they all three have desires.
   2. Though the wise and poor who “knows how to walk before the living” have self control they nonetheless have equal desires. One is able to suppress and the other does not give any efforts to do so.

C. “Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire: this also is vanity and a striving after wind” (6:9).
   1. Solomon concludes that though the wise, poor, and fool all share in desires it is better to be satisfied with what one has rather than chasing after more. A natural part of man is to desire things (see study # 2 / man’s natural understanding of eternity [Eccl. 3:11], natural knowledge gained by observation [Eccl. 3:14], and natural knowledge of good and evil [Eccl. 3:18]). We all desire things like vacation, a home to live in, an automobile to drive, money to eat out with, etc.
   2. Solomon’s point is that if that desire exceeds contentment (i.e., if one’s desire is the love of things or the idea of seeking the “profit” of Eccl. 1:3 from the goods of this life) then one is simply chasing after the wind. He states, “this also is vanity and a striving after wind.”

III. Let us enjoy our Portion from God now and look diligently to our eternal profit in God (6:10-12):

A. “Whatsoever hath been, the name thereof was given long ago; and it is known that man is; neither can he contend with him that is mightier than he” (6:10).
   1. Young’s Literal Translation records this verse as: “What is that which hath been? Already is its name called, and it is known that it is man, and he is not able to contend with him that is stronger than he.” Man has predetermined qualities that God created us with; i.e., desire (Eccl. 6:8-9), understanding of eternity (Eccl. 3:11), an ability to gain knowledge through natural observation (Eccl. 3:14), and the innate ability to distinguish between right and wrong (Eccl. 3:18). Man is also given gifts by God which is deemed his portion as has been stated many times above (see Eccl. 2:24; 5:18-19).
   2. God may allow that man to enjoy the providential “gifts” as his “portion” in this life or it may be that God providentially does not allow that man to enjoy the gifts and portion allotted to him (i.e., he may die or someone may steal them from him) (see Eccl. 6:2).
   3. Man cannot alter God’s providence. We will gain a certain degree of knowledge, desires, and a portion to enjoy in this life. These are, again, God’s gifts to man (see study # 3). To attempt to alter or change God’s gifts would be to fight against God (i.e., one “mightier than he”). Let us remember that the apostle Paul said, “Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why didst thou make me thus?” (Rom. 9:20). God’s portion to man ought to be enjoyed rather than
set aside for more. **Said activity** (seeking satisfaction and profit from things of this life) **goes against the nature of man and will cause restlessness at night** (Eccl. 2:23; 5:12) (see study #2). God has thereby created man with the innate ability to not only seek out eternity but to also put one’s faith and hope (true profit) in God!

4. Again, let us remember Job’s response after God had providentially allowed all that he had to be taken from him. Job said, “**Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly**” (Job 1:20-22). Job’s response indicated that his trust, though he was wealthy, rest in the Lord (see study #13; Trust in the Lord).

B. “**Seeing there are many things that increase vanity, what is man the better?**” (6:11).

1. What are the **“many things that increase vanity”**? Solomon has looked at labor (Eccl. 2:10-11), knowledge and wisdom (Eccl. 2:12ff), riches (Eccl. 5:10), pleasure (Eccl. 2:1), laughter (Eccl. 2:2), building structures (Eccl. 2:4), and all things done under the sun as being vain and a striving after the wind (see Eccl. 1:14).

2. So many areas of vanity in relation to finding eternal profit (i.e., Eccl. 1:3) caused Solomon to say, **“What is man the better?**” Is man any closer to finding profit (i.e., lasting satisfaction) in any of these vain areas? The inference is clearly no. Though I set out to have a great education, wealth, pleasure, and laughter I am no closer to finding profit than when I began the quest. The reason, such a one has looked for profit in all the wrong places. Again, said individual has gone against his natural bent that God created him with.

C. “**For who knows what is good for man in his life, all the days of his vain life which he spends as a shadow? For who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?**” (6:12).

1. Let us go back to verse seven. Solomon said, **“All the labor of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled.”** Man expends efforts and energies while on this earth to obtain the necessities of life. Some extend their efforts beyond the necessities of life. The more they reach for riches, wealth, and honor the more they crave. They are never satisfied. Such a life is vain; i.e., reaching after the wind. It is vain because he knows not whether death or an unfortunate event shall take away that which he spent, **“as a shadow,”** his time and effort to obtain. But again, it is vain because it can only partially satisfy a man. Riches, wealth, and honor shall all vanish at one’s death. Man needs something to give him eternal profit, not just profit in the here and now. That one thing that shall profit a man into eternity is the fear of God (see Eccl. 3:14; 5:7). God has created man with the innate appetite for eternal “profit” (i.e., lasting and soul fulfilling satisfaction). To miss out on God’s eternal promises is to thereby live on in eternity without satisfaction. One will then know that the one thing they should have been looking to achieve profit in their lives was through a fear of God.

2. No man can tell the future. I cannot tell you if my children will be alive to receive an inheritance from me. I cannot tell you whether I will loose all that I have gained in this life so that I have nothing to leave my children. I do not know if I will die tomorrow and not be able to enjoy the blessings of my wife, children, and estate. What we can do; however, is to acknowledge that the blessings we now have are allotted by God. These blessings can be enjoyed now while we await our exit from this life. I ought to keep my mind focused upon true profit by fearing God and keeping His commandments.

**Thoughts to this point of the study:**

Consider some things we have learned from Ecclesiastes at the halfway point of the study. Though all things done under the sun are indeed vain (Eccl. 1:2), in relation to eternal existence, they nonetheless have purpose (Eccl. 3:1). Solomon speaks of man’s “portion” while among the living as being the joy produced from labor (Eccl. 2:10, 24; 3:13, 22; 5:19). These “portions” are God’s “gifts” to man (see Eccl. 3:13; 5:19; 6:2). The measure of satisfaction, fulfillment, or “profit” (Eccl. 1:3; 2:11; 3:9; 5:16) that a man receives in this life must be looked at as temporal in nature. Though temporary, God nonetheless ordains that we enjoy them with thankful hearts (Eccl. 2:24; 3:22; 5:19). Some receive these physical portions (God’s gifts) and look only to them for “profit.” Solomon tells us that one who sets their hope of fulfillment and satisfaction in this life is
likened unto a beast (Eccl. 3:16-18). Animals live and die with no eternal existence and thereby get all gratification from this life. A man who takes an animalistic approach to finding satisfaction and fulfillment will be sorely disappointed on into eternity (Eccl. 3:14). We are all going to die and there is not one material thing from this earth that we will be able to bring with us to the next life of eternity (see Eccl. 3:20; 5:15). Furthermore, there is no guarantee that one will secure God’s material gifts (his portion) in this life (see Eccl. 6:2). Calamity, of some sort, may erase one’s “portion” in this life (examine Job’s life as recorded at Job chapter 1) (this is the gist of chapter 7). If my objective is to seek out eternal profit I will not be devastated by such a loss. Those who set their minds on attaining the things of this world will have no where to turn when all is lost (see Eccl. 5:10, 13-14). A Christian who has lost all of life’s goods maintains their hope of heaven!

Chapter 7

I. A Look at Life and Death (7:1-4):

   A. “A good name is better than precious oil; and the day of death, than the day of one’s birth” (7:1)
      1. One’s name is an illustration of the desired character within one. A good name can indicate the integrity, goodness, and character of an individual (see Prov. 22:1). One receives this good name at birth.
      2. The other end of the spectrum of birth and naming a child is death. The day of death is better than the day of birth in that all of the toils, hardships, heartaches of life are past.

   B. “It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made glad” (7:2-3).
      1. One may go to the “house of mourning” due to death or personal calamity of some sort. Such a state of being will cause one to reflect upon the nature of life itself. Life can be taken without notice. Likewise one’s possessions may be taken without notice.
      2. Solomon has concluded that God’s gift to man is to eat and drink of the blessing of this life with enjoyment (Eccl. 3:13). This enjoyment; however, is to be tempered with the eye that looks to the end of this life and the beginnings of one’s eternal existence. Such a view will cause a man to “walk worthily of the calling wherewith he was called” (Eph. 4:1ff).
      3. What connection is there between one laying the seriousness of life and eternity to heart and mourning? Consider two NT passages spoken by Jesus. The Lord said, “Woe unto you, ye that are full now! For ye shall hunger. Woe unto you, ye that laugh now! For ye shall mourn and weep” (Lk. 6:25). The parallel to this passage is found at Matthew 5:4. Jesus said, “Blessed are they that mourn: for thy shall be comforted.” Jesus addresses those who have sought out profit (satisfaction and fulfillment) in this life as opposed to those who are seeking it into eternity.
      4. Sorrow exists for the man who has gone against his natural being (see study # 2). Sin bothers this man (woman) because their objective is eternity with God. When their true “profit” is threatened by their own sinful actions they are frustrated with themselves. They recognize that they have done deeds detrimental to their life’s goal of being with God. They know this is so because the word of God exposes not only their sin but the consequences thereof (see Jn. 16:8). Sorrow of heart exists as a byproduct of sinful living due to one’s violating their goals of heaven (i.e., trained conscience) (see II Cor. 7:9-10). Such sorrow will lead to repentance and a renewed vigor to serve more faithfully (see study # 16; Godly Sorrow). The heart of laughter, on the other hand, is the mind that is satisfied and seek fulfillment with this material things of this life. While laughter is good and intended for all Solomon is warning his readers not to be seduced by it.

   C. “The heart of the wise is the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is the house of mirth” (7:4).
      1. The wise man’s heart would rather mourn in view of brevity of life (i.e., we live, die, and spend eternity apart from this fleshly life). It is thereby “wise” to have a heart of sorrow when one’s profit is threatened by personal sin.
2. What makes a fool? The fool does not consider the seriousness of this life. The fool does not contemplate life, death, and eternity. The fool gains pleasure, satisfaction, and contentment with this life alone. Their sorrows come when their material possessions are threatened whereas the wise man’s sorrow is just the opposite. The wise man’s sorrow exists in areas that threatened his profit of eternity with God.

II. The Wise are Willing to Hear Rebuke when their “Profit” is Threatened by their Actions (7:5-7):
A. “It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools” (7:5).
   1. The wise man contemplates life, death, and eternity. He is one who finds lasting value in the rebuke of the wise. To “rebuke” is to “criticize or reprove sharply; reprimand” (AHD 1032). Here is one whose concern is where he will spend eternity. If he is doing something that has endangered his objective he will gladly and humbly hear and heed to instruction (see study # 26).
   2. The song of the fool is, “eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die” (see I Cor. 15:32). The fool does not consider the resurrection of the body, judgment, and eternal things. The fool is concerned with reaching happiness now. Jesus said, “For where thy treasure is, there will be thy heart also” (Matt. 6:21). The song and treasure of the fool is found in the temporary pleasures and success of this life (see study # 17; The Identity of a Fool).
B. “For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity. Surely extortion makes the wise man foolish; and a bribe destroys the understanding” (7:6-7).
   1. The fool who seeks out satisfaction in this life to the exclusion of eternity is likened unto dry thorns that fuel a fire and then quickly they are consumed. The life of the fool may shine bright for a moment yet it is short lived (their lives come and go quickly).
   2. The wise who engages in any of the schemes and hopes of the fool shall destroy the understanding that he has gained.

III. The Value of Suffering (7:8-10):
A. “Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof; and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit” (7:8).
   1. Patience and Pride are compared in the realm of life (i.e., the beginning and the end of things). It is better to be patient than proud because life will throw a host of fiery trials our way. By the providence of God our lives may end sooner than we expected and by the providence of God we may have all our possessions taken from us. The wise handles all issues of life with wisdom and patience. He or she will not be devastated at life, death, or sorrows because their objective is eternity.
   2. The proud man will be devastated by death and sorrows in life because this life is where he is looking for the “profit” of Ecclesiastes 1:3.
B. “Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger rests in the bosom of fools” (7:9).
   1. When the spirit of the proud do not have things go they way they would like to see them go they get angry rather than gain understanding and patience from the trial (see James 1:1ff). Here we have a Bible definition of anger. Angry people become so agitated because something in this life is not going as they would have it go. They has sought their profit in this life and when it does not give them satisfaction and fulfillment anger results. We confidently conclude that when a man is angry at things other than sinfulness (see Eph. 4:26) he is making manifest the profit he seeks. Such a one seeks profit in the here and now. The next time you get angry think about what the source of your anger is. If you are angry over a matter of this life you may deduce that you are putting too much emphasis on this life. A sign of one seeking profit from this immediate world is anger (see study # 17; and # 18; Anger).
   2. Solomon said, “He whose spirit is without restraint is like a city that is broken down and without walls” (Prov. 25:28). The fool’s satisfaction is dependant upon the circumstances of this life. When things are well he is happy but when things are not going well he is like a defeated city without walls (all hope is lost to this person when life and or the materials of life are gone).
C. “Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? For thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this” (7:10).
1. The providential work of God cannot be calculated, planned for, or predicted (see study # 15). Though one may have worked very hard and gained much in this life it can be taken away on a moments notice. To look at the calamity and proclaim, “the former days were better than these” would be foolish.

2. One may asks, “Better in what sense?” The former days may have been days of plenty when little lessons of patience were being learned. The man who seeks satisfaction and profit from eternal things will view all points of life as building blocks to eventually reach the eternal destination of heaven. Heartaches and lesser days come at all points of life. The fool cannot and will not understand such a thought because their satisfaction is sought after in this life. When the things of life are taken so the spirit of the fool (see study # 19; The Value of Suffering).

IV. God’s Providential acts cannot be Predicted (7:11-14):

A. “Wisdom is as good as an inheritance; yea, more excellent is it for them that see the sun. For wisdom is a defense, even as money is a defense; but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom preserves the life of him that hath it” (7:11-12)

1. There is profit to be found in both wisdom and money. Those who “see the sun” (i.e., experience birth and life on earth) have a defense against calamity in this life in wisdom and money.

2. Wisdom is a defense against calamity of life (i.e., adversity and suffering) in that it will not allow one to be too downtrodden. Wisdom seeks satisfaction from eternal things and is thereby, to a lesser degree, saddened at the loss of comfort in this life. Money, as well as wisdom, can help deal with suffering in life. Those with inheritance (money) may buy their way out of some calamities.

3. Wisdom; however, is superior or “more excellent” than money because it is without bounds in its availability. Wisdom is what emotionally pushes a man forward during times of suffering (see study # 19). One’s money can last only so long as it is there to use.

B. “Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked?” (7:13).

1. Solomon had made a similar statement of Eccl. 1:15. Note that it is the “work of God” to make things straight or crooked. God’s providential will is that some suffer and some have ease. (see study # 15). Solomon has given us a direct example of this as we compared Ecclesiastes 5:19 to 6:2.

2. When I conclude that I cannot control the timing or severity of these collapses in my fleshly being and material standing then I am heading in the right direction. The mind that seeks out satisfaction in eternity will thereby handle God’s providential movements in life with a sense of calmness rather than anger. Solomon calls upon the wise to consider God’s providential hand in our lives so that we do not get angry, disappointed, disillusioned, disenchanted, and dejected in this life when things go wrong.

3. The apostle Paul recounted his suffering of a thorn in the flesh to the Corinthian brethren at II Corinthians 12:7. The purpose of this thorn was that he would not be “exalted overmuch.” Paul prayed three times that this anguish be removed yet the Lord answered saying, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness” (II Cor. 12:9). Paul then replies to the Lord saying, “Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (II Cor. 12:10). It would be during days of adversity that Paul would lean heavily upon the Lord for strength. We will be closest to God during these types of days (see study # 19).

C. “In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider; yea, God hath made the one side by side with the other, to the end that man should not find out anything that shall be after him” (7:14).

1. The conclusion is that the wise man who seeks out profit not from this life but with God in eternity shall enjoy the “days of prosperity” and “consider” the brevity of life in the day of “adversity.” Again, this reiterates a theme in this book. Enjoy the things you have now while they are with you (see Eccl. 2:10, 24; 3:13, 22; 5:19) for we do not know when and in what manner days of adversity come (see study # 15).
2. The wise will know and understand that with prosperous days will come days of adversity. The Lord tells us that these events are “side by side” (i.e., they both will occur in one’s life). The problem with man is that he does not know when adversity or prosperity will come in life. At an unannounced time we may suffer death, persecution, sickness, disease, theft, pains of age, and so forth. Let none of us; however, suffer as an evil doer (see I Pet. 2:20; 3:17; 4:15) (see study # 19).

IV. Avoiding Extremes that override God’s Providential Care (7:15-18):

A. “All this have I seen in my days of vanity: there is a righteous man that perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongs his life in his evil-doing” (7:15).

1. Solomon, in keeping with the thought of God’s unpredictable providential care in a man’s life, considers the righteous and the wicked. The preacher has observed some things (see study # 12). Surely one thing happens to all (see Eccl. 3:19). Death comes to all; however, no one knows the day of their death. God’s providential work in a man’s life may be seen in that he shortens one man’s life (the righteous) and allows the wicked man to continue (see study # 15).

2. Said observations coincide with the “evil disease” of Ecclesiastes 6:2. At chapters 5:19 and 6:2 Solomon considers one who has power to enjoy the fruit of his labor and at chapter 6:2 he contemplates the man who God has not given the power to eat and enjoy his riches, wealth, and honor.

B. “Be not righteous overmuch; neither make thyself overwise: why should thou destroy thyself? Be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish: why should thou die before thy time?” (7:16-17).

1. Solomon has observed that one cannot control the providence of God (i.e., we know not when days of joy, prosperity, suffering, and even death come). The conclusion is that when prosperous days are upon you enjoy them and when days of suffering abound consider the brevity of life. God’s providential prosperity and suffering knows no target. The righteous prosper and suffer as do the unrighteous. The poor black man from Kenya experiences days of prosperity and suffering just as the rich white man from America. God is no respecter of persons when it comes to these issues of life. This raises the question of man’s life. Our lives are filled with days of prosperity, suffering, hope, and death. Pharaoh of Egypt once asked Jacob, “How many are the days of the years of thy life? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years: few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage” (Gen. 47:9) (see study # 20; What Does a Man’s Life Consists Of?).

2. The Preacher now concludes, “Be not overmuch righteous, wise, wicked, and foolish” to do otherwise would be to “die before thy time.” The time of one’s death is connected to one’s righteousness, wisdom, wickedness, and foolishness. To be “overmuch” in any of these things is to “die before thy time.” The word “overmuch” (Hebrew rabah) = “enlarge, increase, more…” (Strong’s). We may hasten death by acts of our own. Let us be careful not to interpret these verses as license to not be totally righteous (a little wickedness is ok) and wise (a little foolishness is good). To die before thy time is as overly righteous is to go beyond (enlarge) the word of God in efforts to be right. To die before thy time as overly wise would be to set wisdom as the highest priority of life to the exclusion of taking care of other necessities of life. To die before thy time as overly wicked does not mean that a little sin is ok (see I Jn. 3:4). While we all sin from time to time in moments of our weaknesses those who sin without restraint bring upon themselves the life threatening consequences of such actions (see Prov. 5:22; 13:15; 22:5). Solomon is thereby warning against hurtful extremes. Extreme righteousness (i.e., enlarging truth due to being overzealous or disrespectful to God’s revelation... the truth is not elastic), wisdom (to set gaining wisdom as one’s profit in life), wickedness (to continue in sin), and foolishness (to be angry and set one’s profit on this earth) can end one’s life prematurely.

C. “It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this; yea, also from that withdraw not thy hand: for he that fears God shall come forth from them all” (7:18).

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1. Solomon concludes that “it is good that thou should take hold of this” (i.e., the idea of avoiding extremes that may cause one’s life to be shorter than it should be).

2. The God fearing man shall “come forth from them all” (i.e., avoid the sin of extending righteousness beyond its revealed bounds, seeking wisdom beyond other necessities of life, extreme wickedness that shortens life, and extreme foolishness). Once again we see that fearing God is the key to a proper approach to life (i.e., value eternal things and enjoy the portions God gives us now) (see Eccl. 3:14; 5:7) (see study # 11).

V. All are Guilty of Sin (7:19-22):
A. “Wisdom is a strength to the wise man more than ten rulers that are in a city. Surely there is not a righteous man upon earth, that doeth good, and sins not” (7:19-20).

1. The apostle Paul tells us that which human experience reveals; i.e., “all sin and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23 see also I Jn. 1:8). The righteous make mistakes and sin against God’s sovereign will. This raises a question of man’s nature. Did God create man with an innate sinful nature (see study # 2)? Solomon will answer this question for us at the end of this chapter (see Eccl. 7:29).

2. Suffice it to say for now that man has been given the freedom of choice and free will. Wisdom will see to it that when one goes against God’s creative nature of good sorrow, repentance, and prayer will follow (see study # 16). The wise man will seek to overcome sin whereas the fool does what seems right in his own eyes.

B. “Also take not heed unto all words that are spoken, lest thou hear thy servant curse thee; for oftentimes also thine own heart knows that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others” (7:21-22).

1. This verse penetrates deeply within the soul of man. Solomon distinguishes the wise from the foolish and overly sensitive. One often experiences sorrow in life because of self failure. We see the faults and failures in others and make quick judgments. We should, through a spirit of wisdom, have the capacity to recognize our own failures (Matt. 7:4; Rom. 2:3) (see study # 24; Hypocrisy). Again, Solomon has observed that no man is without sin; however, the wise man will do what is necessary to secure his eternal profit with God.

2. It is unreasonable at best for anyone to get upset after hearing that someone has said something hurtful against you because we have all said hurtful things about others. It is weak sauce to be hurt by others’ words of disparagement while at the same time dishing out your own disparaging words. This verse helps us to see that those who are quibbling about misrepresentations and the characters of false teachers ought to look to their own actions in life before crying foul.

3. Certainly the word of God is a sharp sword that cuts deep within our soul’s being to convict us of our own wrong doings (see study # The Power of Truth).

VI. The Search for a Wise Man and Woman (7:23-29):
A. “All this have I proved in wisdom: I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me. That which is, is far off and exceeding deep; who can find it out? I turned about, and my heart was set to know and to search out, and to seek wisdom and the reason of things, and to know that wickedness is folly, and that foolishness is madness” (7:23-25).

1. Solomon sought out wisdom yet at times it seemed “far from me.” Wisdom would cause a man to seek eternal profit, experience sorrow over one’s failures, and handle adversity in life with integrity and hope. Unfortunately, Solomon did not always live up to wisdom and neither do we. The apostle Paul said, “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I know not: for not what I would, that do I practice; but what I hate, that I do...” (see Rom. 7:14-15). Though the principle of wisdom and righteousness is laid before us we all struggle with its applications in our lives. If Solomon and the apostle Paul had these struggles what about the rest of us? The point is that we will fail from time to time yet we must never give up the fight (see study # 22; Diligence)!

2. While wisdom may help a man through adversity in life it cannot predict God’s providential moves. The “reason” of some things is so deep that man can in no way know though much effort is extended (see Deut. 29:29).
3. That which is discovered by wisdom is that “wickedness is folly and foolishness is madness.” The wicked and wise seek profit from this life and it will never be found; i.e., it is as grasping after the wind (Eccl. 5:16).

B. “And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets and whose hands are bands: whoso pleases God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her” (7:26).

1. Solomon had observed, by personal experience, that some women’s minds (heart) are set on entrapping and placing a man in bonds (see study # 12). Solomon spoke of the trapppings of a harlot at Proverbs 7:5-27. He said that “She hath cast down many wounded: Yea, all her slain are a mighty host” (Prov. 7:26).

2. The man that “pleases God” is the man that evidences his faith (Jn. 3:36), love (Jn. 14:15), and fear (Deut. 5:29; 6:2) in the Lord through obedience (i.e., he seeks his profit through truth and eternity). Sinners (i.e., the disobedient man who seeks profit in the physical things of this life) will be slain by her. Such a one looks to pleasure, satisfaction, and fulfillment in this earth. Such a woman appears to be a part of that pleasure puzzle that will give him the satisfaction and fulfillment he searches for.

C. “Behold, this have I found, saith the Preacher, laying one thing to another [weighing one thing after another, to find out the reason / ASV footnote], to find out the account; which my soul still seeks, but I have not found: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found” (7:27-28).

1. Solomon has sought out many things and found answers to many of life’s questions. There are some “deep” things; however, that he cannot know no matter the extent of his efforts (Eccl. 7:23).

2. Solomon has contemplated the state of woman. Some women are wicked and seek to satisfy their fleshly desires through this immediate life. Solomon reveals his deep consideration and careful observation as he seeks out “a woman.” The inference is clear. Solomon is trying to find a woman who seeks out profit through eternal existence with God through wise and righteous living. Though he was still seeking this woman, at the time of this writing, he had not found her. There was an almost equal failure to find a wise man among a thousand polled. Why do you suppose this is?

D. “Behold, this only have I found: that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (7:29).

1. Solomon had found, through personal observation, that there was not a wise woman among 1000 and only one man among 1000 that he considered wise. He has also observed the reason for this finding.

2. The reason there are so many foolish people in the world is that they fight against God’s creative nature. God “made man upright” in that our natures are good (i.e., we innately know the difference between right and wrong actions) (see also Rom. 2:14-15) (see study # 2). Solomon has touched on this subject previously. God created man with the ability to know and seek out eternity (i.e., to conclude that God is based on personal observation) (see Ps. 19:1; Eccl. 3:11; Rom. 2:1). Solomon has also learned that the man who sins goes against God’s creation and his own nature (see Eccl. 3:18). Solomon further indicated that it goes against man’s created nature to seek out profit in this life (see Eccl. 6:10ff).

3. The answer to the question; i.e., why are there so few wise, is not to be found with God but with man. God has created man with all the abilities to do right and act wisely yet man goes against his own very nature by his own choice... “they have sought out many inventions.”

4. I asked, earlier, does Ecclesiastes 7:20 mean that man was innately given a sinful nature since all sin (see study # 2). Calvinist refers to such a thought as Total heredity depravity in the TULIP acronym (see study # 23; Calvinism). Here, Solomon answers such a question for us. God has created man good (i.e., Man is innately equipped with the mental capacity to determine right from wrong and choose the right path). When one sins; he goes against his created nature. Such is a choice by each individual. Again, this helps us to recognize that man is a free moral agent. We have been created with the ability to make choices. The wise will make life choices based upon their objective of obtaining eternal profit with God into eternity!
I. Submitting to a Repressive King (8:1-9):

A. “Who is as the wise man? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man’s wisdom makes his face to shine, and the hardness of his face is changed” (8:1).

1. The Preacher dealt with the identification of the wise man at chapter 7. The wise are bothered by sin (Eccl. 7:4, 19-20) (see study # 25; Attitude toward Sin), willing to hear rebuke (Eccl. 7:5), patient in adversity (Eccl. 7:8, 14), and not soon angry (Eccl. 7:9) (see study # 26; Identity of the Wise).

2. The wise man of Ecclesiastes is one who has his heart set on the profit of eternity with God. Said one has confidence in the reality of God and thereby has the ability to explain the issues of life in relationship to eternity. His wisdom and confidence are detected by all when looking upon his countenance.

B. “I counsel thee, Keep the king’s command, and that in regard of the oath of God” (8:2).

1. Solomon guides his readers to “keep the king’s command.” The wise will be careful to obey the civil governing authorities and voluntarily subject themselves to them (see study # 26). The apostle Paul said, “Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God... Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience’ sake” (Rom. 13:1, 5).

2. The oath of God has to do with God’s laws and our pledge to keep those laws. Let all God’s people today maintain a sense of respect and fear for the civil governing authorities because they are ordained by God (Rom. 13:1) (see study # 27; The Christian’s Relationship to Government).

C. “Be not hasty to go out of his presence; persist not in an evil thing: for he doeth whatsoever pleases him” (8:3).

1. The Preacher admonishes the wise not to make hasty decisions to leave the rule and authority of the king who is cruel and unjust.

2. Consider the fact that Daniel submitted to the wicked rule of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 1) and Paul to the emperor of Rome (Rom. 13).

3. Government rulers have no spiritual unity with the godly; however, they nonetheless occupy an office ordained by God to punish the lawless one.

D. “For the king’s word hath power; and who may say unto him, What doest thou?” (8:4).

1. The king of a land has all authority and the success of the society he governs depends upon the majority following his prescribed laws. Likewise, God has all authority over man’s spiritual life. God’s spiritual laws are revealed for man’s good. To follow rules, regulations, and laws is to seek out the betterment of one’s own self and others.

2. Who has the right to question the king’s decisions? The king is likened unto God in authority and demanded respect (see Isa. 45:9).

3. Though the king be an unjust man the Lord’s people nonetheless have the God ordained responsibility to obey his commands (except in areas of sin / cf. Acts 5:29).

E. “Whoso keeps the commandment shall know no evil thing; and a wise man’s heart discerns time and judgment” (8:5).

1. Though the king be unjust those who keep his rule will experience no “evil thing.” Punishment and disfavor rest in the hands of the rebellious.

2. The wise man knows that eventually all receive their just rewards for their actions (i.e., even those of high powers) (see Eccl. 3:16-17).

F. “For to every purpose there is a time and judgment; because the misery of man is great upon him: for he knows not that which shall be; for who can tell him how it shall be?” (8:6-7).

1. The misery that the wise man has placed upon him by the despotic king will have its time and judgment.

2. That which keeps the wise pressing forward, rather than rebelling, under the hand of an unjust king is that God judges all (see Eccl. 3:16-17; 5:5-9) (see study # 28; Enduring Wrong Doing).
G. “There is no man that hath power over the wind to retain the wind; neither hath he power over the day of death; and there is no discharge in war: neither shall wickedness deliver him that is given to it” (8:8).

1. Solomon considers impossibilities such as the ability to grasp the wind, to know when death comes, relief during a time of war, and a man’s wickedness will not deliver a man from the consequences of said actions.

2. The Preacher’s point is that just as it is impossible to grasp hold of the wind even so it will be impossible for the tyrant king to escape moral justice at the hands of God.

H. “All this have I seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is done under the sun: there is a time wherein one man hath power over another to his hurt” (8:9).

1. Solomon had personally set out to observe “every work that is done under the sun.” The preacher wanted to know the “reason” of things (see Eccl. 7:25).

2. One of these works done under the sun was the wicked rule of a king to his own people’s hurt. What Solomon concludes is that there is so much that occurs under the sun that man will never understand because God never intended for him to (see Eccl. 8:16-17). One thing he did know; however, and that is that man was to fear God (Eccl. 8:12).

II. Fair treatment is relative in the spirit world (8:10-13):

A. “So I saw the wicked buried, and they came to the grave; and they that had done right went away from the holy place, and were forgotten in the city: this also is vanity” (8:10).

1. Solomon observed all things that were done under the sun. One aspect of wisdom is the ability to take note of one’s surroundings. The wise are not only bothered by sin but they realize that they too sin (Eccl. 7:20). All judgments of wise men are made based upon their fear of God (see Prov. 1:6-7). The wise will not be found griping about the mistreatment by others nor complaining about another’s words of discouragement (Eccl. 7:21). When one not only sees but perceives the right or wrong of treatment that others are receiving one has a taste of wisdom. When one examines clothing, language, and temperaments of self and others and weighs these things along side God’s word one is observing in wisdom. When one notes the reactions of violence, anger, passiveness, and hurt feelings of people in various circumstances and weighs these reactions along side the word of God then one is on the road of wisdom. The wise observe not only self but all others in their environments (see study # 26).

2. Another observation of the wise is that not all things are seemingly fair. Fair is relative and the wise recognize the providential involvement of God in man’s life. The wise do not consider whether an issue is fair because all things (good and bad) happen to all (see Eccl. 9:2).

3. Solomon noted that wicked men were blessed with being buried in their homeland where rest the “holy place” (i.e., the temple of God). At the same time, the righteous were being deported out of the land of the “holy place,” died, and were forgotten by the inhabitants of the city. The Preacher concludes that this is “vanity.” This reminds us of the Preacher’s conclusions at Ecclesiastes 5:19-6:2. God gives some men the power to enjoy the fruit of their labors and others He does not give. Though the Preacher considers this an “evil disease” he nonetheless has admitted that the providential work of God has no preferences and thereby events happen to all alike (see Eccl. 2:14; 9:2; and next two verses).

B. “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (8:11).

1. The “sons of men” are the foolish who do not seek out profit by fearing God and looking for hope in eternity. These men observe things just as the wise. The wise observe many things and apply them to their eternal goal of heaven whereas the wicked observe things and conclude that their observations will help them gain glory, honor, riches, and fame in the here and now. This is the mind of the flesh (Rom. 8:1ff).

2. The wicked take note that much evil goes unpunished. If they can get away with wickedness then they will continue in it to gain more and more of this earths goods.

C. “Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and prolong his days, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, that fear before him: but it shall not be well with the wicked neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he fears not before God” (8:12-13).
1. Solomon gained comfort from his observations that wickedness exists in places where justice should prevail in that he knew that God would ultimately judge all (see Eccl. 3:16-17). Ecclesiastes 8:12 helps us understand that not only did sin in one’s personal life bother the godly but sin in others life did too (see study # 25).

2. The wise Solomon had observed the wicked transgressing laws of the land, God’s laws, and then getting away with it (i.e., no immediate punishment). Such apathy toward their wicked works has encouraged them to abound in wickedness. The wise preacher knew, by faith, that such men will never escape the long arm of God’s justice. Though the wicked live a long life on the earth their eternity will be condemned because they “fear not before God.” While by the standards of man one is viewed as having a long life at 80 plus years; this is in all reality, a “shadow” of time in comparison to eternity.

3. Once again Solomon makes a connection between the true profit man is to seek after and the “fear of God” (see also Eccl. 3:14; 5:7; 7:18) (see study # 11).

III. Seeing that we cannot predict or calculate tomorrow’s events let us learn to be content and enjoy today’s Blessings (8:14-17):

A. “There is a vanity which is done upon the earth, that there are righteous men unto whom it happens according to the work of the wicked; again, there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous: I said that this also is vanity” (8:14).

1. Here is another vain and evil disease that the Preacher observes in life. Solomon observes that many righteous people suffer as though they had performed acts of unlawfulness and at the same time many wicked and unlawful men experience blessings in life as though they had lived according to the law of the land and God’s laws (see study # 1).

2. Again, while such events may not seem fair we must understand that God never intended for his creation to react in man’s perceived ideas of fair. Let us recall that the prophet Isaiah quoted from the Lord saying, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8-9).

3. Said events illustrate the manner in which God works. Heartache and sorrow come to all in different points of life so that man may be proved (see Eccl. 3:18; I Pet. 1:6-7) (see study # 5).

B. “Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be joyful: for that shall abide with him in his labor all the days of his life which God hath given him under the sun” (8:15).

1. Solomon had said that “there is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good in his labor. This also I saw, that it is from the hand of God” (Eccl. 2:24 see also Eccl. 3:12-13; 6:19).

2. The Preacher concludes that we ought to enjoy the fruit of our labor while we can because there are so many uncertainties in life. We know not when the day of theft, death, robbery, and adversity comes. Rather than waiting for these days in fear man ought to enjoy the present blessings of his labors.

C. “When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth (for also there is that neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes), then I beheld all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because however much a man labor to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea moreover, though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it” (8:16-17).

1. The wise king Solomon appears to be fixed on the idea of man not having the ability to calculate or predict God’s next move in an individual’s life. Though man may set out to know the providential work of God it is nonetheless impossible to predict or calculate (see study # 15). This is why Mordecai said to Esther, “who knows whether thou art not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14).

2. No amount of wisdom in a man’s life will advance him to the status of knowing God’s mind and timing of actions. I do not know what lies ahead of me tomorrow. God may deem it the right time for me to receive great riches, honor, and wealth or God may deem it a day of adversity and even death. I just do not know and in fact I will not be able to know while among
the living. Solomon’s conclusion is that a man should simply enjoy the good days while they are here.

Chapter 9

I. Issues of Life come to All (9:1-6):

A. “For all this I laid to my heart, even to explore all this: that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God; whether it be love or hatred, man knows it not; all is before them” (9:1).

1. What had Solomon “laid to my heart, even to explore?” Solomon had set out to “apply his heart to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven” (Eccl. 1:13; 8:9). Solomon wanted to know the “reason” for all things (Eccl. 7:25). His objective was to find the answer to the question posed at Ecclesiastes 1:3, “What profit hath man of all his labor wherein he labors under the sun” (see also Eccl. 3:9; 5:16). Man lives a life (some short and some long) (Eccl. 2:16; 3:2; 8:12-14), labors for sustenance (Eccl. 2:11), experiences heartaches, sorrows, pain, and sickness (Eccl. 5:17; 7:4, 10), suffers oppressions (Eccl. 4:1ff), seeks out things such as wisdom (Eccl. 1:13), pleasure (Eccl. 2:1), and happiness (Eccl. 2:3). All these things occur in life yet Solomon’s quest is to answer the question of why and what eternal good can come of these things? The Preacher said, “For what hath a man of all his labor, and of the striving of his heart, wherein he labors under the sun?” (Eccl. 2:22).

2. The Preacher has observed that some live good and others live evil yet good and bad things happen to all (i.e., there is no divine preferential treatment the righteous or discrimination against the unrighteous) (see Eccl. 9:1ff; 2:14; 8:12-13). When pain and anguish occur to the righteous as to the wicked one may scarcely know if God hates or loves them (see Matt. 5:45). Once again, as Solomon explained in Ecclesiastes 8:16-17, man cannot know the providential workings of God in their lives.

3. Note that Solomon writes, “and their works are in the hand of God...” Though man has no idea how and when God “works” in our lives (see Eccl. 8:17) He nonetheless has a working “hand” in our affairs (see study # 15).

B. “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 sacrifices and to him that sacrifices not; as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that swears, as he that fears an oath” (9:2).

1. Sickness, sorrows, joy, happiness, pain, suffering, good times, bad times, and death happens to every person (see Eccl. 2:14-16). No man is immune from both the ups and downs that come with living.

2. Truly, “All things come alike to all!” (see also Eccl. 2:14; 8:12-14). Whether one is good, bad, worships God, or does not, keeps his word, or does not; all things come to all. The providential events are controlled by God and it knows no prejudice.

C. “This is an evil in all that is 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” (9:3).

1. The preacher has observed some “evil” (things that do not seem fair) things in this life. He considered it evil that a man may labor diligently all his life and gain wealth and wisdom yet when he dies his portion goes to a sloth and a fool (see Eccl. 2:21). Again, the preacher notes that it is an evil thing for a man to gain much riches only to have them taken away by an “evil adventure” so that he has nothing to leave his son (Eccl. 5:13-14). The Preacher considered it evil that a man comes into the world naked, works hard and gains much, yet then dies not being able to take anything with him (Eccl. 5:15-16). Then again Solomon considered it an evil thing to be blessed with riches but die too soon to enjoy them (Eccl. 6:1-2).

2. The “evil” that Solomon observes here in chapter 9 is the fact that a righteous man may find himself suffering serious sickness, early death, sorrows due to the loss of a loved one, an unfortunate event that causes him to loose his life’s savings and all simply because he is a man
upon the earth. Such a one does not suffer because they are evil or good. The point is that anything can happen to anyone at any given moment.

3. A wicked man, whose heart is perversely mad up to the point of death, often experiences good health and prosperity all the days of his life. The righteous, on the other hand, often are found to be suffering. Something seems unfair in said cases yet with God there is no fair or unfair.

D. “For to him that is joined with all the living there is hope; for a living dog is better than a dead lion” (9:4).

1. Whether one experiences hardships or joyous prosperity the concluding matter ought to be gratefulness to be alive and experience the emotions of life (See study # 29; Thankful to be Given a Life To Live)

2. The dog is often viewed in the scriptures as a lowly and worthless animal (see Deut. 23:18; I Sam. 17:43; II Kg. 8:13). The lion, on the other hand, is the king of the jungle and prince among animals. Though the dog be the lowest on the scale of animals and the lion at the top the Preacher says it is better to be a dog and be alive than a dead lion.

3. Once one passes from this life it matters not whether you were king or vagrant you are now among the dead and can do nothing else on this earth. The living vagrant; however, continues to exists and enjoy this earth.

E. “For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. As well their love, as their hatred and their envy, is perished long ago; neither have they any more a portion for ever in anything that is done under the sun” (9:5-6).

1. Seems interesting that Solomon has looked at the benefits of being alive (see here at chapter 9) and being dead (see Eccl. 4:1-2 and 7:1) (see study # 29).

2. Solomon’s observation is that all events come upon all without discriminatory preference. While we live in this life we all experience various emotions, successes and failures. Once we pass from this life; however, all our “portion” of our labors are gone as well as the events of life. The dead do not experience love, hatred, envy and neither do they receive their portion (i.e., rewards for labors). Said things belong to the living.

3. That which the living have that the dead do not is “rewards” and “portions” in this life. Solomon is speaking of the life experience. Some conclude that death is annihilated from existence due to these verses. Let us recall two things. First, Solomon tells us that the spirit of man continues at Ecclesiastes 12:5-7 and secondly, Jesus tells us the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19ff) that we may know a bit about life after death (see study # 30; Eternal Existence).

II. Seeing that all will one day die let us enjoy the days of this Life (9:7-10):

A. “Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God hath already accepted thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let not thy head lack oil” (9:7-8).

1. Seeing that God’s providential works in a man’s life have no discriminatory aim and thereby all things come to all (even death) Solomon advises man to “eat thy bread and drink thy wine with joy... let thy garments be white... do not lack oil” (all statements that indicate blessings). We know that Solomon is not commending the consumption of alcoholic beverages because this would contradict other plain teachings from his pen such as Proverbs 20:1; 23:29ff as well as the NT apostles (see I Thess. 5:6-7; I Pet. 4:3). The word wine is not only used for intoxicants but also for pure grape juice.

2. Herein is a main theme of Ecclesiastes. Time and time again Solomon comes to this same conclusion. Enjoy life and one’s possessions while you can because this is God’s gift to man (see Eccl. 9:7-8; 8:15; 5:18-20; 3:12-13; 2:24).

3. The “life experience” seems to be under consideration in the phrase “thy works.” At Ecclesiastes 9:1 Solomon reveals that God’s hand is in the “works” of man in relation to things that happen to good and evil people. All things happen alike to all. God does not discriminate. The conclusion is to enjoy one’s “reward and portions” on earth. God accepts man’s work because He is the one who providentially deals each man a portion (wealth, honor, riches, sickness, persecution, death, etc.).
B. “Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of thy life of vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all thy days of vanity: for that is thy portion in life, and in thy labor wherein thou laborest under the sun” (9:9).

1. Solomon has, for the most part, considered “riches, wealth, and honor” man’s “portion that is a gift from God” (see Eccl. 5:19). Now; however, the Preacher adds one’s wife (i.e., love) to the list of one’s “portion” that God hath “given thee under the sun.”

2. Notice that Solomon continues to refer to man’s life as days of vanity (i.e., “lack of usefulness, worth, or effect; worthlessness or futile” (AHD 1337). The book of Ecclesiastes bears out the fact that all things pertaining to this life are worthless and futile as far as eternity is concerned. Though the events, such as love of a wife and the enjoyment of wealth, will have no purpose in heaven they do have purpose now (see Eccl. 3:1). Once again we are finding that it is ok with God for man to enjoy himself while among the living (this is God’s “gift” to man). Take the “life experience” and embrace it with happiness.

3. God will measure a man by how he handles his providentially given portions and rewards in this life. When hard times come gain patience. When prosperous times hit be thankful. When sorrows come turn to God for comfort.

C. “Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in Sheol, whither thou goest” (9:10).

1. Solomon has sought out the “reason” (see Eccl. 7:25) of why things occur to some people in this life. Here is part of the answer to the reason that a man should work hard and enjoy the fruit of his labors as well as his wife’s love. The next world has no such things. Once one goes to “Sheol” (the realm of the dead) there is no work, device, knowledge, wisdom etc. (see study # 31; The Realm of the Dead).

2. It seems that Solomon is revealing the thrilling thing about being alive. Life is truly a blessing in itself. One who never exists on the earth will never experience happiness, passion, and excitement. These emotions make it special to be alive (see study # 29).

III. Once again Solomon gets back to his discussion of “Issues of life come to all without Discrimination” (see 9:1-6) (9:11-12):

A. “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 favor to men of skill; but time and chance happens to them all” (9:11).

1. “Time and chance happen to all men.” Once again, we note that God’s providential care for man is not discriminatory (see study # 15). God does not allow one man to suffer anguish while another does not because of one’s race or religious background. One interesting part of the world we live in is that God allows things to occur to all. Consider an epidemic disease that strikes a country. That disease knows no sorrow, favoritism, or concern for its devastating work. The good and the wicked will be affected. Likewise, God seems to allow events to take place in all men’s life. A bank robber may happen to choose the bank that I work at to rob. I have found myself “in the wrong place at the wrong time.” My presence is innocent and good in and of itself; i.e., I am working for a living. Yet on this day I may be killed by someone whose life crossed my path. Time and chance, Solomon says, happens to all.

2. One may be a quick runner yet another runner shows up at the race to out run you. I remember my track coach once saying, “John, there is always going to be someone out there to beat you.” Where that person is and when that person shows up to a race is a part of time and change. Likewise just because a nation is strong in battle does not mean that they will always win. The wise and those of understanding hearts are not always the ones with bread and riches. There is no “favor” with God when it comes to the events of life.

B. “For man also knows not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, even so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them” (9:12).

1. Each man is a creative work of God. Once we are in this world we know not how the events of history will unfold. There may be a mass wave of wickedness during our days among humanity that causes God to act providentially to stop (i.e., such as the days of Assyrian and Babylonian
occupation of Israel and Judah). Many righteous people died not because they were wicked but because they happen to live during a time of great warfare.

2. We are thereby likened unto fishes and birds caught in a net to perish (not because of any evil done on our part we just happen to be swimming and flying in that particular area on that particular day in history). Herein is the fascinating part of living. We may find ourselves in painful parts of history and we may find ourselves in peaceful and prosperous parts of history. Whatever time and event happens God is watching our responses. Do we praise and honor Him with our obedience in times of pain as well as times of joy (see I Pet. 1:6-7)?

IV. The Excellency of Wisdom (9:13-18):
A. “I have also seen wisdom under the sun on this wise, and it seemed great unto me: There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built bulwarks against it. 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. Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man’s wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard” (9:13-16).

1. Through all the wise observations of Solomon he sees another injustice (evil thing under the sun). Solomon pictures a small city besieged by a mighty and powerful nation. There is seemingly no hope for the little city. Out of the poverty sections of the city’s society emerges a wise man that gives council to the little city and saves it from destruction.

2. The thing that seemed unfair is that this wise poor man was quickly forgotten after all the danger was averted. Solomon concludes that even though the wise man received no honor or riches for his work it is better to be wise than great in national strength.

B. “The words of the wise heard in quiet are better than the cry of him that rules among fools” (9:17).

1. Once again, Solomon deals in extremes. The fool is contrasted with the wise as quiet is on the other end of the sound spectrum than crying aloud.

2. The extremes are examined to illustrate the great gulf between wise and foolish words. A wise man’s words to one man are of more value than a fool’s words to a multitude.

C. “Wisdom is better than weapons of war; but one sinner destroys much good” (9:18).

1. While sword and shield may make progress in war a wise word may avert the war to begin with.

2. How can “one sinner destroy much good?” The man who continues in his sin because he looks for profit in this world destroys by infecting others with his contaminated ways (see II Tim. 2:16-18). Moses, time and time again, told Israel to be united in putting away evil from the midst of them so that others may not be infected (see Deut. 22:21) (see study # 33; The affects of Sin).

Chapter 10

I. Twelve Attributes of the Fool (10:1-3):
A. “Dead flies cause the oil of the perfumer to send forth an evil odor; so doth a little folly outweigh wisdom and honor” (10:1).

1. The Preacher has said, “but one sinner destroys much good” (9:17b). The “much good” that the foolish man of sin and folly “destroys” is now compared to finding dead flies in perfume. The flies destroy the whole batch of perfume and cause that which should smell good to stink with an “evil odor.” Even so one sinner can do much damage to the souls of not only his self but many others.

2. There are eleven attributes of the fool revealed in these first three verses of chapter ten (see study # 17; The Identity of the Fool):.
   a. The “sinner” of Ecclesiastes is the man who is identified as foolish (see Eccl. 5:1).
   b. The fool is one who lacks understanding (Eccl. 2:14; 10:3).
   c. The foolish are slothful in work habits (Eccl. 2:21; 4:5; 10:15).
   d. They are known by the multitude of words (Eccl. 5:3; 10:12-14).
   e. The foolish possesses little integrity (Eccl. 5:4-5).
   f. He lacks self control (Ecc. 6:8).
g. Does not consider the seriousness of life (everything is a joke / Eccl. 7:4-6).

h. The fool seeks profit from this world (Eccl. 7:5).

i. He is a lover of money rather than reason (Eccl. 7:7).

j. The foolish are known by their outburst of anger (Eccl. 7:9).

k. The Preacher connects the fool to “folly” and a “sinner” at Ecclesiastes 9:17b. The word “folly” is defined as a “lack good sense, understanding, foresight, an act or instance of foolishness... action or behavior considered immoral or criminal... evil; wickedness” (AHD 520). “Folly” is clearly defined as “wickedness” and “foolishness” at Ecclesiastes 7:25.

The Preacher had actually tried his hand at this type of living (see Eccl. 2:3) and found that “wisdom excels folly.”

B. “A wise man’s heart is at his right hand; but a fool’s heart at his left. Yea also, when the fool walks by the way, his understanding fails him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool” (10:2-3).

1. Solomon further distinguishes the wise from the foolish (see studies # 26; and # 17). The wise man directs his paths in ways of righteousness while the fool leans toward sinful living.

2. As the wise and fool walk through life all hear and see them and identify them by their actions. The fool is not only known for his sinful ways of sloth, anger, lack of self control, and multitude of words but he is also known for his lack of “understanding.” He is one who just doesn’t get life. He will say wrong things at inappropriate times. He will make evidence his folly through the acts examined above.

II. How to handle one’s self before a rash Ruler (10:4-7):

A. “If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for gentleness allays great offences” (10:4).

1. Solomon considers a ruler who has rashly responded to your act of righteousness in anger.

2. This verse helps us understand that though we must submit to the governing bodies that be we are not to emulate them in folly. At times a ruler may be upset with our good judgment; however, we are commanded to stand our ground in a gentle way so that he may reconsider his reaction (see study # 27). The word “allay” means to act in such a way that calms others and reduces their intensity. Truly a gentle approach to a potentially volatile situation can solve much.

B. “There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, a s it were an error which proceeds from the ruler: folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in a low place. I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking like servants upon the earth” (10:5-7).

1. Once again Solomon speaks of the “evil” things he has seen (i.e., things that seem unnatural, not right, or unfair) (see Eccl. 2:21; 5:13-16; 6:1-2; 9:3) (see study # 33; Unnatural Events). These events are not only “evil” or unnatural but Solomon pointedly refers to them as “error.”

2. It is not natural (goes against common sense judgment) for a ruler of a land to show dignity toward those who practice folly. Solomon states that he has observed kingdoms where the rich sit in low places and servants ride horses while princes walk around like servants. Can we not see that this is unnatural? We are to give honor to whom honor is due (see Rom. 13:7).

III. Apply Wisdom to Life (10:8-11):

A. “He that digs a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaks through a wall, a serpent shall bite him” (10:8).

1. Solomon delivers statements in these next few verses that illustrate the need for caution and forethought before working under the sun.

2. The man who digs a pit, if not careful, may fall into it and injure himself. The man who digs through a wall carelessly may be bitten by a snake.

B. “Whoso hews out stones shall be hurt therewith; and he that cleaves wood is endangered thereby. If the iron be blunt, and one do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength: but wisdom is profitable to direct. If the serpent bite before it is charmed, then is there no advantage in the charmer” (10:9-11).

1. Those who throw caution and forethought to the wind will find themselves injured when cutting stones or wood. Such a man may go to cut wood with a dull ax and thereby cause his labor to
be more intense than need be. One who charms snakes for handling will be bitten if he does not first charm the snake.

2. These short maxims illustrate the need for applying wisdom in one’s life. What good is it to have wisdom if we do not apply it in life events?

IV. The ways of the Wise and Foolish (10:12-15):

A. “The words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself” (10:12).

1. Solomon considers the words of a man in the next few verses. Let us recall that Jesus once said to the Pharisees, “Ye offspring of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34). Man’s station of life and spiritual condition is made known by the words he speaks.

2. The words of the wise are gracious yet the fool speaks words that lead to his destruction (he says whatever comes to mind no matter how inappropriate or hurtful it may be) (see study # 17).

B. “The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness; and the end of his talk is mischievous madness. A fool also multiplies words: yet man knows not what shall be; and that which shall be after him, who can tell him?” (10:13-14)

1. The fool is known by the multitude of his words and from start to finish he reveals his folly. Solomon says that when one listens to the words of the fool there is no telling what will come out of his mouth next.

2. Herein is a great “evil” in our society. The foolish speaks words of surprise and madness and everyone laughs. The more unpredictable and outlandish the words the greater the laughter. Let us recall that the fool is one who does not take life serious. Everything is a joke to him (see Eccl. 7:4-6). It stands to reason that those who laugh at this folly are just as foolish.

C. “The labor of fools wearies every one of them; for he knows not how to go to the city” (10:15).

1. Solomon has spoken of the fool’s work ethic as being compared to a sloth (see 2:21; 4:5).

2. When the diligent hard worker is placed next to the fool it truly is weariness to the soul. While I do all the work the fool sits back and watches.

3. There is not much one can trust a fool to do in the area of labor. He is so goofy that he doesn’t even know how to “go to the city” to get supplies or other things needful for work. The fool simply cannot be trusted to do much of anything productive in society (see # 17).

V. “Sundry Maxims” (truisms, proverbs, adages) (ASV Heading) (10:16-20):

A. “Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning! Happy 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” (10:16-17).

1. A land with a child (one of youth and inexperience) as ruler is a land destined for trouble within and without. The natural response of the citizens of a land ought to be sorrow and concern when a youth rules but gladness and relief to have an experienced ruler who has grown up in an atmosphere of national leadership.

2. Again, the natural response of citizens ought to be sorrow and anxiety when occupied by princes who eat and drink for sloth and drunkenness.

B. “By slothfulness the roof sinks in; and through idleness of the hands the house leaks” (10:18).

1. Here is another maxim of truth. A house with a sagging and leaking roof is a house filled with sloth and idleness. Some are too lazy to patch a leaking roof. They would rather continue their uninterrupted sloth than get a ladder, hammer, nails and fix the roof.

2. Solomon presses the subject of a work ethic throughout this book (see 9:10) and the shame of being slothful (see Eccl. 2:21; 4:5-6) (see study # 34; Work Ethic).

C. “A feast is made for laughter, and wine makes glad the life; and money answers all things” (10:19).

1. The foolish ruler (king) engages in feasts and wine which is indeed a blessing of life yet forgets the more serious aspects of his kingdom.

2. Sometimes people believe that money is the answer to all issues of life. This is not always the case. Money will not bring true and faithful friends and alliances without genuine character behind it.
D. “Revile not the king, no, not in thy thought; and revile not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the heavens shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter” (10:20).

1. To “revile” is to “denounce with abusive language” (AHD 1058). Though I see many problems in the realm of civil government leaders it is not right to “denounce them with abusive language.” We are commanded to respect and submit ourselves to civil governing authorities (Eccl. 8:2; Rom. 13:1ff) (see study # 27). There are times; however, when we will not agree with their decisions. Their decisions may be blatantly erroneous yet we are not permitted to “revile the king.” The Christian should never “revile” anyone much less the God ordained ruler of a land (see I Pet. 2:17).

2. Not only are we commanded by God not to do so but we also find that there may be harmful consequences for such an action. You may revile the king in the hearing of one who runs to tell the king what you have said. Now you are in big trouble with not only God but the king.

Chapter 11

I. Solomon admonishes man to push forward in life though outcomes lay within the Providential care of God (11:1-8):

A. “Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days” (11:1).

1. Here is another maxim (i.e., adage, proverb, or wise saying). Solomon connected “bread” to the “wise” at Eccl. 9:11 in relation to it not belonging to only one class of people. The wise may more likely be able to obtain bread; however, through labor. The preacher now recommends that those who have bread may “cast it upon the waters.”

2. It seems that the idea of a “portion” (the next verse at Ecclesiastes 11:2) carries the context to indicate an association between bread and one’s portion in this life. This is the eighth time Solomon has mentioned man’s portion from God. He has proclaimed man’s portion to be a reward for one’s labor (Eccl. 2:10, 21), God’s gift (Eccl. 3:13; 5:19), and he has said that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy it (Eccl. 2:24; 3:12, 22; 8:15). Some have greater portions than others. Some may have very little portions. Those with greater portions are encouraged to cast their blessings upon others less fortunate “for thou shalt find it after many days.” When one acts out of kindness one will receive kindness. I may not get my portion back but I will be satisfied in knowing that I helped one who was in need.

B. “Give a portion to seven, yea, even unto eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth” (11:2).

1. There are two possible interpretations of this verse. First, one may be wise to invest in a multitude of areas so that if calamity hits the earth the probability of loosing all is lessened (a diversified portfolio).

2. Secondly, one may follow the context and assume that the subject of benevolence continues. Rather than giving to only one who is in need give to seven or eight (i.e., a multitude of people). Who knows when a great calamity may come and you will be in need from your neighbors.

C. “If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth; and if a tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falls, there shall it be” (11:3).

1. The calamity that may potentially hit the earth is compared to “clouds full of rain that empty themselves upon the earth.” While God’s hand is in this calamity (see Eccl. 9:1) no man knows where the rain will fall and neither do we know what direction a tree may fall.

2. The point is that surely there will come times of calamity yet know one knows where or when. Why not be prepared is the point.

D. “He that observes the wind shall not sow; and he that regards the clouds shall not reap” (11:4).

1. Here is one who looks to the elements of winds and rain and is fearful to begin his work.

2. Solomon’s suggestion is to plan to work and then work. If we continue to wait for more favorable days they may not come. No sowing means no reaping and no reaping means no sustenance. Eventually one must get to the work (see study # 34).
E. “As thou knowest not what is the way of the wind, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the work of God who doeth all” (11:5).

1. Man’s ignorance in the affairs of divine providence continues to be exposed (see also Eccl. 8:17). We do not know when God will perform certain acts. “God’s workings” within man’s life is a mystery that occurs in the unseen spirit world (Eccl. 8:17; Jn. 4:24). One thing we do know is that God’s hand is in it all (see Eccl. 9:1) (see study # 15).
   a. Solomon has revealed God’s hand to be involved in the unseen world in areas of man’s calamity (Eccl. 11:2-3).
   b. Solomon has also revealed God’s hand to be involved in the unseen world in all areas of man’s life (Eccl. 9:1-2).

2. Man cannot truly know why winds blow and how bones grow. While science may predict these things and understand the chemistry of life events we do not have answers as to how this all came to be. We often sing the song, “Lord, I Believe” which states that God’s unseen hand is in it all (i.e., creation). We may only conclude that it was by divine will (see study # 35; Creation).

F. “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not which shall prosper, whether this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good” (11:6).

1. Solomon gives his suggestion seeing that man has no clue as to when and where God’s providential hand will move. Get to work!

2. Sloth has been dealt with in detail throughout this study (see Eccl. 2:21; 4:5; 10:15, 18). Solomon appears to address a similar issue here; i.e., the worrywart or pessimist. Here is one who will not work because he worries about things he cannot control. I may say, I do not want to mow the grass because you never know when it might pour down rain or I may be injured and so forth. Here is the mind that looks to things that could go wrong and thereby does nothing in the area of labor (see study # 34).

3. Solomon, on the other hand, reveals that man knows not how, when, and where the hand of God will move certain events in history to affect one yet this does not mean that man should sit back and wait for an adverse day to come. Every man, woman, and child ought to awake every day and take the punches life throws while keeping a schedule of sowing seed. Again, the worrywart that refuses to sow for fear of calamity will not eat.

4. Interestingly, Solomon had recommended caution and care when putting the axe to wood when going to work at Ecclesiastes 10:8-10 yet now describes the man who is overly cautious to a fault. The happy medium between these two extremes is that man should have the mind to work yet remain cautious in all his doings (see study # 34).

G. “Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun” (11:7).

1. Instead of being a pessimistic worrywart let us tackle life head on. Godly people ought to be happy, cheerful, and diligent in their work. Work today for tomorrows days of health and vigor will diminish day by day.

2. Let us recall that God intends man to enjoy this life (see Eccl. 8:15).

H. “Yea, if a man live many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many. All that comes is vanity” (11:8).

1. The man of God is instructed to work without fear or worry of God’s providential moves in his life (Eccl. 11:4-6). The man of God is further instructed to be cheerful and enjoy the sweet and pleasant things of life (Eccl. 11:7). Now, the Preacher concludes that a man, who has lived a long life, ought to rejoice in all the years God has granted him.

2. While rejoicing in the years of his life he too is to remember the coming dark days (likely the time spent in Sheol / the dark realm of the dead [see Eccl. 6:4-6; Job 10:21-22]).

3. The entirety of man’s life events is recognized as “vanity” in relation to eternal existence (see study # 1). Whether I have much or little on this earth will not be the determining factor as to where I spend eternity. Here are areas of indifference that man is to simply enjoy but never let take precedence over one’s spiritual life (see study # 36; Matters of Indifference).

II. Admonition to Enjoy Youth with a Spirit of Wisdom (11:9-10):
A. “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 thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment” (11:9).

1. Again, let us review the progression of thought. The man of God is instructed to work without fear or worry of God’s providential moves in his life (Eccl. 11:4-6 / The Thessalonians seem to have been doing this [see I Thess. 4:13 / II Thess. 3:10-12]). The man of God is further instructed to be cheerful and enjoy the sweet and pleasant things of life (Eccl. 11:7) (see study # 37 / see also Eccl. 2:24; 3:12, 22; 8:15). Thirdly, the elderly are to enjoy every day of his life knowing that his day of death approaches (Eccl. 11:8). Solomon has recommended that man enjoy and find happiness in labor (Eccl. 3:12, 22; 5:19), old age (Eccl. 11:8), and now youth (Eccl. 11:9) (see study # 37).

2. The young are admonished to have a cheerful disposition due to their appreciation of the vigor of youth. While joyfully appreciating their youth they are not to forget God’s will (i.e., lawful living). All those who live unrestrained by law will be brought into “judgment” (see study # 4).

B. “Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh; for youth and the dawn of life are vanity” (11:10).

1. Seeing that all will be judged according to their works the young are commanded to do two things:
   a. First, “remove sorrow from thy heart.” Sorrow may be caused by calamities faced. Though things may bring us down we cannot remain there. Life presses forward and there are many other experiences of joy awaiting us. Sorrow belongs to those who place their hope in this life (see Eccl. 7:5-7). When these people loose things on this earth that they have placed their hope in they are devastated. The Christian’s aim is heavenward and thereby when we loose things of this earth it matters little as far as the big picture of eternity is concerned. The only sorrow that should put the Christian in a spiritual comma is the sorrow over one’s sins (Isa. 57:15; Matt. 5:4; II Cor. 7:8-9).
   b. Secondly, the young are to “put away evil from thy flesh.” Evil behavior belongs to fools and sinners (see Eccl. 5:1; 10:1). The young are to control their minds. Let youth abstain from fleshly wisdom in the realm of spirituality.

2. Solomon concludes that being young is simply another form of vanity (i.e., worthless in relation to eternity). Being young and cheerful will do nothing for my eternal existence and is thereby labeled “vain.” Though vain, it is not without purpose (see Eccl. 3:1ff) (see study # 1).

Chapter 12

I. A Contrast between youth and old Age (12:1-7):

A. “Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;” (12:1).

1. There is an unfortunate break in the context by a chapter division. It is clear; however, that instruction to the young continues. Solomon has instructed the young to “rejoice in thy youth” (Eccl. 11:9). Secondly, Solomon has instructed the young man to be wise in that God will judge his every work (Eccl. 11:9b). Now, Solomon further instructs the young to “remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” People ought not to wait until they are old to begin serving God. Young people ought to develop a sense of conviction early on that will sustain their hope of heaven throughout their lives (see study # 38; Youth).

2. The “evil days” that are sure to come appears to be calamity in life (see Eccl. 5:13-14). Calamity generally comes to a man in adulthood and continues throughout life. The older one gets the less pleasure he sees in all existence. Such a one draws closer to heaven and eternal existence.

B. “before the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the stars, are darkened, and the clouds return after the rain; 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
shall be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the street; when the sound of the grinding is low, and one shall rise up at the voice of a bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low;” (12:2-4).

1. Apparently a description of old age is given by Solomon. The aged are likened unto a time in life when the skies are darkened with rain clouds.

2. All aspects of the aged man’s body are in decline. He “trembles,” his back begins to “bow,” teeth are few, eyes scarcely can see, and yet they awake early every morning.

C. “yea, they shall be afraid of that which is high, and terrors shall be in the way; and the almond-tree shall blossom, and the grassopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail; because man goeth to his everlasting home, and the mourners go about the streets:” (12:5).

1. Fear of heights and things that cause the legs to stumble occupy the mind of the aged. Their hair has fully blossomed into a gray color (the almond-tree blossom / likened unto our Bradford Pear blossoms).

2. The aging process goes on even to a point that a grasshopper is a burden (a light insect). Furthermore the aged man’s “desire shall fail.” Desire for marriage, relationships, business, labor, investments, and all things that pertain to this life. The time of youth has passed along with desire. Man begins to feel his life winding down and getting ever closer to “his everlasting home” (see study # 39; Eternity). A time of the aged person’s death is contemplated as “the mourners go about the streets.”

D. “before the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns unto God who gave it” (12:6-7).

1. Death is a time of being released from things valuable in this life (i.e., the silver cord) (see Job 3:15; 22:25; 27:16; Isa. 60:17; Zec. 9:3). Some explain that the “silver cord” is Solomon’s way of explaining a life line that connects the spirit of man to his fleshly body. When the cord is broken death occurs and thereby the “golden bowl” (man’s fleshly body) is ended.

2. Another illustration of death is a deep well (cistern) with a wheel, rope, and bucket attached at the top to fetch water. When the wheel is broken the pitcher (vessel used at the end of the rope to get water) falls into the well and is useless. So life is depicted as a once functioning entity that wears out and dies.

3. All things of age that wear out with use decompose and return to dust. Man, being created by God from dust, shall return to that original state (see Gen. 3:19).

4. When life has expired or run its course the body dies and the spirit of man goes back to God. Said verse indicates the dual nature of man and the fact that our existence is eternal (see study # 39).

II. Solomon Delivers the answer to his question posed at Ecclesiastes 1:3; 3:9 (12:8-14):

A. “Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all is vanity” (12:8).

1. Let us pause for a moment and examine “all” that Solomon reveals as vanity in this study:

   a. Solomon begins this study by saying that “all is vanity” (i.e., worthless / without value) (Eccl. 1:2). The Preacher reiterates this theme at Eccl. 2:17; 4:4; 9:9; 11:8 and 12:8.

   b. All works done under the sun (Eccl. 1:14).

   c. Mirth (Eccl. 2:1)

   d. Labor (Eccl. 2:11)

   e. The fact that all things happen alike to all men (Eccl. 2:15; 8:14).

   f. Leaving one’s inheritance to a fool (Eccl. 2:19-21).

   g. Materialism (Eccl. 5:10).

   h. The inability to enjoy one’s portion in life (Eccl. 6:2).

   i. Youth (Eccl. 11:10).

2. All these things are vanity (i.e., worthless) in relationship to my eternal abode. Man must learn to separate the joys of temporal living from the joys of eternal living.

B. “And further, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he pondered, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written uprightly, even words of truth” (12:9-10).
1. The narrator of this book contemplates “the Preacher” and his work. Solomon “pondered and sought out... many proverbs.”

2. Here was a man that observed his surroundings and recorded his observations for the benefit of others.

C. “The words of the wise are as goads; and as nails well fastened are the words of the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd” (12:11).

1. The “wise” has been identified in this study as follows:
   a. Bothered by sin (Eccl. 7:4, 19-20).
   b. Rebukes the erring (Eccl. 7:5).
   c. Patient in adversity (Eccl. 7:8, 14).
   d. Not soon angry (Eccl. 7:9).
   e. Understands and is able to interpret truths (Eccl. 8:1).
   f. Walks in paths of righteousness (Eccl. 10:2-3).

2. The “goad” was “an instrument for guiding oxen... it consist of a rod about eight feet long, brought to a sharp point and sometimes cased with iron at the bigger end, to clear the plow of clay” (Unger’s Bible Dictionary pp. 480). Wise words direct a man, like a goad, in the paths he should take. When we veer off course the words of the wise prick us back to the right ways. Words of the wise are also compared to “nails” that have been driven deep within the wood. Such security prevents items from falling. Truth will certainly keep the soul of man from falling into sin (see study # 41; The Nature of Truth).

3. “Masters of assemblies” would be those who taught the people truths at the days of holy convocations. These truth speakers attain their words by divine inspiration from the “one shepherd” (i.e., God) (see study # 40; Divine Inspiration).

D. “And furthermore, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh” (12:12).

1. Wise words of truth will guide the erring back to the ways of righteousness.

2. Studying religious ideas and theology is a weariness to the flesh.

E. “This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man” (12:13).

1. “The matter” under consideration is the question of Ecclesiastes 1:3 and 3:9. Solomon wrote, “What profit hath he that works in that wherein he labors?” The entire book has considered this question. The answer to this question is found in the book itself. Solomon has concluded that “all is vanity” (i.e., worthless and futile) (Eccl. 1:2; 2:17; 4:4; 9:9; 11:8 and 12:8). Though all is vanity Solomon has revealed that this does not render all works done under the sun without purpose (see Eccl. 3:1). Man is instructed to enjoy the portion that God blesses them with while on this earth (see Eccl. 2:24; 3:12, 22; 8:15). The joy of life and possessions; however, should never take the place or precedence over one’s objective to obtain eternal glory with God. How does one balance a life of godly living and the vain things of this world?

2. Solomon’s answer is that man would “Fear God, and keep his commandments.” Man evidences his fear toward God when gratefully submitting to His commandments (see Deut. 5:29; 6:2; Rev. 14:17 comp. to John 15:5-10).

3. The “whole duty of man” is to not only enjoy their portions on earth but they are to bring the name of Jehovah God glory in this life through their obedience to His will.

F. “For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (12:14).

1. Man’s “every work” includes all things done under the sun. The “good and evil” may include our labors, worship, thoughts, words, dress, actions, thoughts, etc.

2. Everything about us will be brought into judgment on that great and terrible day (see Eccl. 3:16-17; 11:9; Rev. 20:13).

3. The book ends with its readers having a better understanding of the short time we spend here on this earth. While we are to enjoy our portions that God gives us we are never to forget His prescribed standards that we shall be judged by. Man lives upon this earth now but shall live for eternity after death!