

Ecclesiastes

**Wisdom for daily life
in the
Quest for the Chief Good**

Printed for
LOGOS PUBLICATIONS
632 Burbridge Road, West Beach, South Australia 5024
by
Eureka Press Pty. Ltd.
56-58 Howards Road, Beverley, S.A. 5009

Foreword

We present this exposition of Ecclesiastes with the prayer that it may assist in the understanding of this often quoted but little understood book.

We have come to appreciate the difficulties that others have laboured under in their considerations because occasionally the meaning of the Hebrew is obscure and the English translations divergent.

We have searched for the background of Ecclesiastes and concluded that it is centred around Solomon's life and all his experiences. It has been possible to search into his mind and discover his reasoning as the Spirit has taken that man and taught him wisdom and understanding. The depth of his understanding of human nature as it was manifested in all his subjects is of great value to us as we grapple with our own personal problems in life.

The book is far from negative in its message. Whilst it reveals the fleeting frustrating nature of our existence, it also brings a clear sense of purpose to it. Solomon's understanding of the work of Elohim in the life of the saints is one of the gems within the book. Also of great value is the way in which he comes to understand this work. In this we may identify with many of his discoveries and learn so much more about ourselves.

The matter is presented in a format that will enable the reader to peruse it as a book or use it as a basis for verse by verse study and Bible marking.

Several major themes are evident within the book and we have summarised these for the reader's separate consideration.

Much of Solomon's message is based upon the first three chapters of Genesis highlighting the importance of these first principle foundations. The apostle Paul's use of the principles and language of Ecclesiastes throughout his epistles is a clear indication of the very practical advice and wealth of foundation material contained within its pages.

We invite the reader to share in the development of Solomon as Yahweh blessed him with wisdom and understanding. Temper this with the tragedy of his fall and rejoice with him in the discovery of the promised redeemer. The effect of this discovery upon Solomon filters through the latter chapters of Ecclesiastes, culminating in his conclusion upon the "Whole Man".

Contents

Foreword	3
Contents	5
Introduction	7
Chapter One	9
Chapter Two	14
Chapter Three	19
Chapter Four	24
Chapter Five	26
Chapter Six	31
Evil	31
Good & Better	34
Chapter Seven	35
The Living	37
The Dead	38
Things that are Better for Man: An answer to Ecc. 6:12 & 7:11 .	39
The One Among A Thousand	44
Chapter Eight	45
Chapter Nine	49
Chapter Ten	54
Chapter Eleven	59
Chapter Twelve	63
A Declining Man and His Household	65

Introduction

“*Whatsoever God Doeth — It Shall Be Forever*”

Ecclesiastes is the summary of Solomon’s findings concerning man and his environment, and the purpose behind it all. It was probably written near the end of his life (see Eccl. 1:12) as he looks back over all his experiences and learning. Although the reasoning in Ecclesiastes is profound, the basis is very simple. It considers two points of view.

- (1) What this life is like viewed as an end in itself.
- (2) What this life is like viewed in relationship to eternity.

These two view-points are interwoven throughout the book to give us a very clear picture. Life as an end in itself is vanity, vapour and nothingness, but life as a preparation for the Kingdom is satisfying, enjoyable and purposeful.

To help us to understand the message and background of Ecclesiastes we must discover what it was in Solomon’s life that led to his quest for knowledge. Ecclesiastes deals with the findings of a King who desired to understand the character of every subject in his Kingdom and how that character developed. It was his reason for wanting this understanding that secured Yahweh’s blessing upon him. This is outlined for us in 1 Kings 3. After Solomon was established as King, Yahweh appeared to him in a dream and said “Ask what I shall give thee”.

- v.5:** Solomon’s reply “pleased Yahweh” (1 Kings 3:5-14).
v.7: “I know not how to go out or come in”.
v.8: “Thy *servant* is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen”.
v.9: “Give therefore thy servant an understanding (Heb. *shama*: to hear intelligently, implying obedience) heart to judge thy people, that I may discern (*biyn* — mentally distinguish) between good and bad (re -evil, from *ra’a* to break in pieces, spoil).. “for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?”
v.10: “The speech pleased Yahweh”.
v.11-12: “Because thou hast asked for this thing and hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast asked riches for thyself nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but has asked for thyself

ECCLESIASTES

understanding to discern judgment: Behold I have done according to thy words — Lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee”.

v.14: “If thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days”.

v.15: Solomon — “came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of Yahweh and offered up burnt offerings and offered peace offerings”.

In this he sealed the covenant between himself and Yahweh. He was bound to his acceptance even as Yahweh was to His.

At the dedication of the temple that Solomon built, his prayer ascended, his offerings were complete. Afterwards, 1 Kings 9:1, Yahweh appeared unto Solomon the second time. Amongst other things he was told of the everlasting nature of the blessing of David and his house (v.5), and of the consequences of failure — in particular, what would happen if he turned and followed other gods (v.6-9).

With the blessing of an “understanding heart”, Solomon was to develop an understanding of every aspect of wisdom and folly that would influence every member of the Kingdom. But clearly, in the process he was not to become involved with the women of other nations and their gods.

In the book of Ecclesiastes we shall see the great tragedy of this man who discovered all aspects of human nature and its relationship to good and evil only to fail in the very issue that Yahweh warned him against (1 Kings 11:1-8). In his failure he was to discover the desperate need of all men and women for the Redeemer of Yahweh’s providing. This Redeemer would be seen by Solomon as the only hope for mankind that they might be restored to Yahweh and ultimately be returned to harmony with their environment.

Chapter One

“The Words of the Preacher, the Son of David, King in Jerusalem.” Solomon’s opening phrase explains the important place the Book of Ecclesiastes holds in his quest for “an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad.”

In the Book of Proverbs (Heb. mashal to rule), he shows how to rule the mind with the Word of God, that we might live the Truth in our daily life. “Wisdom is profitable to direct” says Solomon (Eccl. 10:10). True wisdom generates a “fear” of Yahweh as we discover His character and our contrasting weakness. This fear combined with a developing love of Yahweh generates a respect that avoids a familiarity and promotes an attitude that honours Him.

The Book of Ecclesiastes develops and gathers together the results of Solomon’s search for wisdom and the understanding of good and evil. It is as if we have been allowed to “sit in” on his thought-patterns and follow along with him until he comes to the conclusion of the “whole” matter (Eccl. 12: 9-14).

Verse 1

The “Preacher” is the Hebrew, *Koheleth*, from *qahal*, the equivalent to Ecclesia — the gathered or called-out ones — the assembly. Similarly, Solomon gathers or assembles his practical experiences in the Book of Ecclesiastes. It is the ability to gather together and coordinate his experiences and to also observe life from Yahweh’s point of view that makes this book so valuable, for it is the Word “given from one Shepherd”, even Yahweh Himself.

Verse 2

When he views his subjects and their lives, Koheleth discovers “Vanity of vanities” (*hebel* — breathe — vapour, emptiness) “ALL is vanity”, emptiness. The words of Solomon in one of his psalms reveals the same thing: “Except Yahweh build the house, they labour in *vain* that build it” (Psa. 127:1).

This phrase “Vanity of vanities” is a key expression and is used many times in Ecclesiastes to describe the utter emptiness of this life. How has this state of things come about? Romans 1:21 gives the answer: “When they knew God, neither were thankful; but *became vain* in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened”. In the transgression, the course was laid for the whole human race; the course of vanity or emptiness in a fleeting existence. In contrast see Yahweh’s view of the matter: Eccl. 3:14. This vanity is an interim measure until

ECCLESIASTES ONE

ultimately the Sons of God will be manifest.

But note: *all* is vanity. *All* becomes another key theme within the book. Koheleth not only gathers the words of his experience but finishes the Book by gathering *all* men into one in Christ. The terms “all”, “every” and “whole” are the one Hebrew word and the sense can be seen in the phrase “let us hear the conclusion of the *whole* matter, fear God and keep his commandments, for *this is* the whole man” (ch. 12:3). The Spirit expands the same theme in the New Testament. Here the phrase “the all things” is used to describe the complete man in Christ who has been redeemed and stands in relationship to the “*olahm*” (Ecc. 1:4) or the kingdom as “the all things” of Rom. 8:32; 11:36, or the fulnesses (*thummim*) of the breast plate of the High Priest.

Verse 3

What profit? Is there any real gain from a man’s labour? Koheleth’s mind is constantly exercised by this thought.

Under The Sun — The phrase occurs 29 times in Ecclesiastes. It indicates a limiting factor in a man’s life. This is why Koheleth’s perspective changes when he “sees the sun” (Eccl. 7:11, 11:7). The sun is a source of light like the Word of God. Light allows man to see a contrast between light and darkness, and between good and evil. Through this he gains a view of God’s work in filling the earth with His Glory.

When man views life “under the sun” he is unable to view the source of light and therefore is in a state of ignorance concerning God’s purpose.

Verse 4

Generations pass yet the earth abides *forever* (for *Olahm*).

Olahm — occurring 7 times in Ecclesiastes — is a period hidden or concealed (*Eureka* Vol. 1 p. 127). The promises to Abraham and David had reference to the *Olahm*. David, in his last words, styled the covenant Yahweh made with him “a covenant of *Olahm*” (2 Sam. 23:5). The Kingdom taken and possessed by the saints in Daniel 7:8 is styled “the Kingdom of *Olahm*”. This time of the Kingdom appears to be the *Olahm* of Ecclesiastes 3:14, “Whatsoever Elohim doeth it shall be for ever” (*Olahm*). This demonstrates that God’s Kingdom is paramount in all the actions of the Elohim.

Man is at odds with the earth which continues while he returns to the dust. Why is this? Man was made for the *Olahm* (for ever) with a mind designed for this in the beginning. He was created in the image and

ECCLESIASTES ONE

after the likeness of the Elohim (Gen. 1:26). But because of the transgression he finds life empty and frustrating without the Hope of the Kingdom and he quickly passes away. This is the theme Solomon develops in Ecclesiastes as he struggles to come to know and understand true wisdom.

“I know that whatsoever Elohim doeth, it shall be forever (for the Olahm): nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it, and Elohim doeth it that men should fear before him” (Eccl. 3:14). “He hath made everything beautiful in his time, also he hath set the world (Olahm) in their heart, so that no Adam can find out the work that Elohim maketh from the beginning to the end” (Eccl. 3:11). Transitory man (Adam) cannot find out this work. Only the Sons of God “begotten by the Word” (James 1:18), who “set their affections on things above not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:2), “whose life is hid in Christ with God” (v. 3), *can* “find out the work that Elohim maketh from the beginning to the end” (Eccl. 3:11). They alone *will* be able to stand or abide at Christ’s appearing (Mal. 3:2).

Verses 5,6,7

These verses demonstrate the attitude of Solomon towards his whole environment. Note how they can give two totally different pictures — depending upon the attitude of mind:

The Sun — Arising, going down, hasting, panting to his place where he arose — a weary cycle of life to death — or “as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race” (Psa. 19:5).

The Wind — Going, turning, whirling about and returning again. Either a weary cycle of life to death, or “As thou knowest not the way of the wind... even so thou knowest not the works of Elohim who maketh (all)” (Ecc. 11:5).

The Rivers — “ALL run into the sea, yet the sea is not full. Into the place from whence they come *thither* they return again”. Either a weary cycle of life to death — or “the king’s heart is in the hand of Yahweh, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will” (Prov. 21:1).

There is design in every work of creation to teach him who will respond, i.e. “the whole man”, all he needs to know of God’s purpose. But without the Word of God, he will never understand it. The water cycle (v.7) is one of the delightful examples of God’s dealings with man. There are those that Yahweh draws out of the sea of nations, by the warmth of the sun of righteousness and they will ultimately

ECCLESIASTES ONE

descend upon the subdued nations like “showers upon the mown grass” (Psa. 72:6).

But in his view of his subject peoples, Koheleth saw the burden experienced by all his subjects.

Verse 8

ALL things are full of labour — man (Adam) cannot utter (bring into order, subdue) i.e. he cannot overcome his weariness of life and bring about his own reconciliation with his environment.

The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing. Why? “Satisfied” (Heb. *saba*, fill to satisfaction). Because man’s senses of sight and hearing were designed for far greater things than his finite mind can absorb.

Verses 9-10.

The pattern of mankind’s life and his environment was established of “old time” (v. 10). The Elohim were involved both in the work of creation and in the consequences of the fall of man. Their work of filling the earth with the Glory of Yahweh will not deviate from its course and there is no new thing under the sun. Koheleth found a predictable pattern in every circumstance of life — past, present and future.

Verse 11

Yet man will not learn from the experience of others even when he knows there is a totally predictable pattern of conduct in human behaviour. So, to quote from Young’s Literal Translation, “there is not a remembrance of former generations and also of the latter that are (now) there is no remembrance of them with those that are at the last”. This generation is not mindful of former generations and those to come would not be mindful of the present generation.

Verse 12

This verse provides internal evidence of the time the book was written in the King’s life, as he looks back over his experiences.

Verse 13

Koheleth gave his heart to “seek and search out by wisdom”. Seek — tread or frequent. Search out — meander, reconnoitre. All is done “by wisdom” which he asked for from Yahweh, c.f. Chron. 1:10-12. Also see David’s prayer that Yahweh Elohim would give Solomon a perfect (upright) heart — 1 Chron. 29:19.

ECCLESIASTES ONE

To gain this type of wisdom a man must use his mind to think like the Elohim and this will generate suffering in a mortal man because of the intense conflict between flesh and spirit. When we look at the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, we see the arena of the greatest conflict possible — the “Word made flesh” — and appreciate the more what he accomplished. Elohim has given this “sore” travail (sore: *ra*, evil, from *ra’a*, to break in pieces) of Isa. 45:5-7. It is Yahweh that creates evil to “break in pieces the oppressor”; it has been *given* by Elohim to the sons of Adam to afflict (AV margin) them. Therefore there is purpose in the evil events of life that overtake us. We need to see them as a consequence of Adam’s transgression so that we are not satisfied with this life, but rather look for something better; and in discovering this in the Word, turn and repent and change our ways and so long for the Kingdom (Ref. notes Eccl. 6:1, “evil”).

Verse 14

All the work — action, done *under the sun*, is vanity — transitory and striving after wind or spirit, cf. Rom. 8:18-23. Koheleth sees all labour as weariness, Paul sees it as a means of revealing the Sons of God. There is purpose and design in it all and this is what Koheleth will ultimately discover as he develops his wisdom. Compare Eccl. 3:14 — It is all for the Olahm.

Verse 15

There are innumerable problems in life that man has no power to correct.

Verses 16-18

These verses describe how Koheleth found wisdom by experience and dedication, involving (v. 17) giving his heart to know wisdom and madness and folly.

“I perceived that this also is vexation” (Heb. *rayown* a desire “for spirit”). The expression “vexation of spirit” has the sense of feeding upon, grasping after, because the root word is *ra-ah*, to pasture, to rule, to associate as a friend (Strong’s). It expresses the desire to become part of that mode of thinking and life enjoyed by the Elohim but (v.18), that striving in man brings much grief and increases sorrow and anger. The frustration, despair and grief is brought about by the Sons of Adam not understanding God’s purpose with them. They are therefore in no position to understand the conflict and dissatisfaction with life they experience.

Chapter Two

Verse 1

Solomon now tries to get above the feelings of Chapter 1 by seeking “pleasure”. In all this he was searching for “what was that good for the sons of Adam” (v.3).

Verse 2

Laughter — *sachaq*, laugh in pleasure or derision. It is mad — *halal* to boast, make a show. Septuagint uses the Greek *perifero* — carried about in a circle. Mirth — *simchah* gleeful, festive spirit. All three words have the idea of escaping from reality. Nothing is achieved by this.

Verse 3

Koheleth seeks to draw the flesh with wine (AV margin) — yet at the same time maintaining discernment. If it befogs the senses perhaps it will numb reality and release man from all the problems of life so that he can gain satisfaction. So he wanted to seize folly (silliness), to possess it through wine, and yet still retain wisdom so that he should “see which was blessedness for the sons of man as to what they could do under the heavens during the number of the days of their life” (Roth). What a challenge! Compare with Gen. 3:17 where Adam was told that in sorrow he would eat of the ground “all the days of thy life”. Sorrow here is *istabow* meaning labour or pain. In Ecclesiastes Koheleth struggles to understand if there can be any benefits from the judgments on Adam in Gen 3:17. So he experiments with all facets of life “till I might see what was that good for the sons of Adam”. Refer also to notes on “good”, “better” in chapter 6.

Verses 4-11

He now turns to create his own world because he had seen from his own experience that creating a new world was the answer to overcoming the problems of the present one. During this work “my wisdom remained with me” (v. 9). Therefore he was the pivotal point in *his* wisdom in the work of *his* creation (v. 9). So I was great (Heb. *gadal* in honour and estate). Solomon became the El (power) of his creation, the El behind it all, cf. Isa. 45:22. Note the number of times “I”, “me”, “my” occur in v.4-11. At the completion of his creative work he “looked on all the works that my hands had wrought and all the labour that I had laboured to do: *and behold*, all was *vanity* and *vexation of spirit*, and there was *no profit under the sun*” (v.11). Compare this with the work of Yahweh’s creation (Gen. 1:31): “And Elohim saw everything

ECCLESIASTES TWO

that he had made, *and behold, it was very good*". The work of Yahweh's creation was very good for what it was designed. But whatever a man does, whether it involves his daily work, his creative impulses, the fulfilment of his desires — it can only be secondary to the greater work of the Olahm: the Kingdom. It is therefore transitory "vanity" and will show itself as inadequate as he searches for something better — "a striving after spirit".

Verse 12

So Koheleth turns to discover what all his subjects would be experiencing. How can he judge God's people without an "understanding heart, that he may discern between good and bad"(1 Kings 3:9)? This was his reason for beholding "wisdom and madness and folly: for what can the man do that cometh *after* the King?" The man that comes after can only do "wisdom and madness and folly". Human life involves the same issues for each generation. "Madness" — *howlelah* from *halal*, with the idea of making a show or boasting; "folly" — silliness.

Verse 13

He saw that wisdom excelleth, i.e. has the pre-eminence over folly — as far as light excelleth, i.e. has pre-eminence over darkness. Folly is absence of wisdom like darkness is absence of light. Koheleth had discovered a key principle of truth. In the absence of wisdom, folly will prevail. In the absence of light, darkness will prevail. The Hebrew words for pre-eminence, profit, profitable, *excelleth*, excelling are derived from one root *yathar* — to jut over or exceed and this is mentioned 17 times in Ecclesiastes. Related to this is the theme of *what is better for man*. It becomes one of his major investigations (ref. Eccl. 6:6). Koheleth starts by showing the instability of man's life in contrast with his permanent setting, then shows that man's strivings and fruitless effort may also be mirrored in his environment. This reveals the importance of our attitude of mind. If we look at our environment through the eyes of man, it will all appear transitory and dissatisfying. If we look at it through the eyes of Yahweh, the features of our natural world become the symbols of greater things, even His "eternal power and Godhead" (Rom. 1:20). In this, there is the evidence of wisdom excelling folly.

Verse 14

The wise man's eyes are in his head — he can "perceive" because what he sees he thinks about. But "the fool walketh in darkness" —

ECCLESIASTES TWO

his walk is devoid of the blessing of light because he does not have the advantage of wisdom, cf. Matt. 15:14, Matt 6:22,23. The fool is therefore without the sun. Solomon, having his “eyes in his head”, is able to perceive that wisdom doesn’t change “*the end*” of the wise in this life — “one event happeneth to them all”.

Verse 15

“Why was I then more wise?” — What then is the advantage of having wisdom if death comes to both alike? This is also vanity — transitory. We know that death is essential to declare the righteousness of Yahweh and the wisdom of a man still requires the vindication of Yahweh.

Verse 16

Koheleth is not referring to God’s righteousness at this time, cf. v. 17 — “under the sun”. He therefore declares there is no remembrance nor memorial for the wise more than the fool for “*olahm*”, because he knows that from a man’s point of view all will be forgotten and the wise dies as the fool. But note what the Lord Jesus Christ states in John 5:28 “all that are in the memorial graves shall hear his voice and come forth...” What a different dimension life takes on when we view it through the eyes of Yahweh.

Verse 17

Because of his limited view (under the sun) he personally hates life and his labour is grievous (*ra* — evil, from *ra’a* to break in pieces). But remember that it is Yahweh that creates evil — Isa. 45:7. (See notes ch. 1:13, 6:1). Solomon has found that his life has become his enemy and is “breaking him in pieces” thus defeating *his* objective. In understanding this he is now in a position to come to a true understanding of the reason for life. We all must come to see that without the light of the Word (the sun) all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Verse 18

His thoughts on life now turn to death — what will happen when he has gone to the grave? All the labour of his life becomes wasted because it *ends* in death. A wasteful exercise. He can’t take it with him; it would be left to the man after him.

Verse 19

What will that man be like? Did Solomon know what Rehoboam would be like as King? cf. 1 Kings 12:14-15. He would have dominion

ECCLESIASTES TWO

over all his labour and wisdom. There are benefits for Koheleth if a fool follows him and destroys all his labour. Having accepted that this could happen he now —

Verse 20

— deliberately sets about to develop a state of turmoil in his mind (despair, Heb. *ya'ash* to be no hope) over the effort that he has put into his life, still viewing “under the sun”. By doing this, he will come to know the turmoil in the minds of many of his subjects.

Verse 21

One of the greatest evils in life is to see a man applying himself to gaining wisdom, knowledge and equity (i.e. advantage or success), knowing that finally he has to pass the benefits of this on to one who has not applied himself in this sphere. The latter cannot therefore really appreciate the greatness of his heritage nor the benefits associated with it. This can happen within an ecclesia when one generation, applying itself to the Word of God and building up the ecclesia, can be followed by another generation that takes it all for granted and does not pursue wisdom and knowledge and equity. The latter therefore never comes to understand the sacrifices involved and may not fully appreciate the worth of the heritage. This has led many ecclesias to make shipwreck of the faith.

Verse 22

Both body and mind are involved in the “labour” and the “vexation of his heart”. What does a man gain if he is viewing his efforts without the benefits of the source of light? This applies equally to our work in the truth or our daily employment.

Verse 23

“All his days are sorrows (anguish) and his travail grief (angry vexation), yea his heart taketh not rest in the night”. Remember Yahweh blessed Solomon with wisdom and knowledge. To gain this blessing the sufferings would be great because there is intense conflict between flesh and spirit. He came to understand what it is like to spend a sleepless night in a state of turmoil — and concluded that it is vanity.

Verses 24-25

It is a God-given pleasure to enjoy good in our labour. The critical question is what is good? The only true good is that which God declares is good according to His Laws. Solomon is acknowledging that his

ECCLESIASTES TWO

ability to enjoy life is from the hand of Elohim. 1 Kings 3:13.

Verse 26

To a man that is good — *in His sight*, i.e. one who is judged good by God. Ultimately there is only one good in His sight: the Lord Jesus Christ, whose goodness is extended to those who are made “the Righteousness of God in the Lord Jesus Christ.” See also Notes on “good” in chapter 6.

Two classes, the “good” and the “sinner”, are revealed in this verse and Elohim “gives” to them both:

To the “good” man — wisdom and knowledge and joy.

To the “sinner” — travail, to gather and heap up that he may give to him that is good before Elohim. cf. Rom. 8:28: “All things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”.

Verse 26 is in parenthesis except the last statement — “This also is vanity and vexation of spirit”. This last statement is an overview of vv. 24-25.

Chapter Three

Verse 1

The scope of Solomon's enquiry involving man and his environment has been too small. His thinking leads him to consider another dimension — time as it relates to man and his environment. Time is abstract and like sin, faith, righteousness, mercy, love which are all abstract principles, it must be seen in action before we can understand it. So he looks at the practical issues of life *under the heaven* and finds that there is purpose (something in mind) and design in it all (vv. 11,14).

Verses 2-8

Koheleth finds that time is manifest by comparisons and gives examples of this in verses 2-8. How do we know that there is an appropriate time to be born and to die? We know by experience that there is a beginning and an ending to every action. It is also by experience that we know that the beginning and the ending are two limiting factors in our life (under heaven, v.1).

Man's life is full of change and examples in vv. 2-8 demonstrate the opposites encountered in life. It is as if life is dominated by reversals which cause him to lose the benefits of his labour (v. 9) and this is part of the "purpose" (v. 1) in the sentence of labour in Gen. 3:15. Man's fruitless travail or work, (v. 10) is the means of humbling him, (v. 10) that he might search for something "better". What is "better" for man is, in fact, his restoration to Yahweh.

The ultimate control of time is out of our hand. There is "the time to be born and the time to die" (v. 2 cp. Jer. 10:23). If we fight against the appropriate time, we suffer the consequences.

This is why Eccl. 8:5 declares "a wise man's heart discerns time and judgment". Note that when we get to Eccl. 3:8 there is a reversal of the sequence to end in "a time of peace". This reversal emphasises the message of v.11, for the future Olahm will be a time of peace.

Verse 9

What profit is there in all the effort we put into life? Will we always know when to do a certain activity or when to refrain? Can we always make the right decisions at the right time? The answer is "no" because we won't always be right! Time is an inflexible limiting factor which shows us that we can never achieve perfection in this life. It is designed that way because —

Verse 10

Koheleth saw all the work that is God-given, that Adam should be

ECCLESIASTES THREE

“humbled by it” (Young’s Literal). By work he should learn how dissatisfying life is without the Truth and how there are times to do things and he will sometimes fail to do them at the right time. This highlights man’s inability to succeed in his own strength and therefore should exercise his mind to consider the significance of the Truth contained in the following verses.

Verse 11

This verse is a key verse in Ecclesiastes and has already been referred to a number of times. It presents “the whole” or “everything”. “The whole he hath made beautiful in its season” (Young’s Literal). Elohim set the Olahm (“eternity” RV; “the world” AV) in man’s heart. We see this in all spheres of life as men strive after something better, greater, or more satisfying which always eludes them. Man was made in the image and *after the likeness of the Elohim* (Gen. 1:26). His mind, like that of Elohim, was designed to think on eternal things but the transgression caused alienation from the Elohim. The Apostle Paul shows in Romans 1:18-21 what happens when man loses sight of the Kingdom and becomes bound by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

How has God shown “what may be known of God” to man (v. 19)? The answer is given in v. 20: “from the creation of the world they are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made.” What is clearly seen? The invisible things of Him, even His eternal power and Godhead. So man is without excuse. He has the potential for godly thinking yet “they became vain in their imaginations” (v. 28). “Even as they did not choose to possess the knowledge of God, God delivered them over to a worthless mind to do improper things” (Diaglott).

Because of this it is not in man to lift himself above his fleshly thinking (Jer. 10:23). He cannot understand the work of Elohim from the beginning to the end. Man needs something external to himself to survey the works of Elohim; something to help him soar like an eagle with unbounded horizons, with ability to see from the beginning to the end. The Word of God is the only source of this knowledge. Without it man is frustrated and unfulfilled and his life is vain. The understanding of the goodness of God (His character) should help us to see what we are from His point of view, and what He is and is meant to lead us to the point of repentance (Rom. 2:4). For there will be a time of judgment to declare God’s Righteousness (Rom. 2:2-3, Eccl. 11:9).

Verse 12

The only “good” that man can have in this life is to rejoice and “do

ECCLESIASTES THREE

God" (i.e. manifest the character of God) in his life.

Verse 13

The "whole" man should enjoy (*ra'ah* — to have pleasure, in the sense of perceiving) the *good* of all his labour, because there is purpose in that labour. With the Word it is designed to help us to change. It can cause us to perceive Yahweh's purpose with us. But what should man "perceive"?

Verse 14

That whatsoever Elohim doeth it is for the Olahm. Contrast this with man in Eccl 2:14; whatever he does, because of mortality he leaves it to someone else and cannot enjoy it for ever. But with the Elohim "nothing can be put to it nor anything taken from it" i.e. we live in a totally ordered environment.

Verse 15

To God, past, present and future are all one; but to man the passing of time reveals his limitations and according to the "cosmos" of v. 14, it must have a purpose and climax. The climax is v. 15: "God requireth that which is past (driven away) or pursued (Young's Literal). The word "requireth" is to search out, especially in worship or prayer. What we have thought and done in the past, will reflect in our prayers and worship, and this is the basis of judgment. "By thy words (*logos*) thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:36-37). It is the investigative work of the Elohim during our life which will establish acceptance or rejection in the Day of Judgment. But it goes further than this. Man was "driven away" that he might not partake of the tree of life and live for ever (Gen. 3:22-24). Long labour ending in death became the lot of man (Gen. 3:19). This in itself would have no profit (Eccl. 3:9), but the Elohim are seeking those who will respond to the Word.

Verse 16

Continuing his line of thought Koheleth contemplates the theme of God's "searching out" in judgment. He now turns to judgment and righteousness in the world (under the sun) and sees frustration in the lack of justice. However, in his heart Koheleth knows that...

Verse 17

"God shall judge the righteous and the wicked", because in His arrangement and plan, there is a time for "the whole" purpose (what

ECCLESIASTES THREE

is in the mind) and the “whole work” there. The Hebrew provides “the whole” again here; cp. Acts 17:31 and notes in Eccl. 1:2.

Verse 18

God is putting men to the test to help them to see their own true nature, as that of the beasts. It is hard for a man or a woman to accept this fact and yet until they do there is still a tendency to think and react as if they are inherently good and can earn their own salvation. This tendency in human nature is critical and must be exposed and dealt with because it challenges Yahweh’s vindication in the sentence upon Adam and Eve and their progeny. Therefore the theme is now developed in the following verses.

Verse 19

Death is common to both man and beast: “man hath no pre-eminence (key word) above a beast.” The word pre-eminence comes from the same Hebrew root translated “profit” 7 times in Ecclesiastes.

Verse 20

“The whole is vanity (v.19).

The whole are going unto one place.

The whole have been from the dust.

The whole are turning back unto the dust.” — (Young’s Literal).

Man cannot in himself lay claim to any superior destiny.

Verse 21

Who knoweth “The spirit of the Sons of Adam that (exalts to the highest)” — J. Thomas. Man is striving to attain a position of elevation, yet he is frustrated in not being able to achieve this himself. This is the desire for the Olahm which was set in man by the Elohim in Gen 1:26 (see Eccl. 3:11). Without an understanding of the Word of God he cannot understand the reasons for his frustration because the answer is involved in the sentence of Eden. The human mind was fashioned after the likeness of the Elohim. This can only be complete or “whole” when it is thinking like the Elohim. Yet now, due to transgression, it is limited to the finite and associated with a God-defiant, God-dishonouring sin-stricken nature. *This is the Truth Concerning Man’s Nature.* Man is subjected to travail (Eccl. 3:10), to help him to perceive the first fundamental issue: the nature and mortality of man. This *must* be

ECCLESIASTES THREE

understood before a person can really be humbled and declare Yahweh's righteousness.

Adam understood this in the provision of skins of animals. Abel understood this in the sacrifices he offered, and demonstrated it in his own death.

Noah understood this in the waters of the flood which destroyed man. Abraham understood this in many aspects of his life, coming to understand Yahweh's strength and his own weakness — "fear not Abraham I am thy shield and exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15:1).

The animals cannot perceive this and hence look merely to the earth.

Verse 22

In his consideration of the subject, Solomon is not concerned with resurrection, judgment and blessing (for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?) but rather he is viewing this all through the limits of human life and that is why in v.22 he does not see beyond this life, and so says: "rejoice in your *own* works".

As his mind swings through the arc of life, he sees oppression (chapter 4:1) so that the dead are better than the living, because the living are suffering sin and its effects.

Chapter Four

Verse 1

Solomon now gives his attention to the results of man's striving. Can he achieve this elevation in his natural life *under the sun*? The oppressed have no comforter.

"Comforter" — *nacham* — *to sigh deeply, to pity, console.*

"Power" — *vigour.*

Verses 2-3

He praised the dead more than the living but "better than them both did I esteem him which hath not been" (RV). One not yet born, who has not seen evil and its effects is better than the dead or the living, because sin and its effects bring to the birth a grotesque creature (man) rather than the image and likeness of the Elohim.

Verse 4

What then did he see in the world? He considered "all" travail (the whole) and all the rightness of work. Therefore this work is the type that has been planned by God to draw a man to see the need for salvation so that he might gain "the olahm". It is designed to assist a man ultimately to see the sun thus changing his perspective in life. When a person pursues that "work" and achieves results it generates jealousy in others and therefore vexation or striving after spirit.

Verse 5

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psa. 14:1-3). So Yahweh looked "to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one". When he folds his hands together (cp. Prov. 6:9-11), the fool consumes himself. He does not even start to work so he never learns to be frustrated with this life, nor to see the need for redemption for the olahm.

Verse 6

Better (key word ref 2:2 and 6:12); to be content with an handful and gain the quietness of mind than become enslaved to work as a god and allow it to become an idol and end up by "striving after wind", with no real satisfaction.

Verse 7

Which ever way he turns he sees vanity under the sun.

ECCLESIASTES FOUR

Verse 8

There seems to be no end to work and on occasions there is no one to leave the benefits to. Then he discovers his true position (the third “neither” is only in the A.V and Vulgate). RV says “For whom then saith he do I labour and deprive my soul of good?” The character of Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, would leave any father in doubt over the future of all his own efforts. “This is also vanity, yea, it is a *sore* travail” — i.e. it is beyond the travail that is needed to lead us to seek God.

Verses 9-12

Two are better than one. The principle of the help-meet of Gen. 2:18. Two together can accomplish more work than separately. Two can help each other in times of difficulties. Two can help each other to keep warm. Two can better resist bandits. But there is even greater strength in a threefold cord; compare the examples of three together (2 Sam. 23:9,16,18,19,23; Dan. 3:16,17).

Verses 13-16

The Hebrew of these verses is difficult. Solomon appears to be considering a real situation taking place at the end of his days (refer chapter 1:12) with Jeroboam the son of Nebat and his own son Rehoboam. See 1 Kings 11:26-40. The poor and wise youth would be Jeroboam for whom Yahweh Elohim promised to build a sure house (v.38) and who had fled to the “prison house” of Egypt (1 Kings 12:2). The old and foolish king would be Solomon because he forsook Yahweh and worshipped Ashtoreth, Chemosh and Milcom (1 Kings 11:33). The “second child” of Eccl. 4:15 would be Rehoboam who associated himself with “the living” who walked under the sun (Refer notes on “Living” Eccl. 9). These “living” in Eccl. 4:15 would be those friends of Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:8-11) who advised him as though they knew nothing about the principles of justice and mercy. The RV translated v.15 in this way: “I saw all the living which walk under the sun that they were with the youth, the second”. However, in RSV, verse 16, “There was no end of all the people, he (the second youth) was over all of them (as a united kingdom). Yet those who come later will not rejoice in him”. Cp. 1 Kings 12:16-19.

Chapter Five

Life is not an end in itself and man cannot view it as such. He is not the pivotal feature of life. That position belongs to Yahweh. Man cannot exist without Him. When this is understood and remembered, our whole perspective changes. Even "striving after wind" takes on a new meaning when seen as being under God's providential care.

For the first time in the book Koheleth now addresses the reader, and from here on, personal exhortation is delivered directly to the individual. In all his considerations Koheleth has developed an affinity with every reader because he has discovered the common problems of every human being. To gain wisdom and understanding from the Bible we must identify with the subject matter. This personal identification with the Word of God was so evident in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ e.g. Heb. 5:1-10. Solomon desired this wisdom and understanding to rule God's people (1 Kings 3:9). It is this type of understanding that will enable us to rule over God's people as King/Priests of the future age. But we do not need to experiment with life. We learn from the study of the Word as did our Lord (John 2:24-35).

Providence now becomes a major consideration to Solomon as the Elohim are shown to be a dominant factor in life. He sees that there must be a personal relationship with the Elohim, an appreciation of their involvement in our lives.

Verse 1

The House of Elohim. We must appreciate the importance of being in the House of Elohim. Paul advised Timothy "that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the House of God which is the *Ecclesia of the Living Deity, the pillar and stay of the Truth* (1 Timothy 3:15) and gave necessary instructions for those who would serve in that House. Heb. 3:6 tells us that we are the house of Christ *if we hold fast the hope*. Then the Elohim are with us. Our worship must be with reverence. Keep (*shamar* — guard) your "walk" when you go to the House of Elohim. Be more ready to hear (RSV: draw near to listen), because knowledge brings responsibility and therefore the potential for blessing. Sacrifice is *zebek* slaughter, and is normally associated with the peace offering which speaks of fellowship. But fools are morally deficient and "know not" (RSV) that they do evil.

Verse 2

"Rash" — *bahal* — alarmed or irritated. A word spoken in

ECCLESIASTES FIVE

uncontrolled emotion is dangerous when associated with a vow or prayer. Prayer should be the product of a dedicated life with an awe-some regard for Yahweh. It is spoken before the Elohim, v.4. Their thoughts are exalted and they observe our every thought and action. Becoming aware of this should make us much more sensitive in our use of the privilege of prayer.

Verse 3

A dream is often associated with the pressure of life, and is muddled thinking. A fool with his multitudes of words is like a dreamer, confused. Clear thinking, understanding of the Word and honesty in our thoughts are all prerequisites to a prayer where an undertaking is made.

Verses 4-5

When we make an undertaking to God, it is a "vow to Elohim". We therefore have a very personal involvement with them. Our prayers to the Father are known by the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Elohim. The Elohim are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation". The "house of Elohim", or the place where Elohim dwell, is our life. They are always there as Jacob found out: Gen. 28:16-17.

Verse 6

A man's mouth can bring his whole body to sin because there is guilt in not doing what he said he would do. A word spoken hastily, without care or forethought of its consequences, is still binding (cf. Gen. 20:13 with Abraham and Sarah). It is no use saying to the angel "it was an error" (I made a mistake). C.f. Num. 15:22-31 on sins of ignorance. Elohim will be angry at the excuse and destroy the works of the hands. Therefore man's labour in life would be in vain. It is like rejection at the judgment seat of Christ. "Lord... have we not prophesied in thy name... and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:22-23). The comments of Eccl. 5:6 show how personally involved the Elohim are in our life and how they are affected by our thoughts, speech and actions.

Verse 7

There is great danger in overdoing labour in daily business (cf. v.3) in contrast to labour in the Truth. The multitude of business of v. 3 causes pressures of such a magnitude that befuddled thinking and

ECCLESIASTES FIVE

“dreams” are the result. With the mental pressures comes a desire to escape reality by running into an unreal dream world. In this state of mind, uncontrolled by the Word of God, the understanding of all things in life, including the Truth, will be based on how we feel and think rather than what the Word of God declares. All this is vanity — emptiness, and through this lack, our prayers and vows may well become the vehicles of our own destruction at the end.

“But fear thou Elohim” — Some one who holds Elohim in awe is also humbled by that awe. But one who inflates his own importance with a pride that apes humility, only indulges his own emotions and cannot offer anything acceptable to God. How can we overcome this? It is either by the process of fleshly determination or dominion (rada-subjugation), or rulership of the mind (mashal) by the word of Gen. 1:26,28 and Gen. 3:16. It should be the latter.

Verse 8

As the theme of Elohim revolves around Solomon’s mind, he looks at their all-seeing ability to know the hearts of men, and advises the reader not to have consternation at all the unrighteous acts of man. The Elohim see it all and Yahweh is higher than they. Don’t think that God does not see what is going on in the world.

Verse 9

Moreover the profit of the earth is for *all* who will be King-Priests of the future Age (the whole man class). It is for this reason that the corrupt practices of man are allowed to continue that they might develop character in the “all” class. “The King is served by the field”. This is the King’s final blessing which began in the field being prepared and sown in hope. The world is like a field (Matt. 13:38). That is why the world is shown as groaning and travailing together until now — waiting for the adoption, i.e. the manifestation of the Sons of Deity (Rom. 8:19-23). So the benefits from the field are finally handed to the King and the final blessing will be given to the King-Priests of the future age — “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28). The final consummation is behind every action of the Elohim.

Verse 10

“Loveth” (*ahab* — have affection for) silver and abundance with increase, shall not be satisfying. The olahm is the only thing that can satisfy and without the olahm as the goal, all desire is futile.

ECCLESIASTES FIVE

Verse 11

“Silver and increase cannot satisfy because they bring the burden of “who will benefit?” and the beneficiaries increase. The only satisfaction then is to see them with the eyes. This can only satisfy the propensities, not the intellect and moral sentiments.

Verse 12

The labouring man can be satisfied with little or much because he has rest of mind, whereas the turmoil of mind in the rich will bring pressures which will stop him from relaxing and being restored in sleep. “A rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matt. 19:16-26). It is difficult for him to cast off the burden in order to be renewed.

Verse 13

“Sore evil” — translated “wicked” in Jer. 17:9. Evil is brought upon men by God (Isa. 45:7). Refer to notes at Ecc. 6:1 on “evil”. Solomon’s assessment of this evil and its effects is done without the advantage of perceiving the source of light — “under the sun”. This particular “sore evil” is when a man is hurt by the riches he has gained.

Verse 14

“Those riches perish by evil travail.” Note the difference between the travail of Eccl. 3:10 which is designed to humble a man, and the evil travail of Eccl. 5:14. This travail, being “evil”, has the effect of breaking in pieces and crushing a person. It speaks of a man who hoards and gathers only to lose all and leave nothing to his heir.

Verse 15

He begins life with nothing, amasses goods to himself during his life, loses them and can take nothing with him as he goes to the grave. What then is the purpose of it all?

Verse 16

This also is a “sore evil” because he has not learnt anything out of all his experiences — “In *all points* as he came so shall he go: what did he gain for all his labour *for the spirit (ruach — wind)?*” Bro. Thomas, in *Elpis Israel*, described the spirit as the “instrumentally formative power”. This man’s life has been wasted and he has not fulfilled the purpose of God in him.

Verse 17

He suffers true sickness because “all his days he also eateth in dark-

ECCLESIASTES FIVE

ness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness". This unteachable man can't see the true issues of life because of the "blindness of his heart". The Lord Jesus Christ advised of such: "leave them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind" (Matt. 15:14). There are so many who suffer the consequences of transgression and yet fail to see the purpose in it all. They are the class that Paul speaks about in Eph. 4:18 — "Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart". In contrast to the man who lives in ignorance Koheleth now invites the reader to "behold that which I have seen" (v.18).

Verses 18-19

"It is *good* and comely (beautiful) for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the *good* of *all* his labour he taketh under the sun, which Elohim giveth him: for it is his portion". Goodness is the manifestation of Yahweh's character. When a man sees this goodness and beauty in his life "under the sun" the contrast with the wickedness of his fellow man will be obvious. This "goodness" of God leadeth to repentance (Rom. 2:14) and it is man's "portion" or inheritance that is granted to him only if he responds to God's goodness. Eventually it will cause him to lift his eyes to "see the sun" (Ecc. 11:7).

Elohim are shown to be closely associated with man in his daily life. Not with man generally, but rather with a particular class of man: the "every man" of verse 19, is the same as "the whole man" of Ecc. 12:13. It is to this class that Elohim has given riches and wealth and also the power (by implication, permission) to eat and to take his portion or inheritance, and to rejoice in his labour.

This is the gift of Elohim. There is a joy in the work of the Truth, the riches and wealth of the world and the power to devour them is a God-given privilege. Let us make sure that we look upon the "riches and wealth" of this world's goods as but a parable of something far greater. This will help us to keep the true perspective in all matters pertaining to life. Remember, it is only the "whole or every" man class that is in a position to appreciate this.

Verse 20

Young's Literal: "For he doth not remember the days of his life for God is answering through the joy of his heart"; (RSV): "for God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart". It is from Elohim that we are happily occupied, and who controls the work of the Elohim now? The Lord Jesus Christ is now in control — "all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18).

Chapter Six

In contrast to "that which is good and comely" of Eccl. 5:18-20 and the joy of our work in the Truth, Solomon further considers the position of the person who has been given the blessings of life by the Elohim but not the ability to enjoy those blessings. How important it is that we do not take our blessings and our enjoyment of them for granted!

Verse 1

Again Solomon describes this situation as an evil he has seen "under the sun". "It lies heavy upon Adam" (RSV).

Evil

Evil — Heb. *ra* from *ra'a*, to spoil by breaking to pieces. The Hebrew word occurs 31 times in Ecclesiastes. It may be used in a natural or moral sense. The ability to discern between good and bad (evil) was one of the requests that Solomon made to Yahweh — 1 Kings 3:9. Refer notes Eccl. 1:13.

Extract from *Elpis Israel* p. 126

'Sin and evil are as cause and effect. God is the author of evil but not of sin; for the evil is the punishment of sin. "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I Yahweh, do all these things" (Isa. 45:7). "Shall there be evil in a city and Yahweh hath not done it?" (Amos 3:6). The evil to which man is subjected is Yahweh's doing. War, famine, pestilence, flood, earthquake, disease, and death, are the terrible evils which God inflicts upon mankind for their transgressions. Nations cannot go to war when they please, any more than they can shake the earth at their will and pleasure; neither can they preserve peace when He proclaims war. Evil is the artillery with which He combats the enemies of His law and of His saints; consequently there will be neither peace nor blessedness for the nations, until sin is put down, His people avenged, and truth and righteousness be established in the earth'.

When the word 'sore' or 'disease' is used with the word 'evil', it extends the meaning to also include the end result of evil. Sore or disease — Heb. from *chalah* means to be worn, weak, sick, afflicted. It therefore involves a pulling apart, which ends in weakness and wearing out, because it involves mental anguish. When the human mind suffers, conflict becomes far deeper than mere physical pain. It involves the breaking of human pride and reveals the weakness of human nature and its inability to heal itself. This breaking down process is in all flesh. In contrast, while he still suffers in the flesh, one who has the Olahm in his heart, and who dwells upon the Things of the Kingdom and the Name, will eventually be "rebuilt" when the Lord Jesus Christ returns and establishes the Kingdom of God.

ECCLESIASTES SIX

Verse 2

This evil that lies heavy upon Adam involves the man (*ish*) to whom Elohim hath given everything he would need in life (lacking nothing) yet he has not been given the power to eat thereof. The phrase “of all that he desireth” indicates that he is living for the present and has not really set his heart on the Kingdom. No wonder the Elohim are working in his life to change him. Look at the results — there is no response — and a rich man apparently dies young, with no man to be heir. A stranger takes his estate. This involves the same principles as Matt. 13:12 — “but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath”.

Having considered the evil that crushes a man in an early death without his turning back upon God, what about a man who lives to an old age?

Verse 3

This man has “not a burial” (Young’s Lit.), i.e. death is deferred and he lives on and on. A still-born child has an advantage over him if his life is not “filled with good”, i.e. filled with the knowledge of God and His purpose.

Verses 4-5

The still-born child comes in with nothing and departs in darkness. Its name (or memorial — *shem*) is covered in darkness. As it has not “seen the sun” and is ignorant of God’s saving Truth, this child has no knowledge and therefore no responsibility. There is no memorial grave to be called from at the return of the Lord. It is better for this child than for the man Koheleth has been considering because —

Verse 6

— this man having lived twice as long as the longest living man (Methuselah, Gen. 5:27) would have gone through all the agony of the creation groaning and travailing (Rom. 8:22) without any hope of his ever coming to spiritual rebirth because he has not seen above his own selfish life and come to know the purpose of it all. That man has not seen the only “good” that will give satisfaction, which is the Truth understood and believed.

Verse 7

“All the labour of Adam is for his mouth” of Gen 3:19. The purpose of this labour is to bring home the lessons of Gen. 3:19 by daily reminding him that he needs continual feeding, and that lasting

ECCLESIASTES SIX

satisfaction from his labour cannot be obtained by his own efforts — a very important lesson; c.f. Deut 8:3!

Verse 8

“What advantage hath the wise more than the fool?” (R.V.) Much more! Wisdom has the power to overcome folly as light can overcome darkness. See notes on ch. 2:13.

“What hath the poor, that knoweth to walk before the *living*”? (*chay*). *Chay* is translated in Ezek 1:20,22; 10:15; 17,20 as the “living creature”. These living creatures are representatives of the saints in their state of glory as vehicles of God Manifestation. To “walk *before* the living creature” is to walk as a counterpart to the living creature. It is the light of the knowledge of the Word which will cause the “poor” or “afflicted in spirit” to walk as counterparts now to the living creatures of Ezekiel 1. Then, in the time to come, they will be “the living creatures” as part of the Lord Jesus Christ manifest in glory with His saints.

Verse 9

“Better is the sight of the eyes” — In the time of the Lord, he accused the disciples of having eyes but not seeing (Mark 8:18). This was because they did not perceive the spiritual importance of his message.

“Than wandering of the desire”. The people of Noah’s day allowed their imagination to wander into paths of continual evil (Gen. 6:5). They lived in an unreal world in contrast to the substance of Noah’s faith (Gen. 6:8 and Heb. 11:1,7). Thus they were brought to destruction. This reveals the ever present danger for all the human race. The heart of man is deceitful above all things and will inevitably lead him to an inheritance of vanity and striving after wind. That is why Koheleth now draws our attention to the nature of man.

Verse 10

Roth: “Whatsoever one may be, long ago was he called his name and it is known that it is sons of earth”. Sons of earth certainly cannot contend with those stronger than them, i.e. the Elohim. What a contrast between the name of “the sons of earth” and that of the sons of Yahweh; “Thy Name is called upon us” (Jer. 14:9). See also Eccl. 7:1.

Verse 11

In thinking of man’s inability to contend with the Elohim (v.10) Koheleth acknowledges that many *words* increase vanity. Arguing

ECCLESIASTES SIX

against the work of Elohim will not satisfy man or improve him. Adam and Eve learnt this lesson the hard way in Gen. 3.

Good & Better

Good or better — Heb. *towb*, is used 51 times in the book of Ecclesiastes. It was one of the qualities that Solomon desired to discern when he sought Yahweh's blessing, 1 Kings 3:9. In his quest for discernment, Solomon asked "who knows what is good for man in life?" (Eccl. 6:12). God alone can provide the answer to this question because "goodness" is one of His qualities. What is "better or good" for man will undoubtedly provide him with the means of redemption. C.f. Heb. 7 —

- * The Better Hope
- * The Better Covenant
- * The Better Promises
- * The Better Sacrifice
- * A Better Resurrection
- * A Better and Enduring Substance

Verse 12

Who then knows what is good for man (Adam) in this life — this vain life of fleeting moment? And who can tell man (Adam) what shall be after him under the sun? It is God who can tell Adam what shall be. Faith in God can turn the "shadow" of man's life into substance (Heb. 11). But has man the mind to hear, or will he challenge God and reject His Word? "Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my words" (John 8:43).

Rather than challenging God, it is better to face reality and listen to His Word. Through this, our thinking and character may be developed to become more like that of the Son of God. Eventually we will become part of the family of God and be named with His Name. What then is *good* for man in this life? The question is answered in Eccl. 7.

Chapter Seven

Verse 1

There is a Name which is better than precious ointment. It is the family Name of Yahweh which tells us of the future and answers the question of ch 6:12. This Name is good and brings good to those who bear it. Man has a choice. He either puts on this saving Name through baptism into the Lord Jesus Christ *or* he maintains his links with the Adam (ch. 6:10) sharing its inheritance of sin and death.

Solomon considers this “good or better” name with a play on words to emphasise the point. The Hebrew for *good* and *better* is the same (Refer to notes at Ch. 6:6). We have a better Name than Adam and that Name is better than the precious ointment used to anoint a prophet, priest or king consecrating him to his office. This Name consecrates us to the role of Kings and Priests in the Age to Come. The Lord Jesus Christ obtained this “more excellent name” by inheritance (Heb. 1:4). Through him we too can become inheritors of the Name. That Name is the name of the whole family of Yahweh both in heaven and earth (Eph. 3:14-15). The fragrance of the good ointment becomes apparent only at the culmination of the work of the Apothecary. Likewise the Name speaks of character developed, and is the memorial of the person who bears it. This is illustrated in Song of Sol. 1:3, “Because of the savour of thy good ointment thy name is as ointment poured forth.” We are shown an example of this in the case of the woman with an alabaster box of very precious ointment who anointed Jesus for his burial. The Lord declared, “Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a *memorial* of her” (Matt. 26:13). To be true bearers of the “better” memorial Name of Yahweh we must live up to that Name, think upon the Name and fear the Name (Malachi 3:16).

The day of death is better than the day of one’s birth, because then our probation is over and Yahweh is vindicated or declared righteous. The “Name” is established awaiting the Resurrection and the Judgment at which time the “Name” will be declared as either Adam or Yahweh.

Verse 2

Because of the nature of our probation, it is “better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting”. Mourning helps to reveal life in its true perspective; it involves the “end of all Adam”. But the house of feasting is a house of escapism from reality.

ECCLESIASTES SEVEN

In the house of mourning, there are great lessons to impress the mind of a certain class of people called "*the living*". These people are the same class as those of the better name. These living will take it to heart.

The Living and The Dead.

The phrases 'the living' and 'the dead' speak of two classes of people.

Living: (Heb. chay — living creature,) c.f. Ezek 1:5, "they had the likeness of a man". Refer to notes at Ch. 6:8.

Dead: (Heb. muth — relates to the whole process of death of Gen. 2:17 A.V. margin). This process culminates in dissolution into dust of the earth. The two classes are both considered in Eph. 2:1-7. Here they are termed 'the quickened' and 'the dead in sins'.

Verse 3

Continuing the lessons from life, Solomon now considers sorrow (or vexation or anger, these words can all be translated from Heb. *kaas*) to be better than laughter. These emotions of sorrow and anger are both due to vexation and often sorrow is expressed in anger. Both reveal a person's insecurity and desperate need for comfort, guidance and support. They can be turned to advantage or as in v.9 they can be the reaction of fools. The Lord understood the depth of this need in his disciples when he said: "And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John 16:22). This comfort and support provided by the Lord was typical of the comfort that Yahweh has always extended to His children who turn to Him. In contrast, *laughter* (cp ch. 2:2) is often used to 'cover up' fears and inadequacies.

Verse 4

The wise faces mourning, whereas the fool will not face anything. There is a great lesson in this. What appears to be unattractive, i.e. mourning, will in fact bring deeper satisfaction because it outworks itself in deep soul-searching. As the wise comes to know the benefits of soul-searching he desires to share them with those that need direction. Solomon continues —

Verses 5 & 6

"It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise than for a man to hear the song of fools". The rebuke of the wise has substance and purpose. The song of fools is empty and powerless to change a person's way of life back to God. In fact it leads to self-indulgence with a quick destruction of moral standards and does not consider the feelings of others. The

ECCLESIASTES SEVEN

quick response to avoid facing reality, and the joke, when we feel the discussion biting at us, all end in emptiness. This is like the twigs placed on the fire to boil the pot. They quickly consume away and have accomplished nothing.

The Living

- * There is a book of 'the living' from which we may be blotted out (Psa. 69:28 c.f. Phil 4:3, Rev. 3:5, Rev. 20:12 & 15). The book is used for judgment.
- * Aaron stood between 'the dead' and 'the living' with incense and the plague was stayed (Num. 16:48).
- * El enlightens with the light of 'the living' to bring man back from the grave (Job 33:29-30).
- * We may walk before Elohim in the light of 'the living' (Psa. 56:13).
- * Yahweh satisfies the desire of every 'living creature' (Psa. 145:16) and they are those who fear Him (v. 19).
- * 'The living' which are yet alive suffer oppression (Ecc. 4:1-2).
- * Some of 'the living' may walk *under the sun* (Eccl. 4:15), i.e. they may walk without continuing to 'behold the sun' and although they were once enlightened they are now walking inconsistently with their calling.
- * Knowledge causes the poor (i.e. the afflicted in spirit) to walk as a counterpart to 'the living' (refer notes Ecc. 6:8).
- * In the house of mourning, the end of all Adam is seen and 'the living' will lay it to his heart (Ecc. 7:2).
- * To him that is joined (i.e. Heb. *bachar* — to be tried for selection), to all 'the living' there is hope (Ecc. 9:4).
- * 'The living' know that they shall die (Eccl. 9:5).
- * The purpose of the prophetic word is that 'the living' may know that the Most High ruleth in the Kingdom of Men and giveth it to whomsoever He will (Dan. 4:17).

Verse 7

When reality is avoided and we refuse to change from a wrong direction, our moral values may change instead, so that right appears to be wrong and wrong appears to be right. Then moral corruption will take its toll. "Surely oppression (extortion) maketh a wise man mad; and a gift destroyeth the heart". It deprives a wise man of reason, and being trapped in the wrong he soon gains the feeling of oppression if he does not acknowledge the wrong and repent — c.f. David concerning Bathsheba (Psa. 32 and 51). Roth: "A bribe destroys the understanding". In this we are shown a person who has not accepted the work of Yahweh Ropheka, The Healer, with His power to humble and redirect a person's life that he might be restored. Taking matters into his own hands, he manipulates people with bribes and destroys any hope of

ECCLESIASTES SEVEN

understanding the hand of Yahweh at work. He does not see the value in the serious things so far considered in these verses which are now developed further.

Verse 8

There are great advantages in seeing an issue through to the end before drawing conclusions. “Better is the end of a *thing* (Heb *dabar* — word, by implication a matter spoken of) than the beginning thereof”. Hear the situation right through rather than give a quick assessment in pride and draw a wrong conclusion. The “patient in spirit” have a great advantage. They are not as likely to have the serpent-like reaction of a hasty reply knowing only half the story. They will also be able to see the fulfilment of Yahweh’s purpose and not be bowed down by the adversities of life.

Verse 9

The hasty reaction can be a response based on supersensitivity to something which destabilizes our equilibrium. Anger and sorrow are destructive emotions in fools (cp. v. 3).

The Dead

- * ‘The dead’ praise not Yahweh (Psa. 115:17).
- * The paths of the strange woman incline unto ‘the dead’ (Prov. 2:18).
- * ‘The dead’ are in the house of the foolish woman (Prov. 9:18).
- * The man that wanders (Heb *taah* — to vacillate) out of the way of understanding shall remain (Heb. *nuwach* — settle down) in the congregation of ‘the dead’ (Prov. 21:16) i.e. he will “find no way to change his mind” (Heb. 12:17 A.V. margin concerning Esau).
- * ‘The dead’ which are already dead are praised (commended) by Solomon more than ‘the living’ which are yet alive (Eccl. 4:1-2) because their life is over, ‘they shall not rise’ (Isa. 26:14). Never again will they experience the folly and sufferings of life, whereas ‘the living’ which are yet alive have to suffer in their days of mortality.
- * The heart of the sons of Adam is full of evil and madness is in their heart while *they* live and after that they go to ‘the dead’ (Eccl. 9:3).
- * ‘The dead’ know not anything (any point, i.e. oblivious). Neither have they *anymore* again a reward (Eccl 9:5). They are the class spoken of in Matt. 6:1-2, “They have their reward”.

Verse 10

Developing his consideration of patience, Koheleth sees impatience in old age when a person compares the present days with the past and talks about the “good old days”. The human mind can distort reality by forgetting the bad and only remembering the good. In doing this a false

ECCLESIASTES SEVEN

impression is developed which destroys the very picture that the Elohim want us to see. Instead of hoping for the Olahm, the mind reminisces about the past and “thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this”. It is not an action of wisdom but of folly. In Ezra’s day we have an example of this (Ezra 3:12-13). The rebuilding of the Temple while not as grand as the previous one in Solomon’s time should nonetheless have encouraged them to look forward to the even greater House of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 11

In developing the answer to the question of ch 6:12 there have been seven things which are “good or better” for man and the last of these is wisdom.

What sort of wisdom is as good as an inheritance? It is true wisdom depicted in the Book of Proverbs, e.g. 3:13, 4:7-9, 15:33, 16:16 etc. In this there is profit to those who *see the sun*. Now Solomon brings together all the lessons we have learned and pinpoints the only true good thing — the knowledge of the Truth and an understanding of the Father who is the source of light, and His Glorious Son. “Truly light is sweet and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun” (Eccl. 11:7). “For Yahweh Elohim is a sun and a shield. Yahweh will give grace and glory. No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly — O Yahweh of Hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee” (Psa. 84:11).

“But unto you that fear my Name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his Wings” (Mal. 4:2). The Lord Jesus Christ as the embodiment of the WORD can truly be spoken of as the Sun of Righteousness. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). “For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

Things that are better for Man: An Answer to Eccl. 6:12 and 7:11

- 7:1 A good name better than precious ointment.
- :1 The day of death than the day of one’s birth.
- :2 To go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting.
- :3 Sorrow than laughter.
- :5 To hear rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools.
- :8 The end of a thing (word) than the beginning.
- :11 Wisdom is better with an inheritance.

ECCLESIASTES SEVEN

Verse 12

Wisdom is a protection or shelter (defence); so is money. But the “excellency” — pre-eminence or gain of knowledge (Heb. *daath* from *yada*, knowledge by experience) is to know that wisdom “giveth life to the possessor thereof” (Roth), something that money cannot do. The physical ability to be wise is given by God and now Solomon moves on to consider this.

Verses 13-14

“Consider the work of Elohim”. We cannot overturn their work by making straight what He hath made crooked. They lead us through both prosperity and adversity for a reason. Life is not a series of haphazard events but rather, “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). We must consider both prosperity and adversity equally if we desire to grow spiritually. When life appears to be smooth, then problems arise and there is no stability. Our inability to control our life reveals our current inferiority to the Elohim. There is no lasting satisfaction until the justification of the Saints in Glory. Then, and only then, will man be in the full likeness of the Elohim.

Verse 15

Seeing man in this inferior state, Solomon now understands that life is full of anomalies. He has “seen in the days of *his* vanity” a just man perishing in his righteousness and a wicked man prolonging in wickedness. Why does it happen? C.f. the principle of Job 19 and 21:1-9. There is purpose in the suffering of God’s saints. In their probation they learn that “if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable,” (1 Cor. 15:19). There must be the suffering before the Glory — “If ye be reproached for the Name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of Glory and of God resteth upon you” (1 Pet. 4:14). In contrast to the saints, the wicked, prolonged in his wickedness, will say unto God “Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways” (Job. 21:14).

Verses 16-17

In thinking about righteousness, Solomon notices that there are two standards of righteousness, God’s and man’s.

“Be not righteous over much” — it speaks of self-righteousness but true righteousness comes from God alone. Self-righteousness is reflecting the thinking of Adam and Eve as they tried to provide their own covering in an endeavour to overcome a lack in themselves. “For

ECCLESIASTES SEVEN

they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:3). It is the "Spirit of Adam that exalts to the highest" (Eccl. 3:21). "Neither make thyself over wise" (Roth: "neither count thyself wise beyond measure"). God is the one who has wisdom beyond measure, and for man to presume that he has that prerogative will "destroy"; i.e. stupify or confound him. Confusion of mind will develop out of a warped, man-centred consideration of the Word. "Be not wise in your own conceits" (Rom. 12:16).

Now he turns to the other end of the scale and observes that wickedness and folly will also destroy a person.

Verse 18

It is good for us to discern all the characteristics of man-centred religion and note how they reveal themselves in a person's life. "for he that feareth Elohim shall *come forth* of THEM ALL." The ones who have seen how Elohim work in their life and who develop that awe and respect for them shall steer away from all the pitfalls of life and "come forth" like the 'Ecclesia,' out of "them all".

The two classes are again shown. This time as those who "fear God" and the "them all" class. Koheleth continues to divide the people into the two classes; the light and the darkness, the wise and the fool, the 'whole man' — i.e. those who fear God, and 'them all', the living and the dead.

Verse 19

Roth: "Wisdom bringeth more strength to a wise man than ten heroes that are in the city"; because it gives him power to overcome the hand of the enemy (c.f. Prov. 21:22). "The wise scaleth the city of the mighty and casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof". He can do this because he has come to understand the nature of the enemy, how to do battle with it, and how to destroy the enemy through the vulnerable part of the body, i.e. *the mind*, thus destroying its self-confidence.

But there is a danger! This can be done by human wisdom, unfettered by the Word of God. A man can learn to discern human motivation and how to manipulate it. It is called "People Management". We must make sure our "wisdom" is based on the Word of God and not our own human thinking.

Verse 20

As Koheleth discerns the mind of the reader, he sees the danger of relying upon the opinions of human philosophy unaided by Divine

ECCLESIASTES SEVEN

wisdom. So he declares: “For (i.e because) there is not a just Adam upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not”.

Verses 21 & 22

“Also (i.e. therefore) take no heed to *all* words that are spoken” (not all words are wise). If we listened to every thing said, we would soon be see-sawing with doubt, fears and unclear minds undermining our faith and relationship with our brethren. If we are honest with ourselves we will see that “many times” in our own heart we have “cursed” (i.e. despised, brought into contempt) others.

Verse 23

All that Solomon had observed, he had put to the test that he might understand it in a practical sense, but as he pursued wisdom in these matters, he discovered the limitations of human nature. Although his mind wanted to grapple with it all, there was the frustration of a finite, limited ability to perceive. Roth: “I said I will be wise, but that was far from me”. True wisdom is so deep that when we try to comprehend it in our present state of mortality we keep coming across this limiting factor of the human mind. This mind was created for fellowship with the Elohim but now it is corrupted by sin and in this state fails to attain to full wisdom.

Verse 24

“Far away is that which hath been, and deep — deep who can find it out?” (Roth). David, Solomon’s father, found that “such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it” (Psa. 139:6). Even those who shall be the Elohim of the future age, in their present state of mortality, find both joy and agony in the knowledge of Yahweh and His Word. It involves the knowledge of the glory and the wisdom of Yahweh and His Word on the one hand, but the stronger awareness of our sin that comes with it on the other. Paul discovered the agony associated with greater knowledge in 2 Cor. 12:1-7. When he “saw things too wonderful to utter”, he was also given a “thorn in the flesh” to buffet him lest he should be “exalted above measure”, i.e. “exalting himself exceedingly” (Vine).

Koheleth had now discovered the reason for conflict in his own mind

Verse 25

With this conflict he set out to discover by experience the knowledge

ECCLESIASTES SEVEN

of good and evil, to try and understand its effect upon Adam at the time of transgression. Solomon followed the same course as Adam (v. 26) and that is why the pattern of Proverbs 7 and Proverbs 5 is so close to the pattern of Adam and Eve. Ref. Elpis Israel 83-85, "The Nature of the Transgression." Solomon had been warned of the dangers ("my son" — Prov. 5:1) yet in his quest for knowledge, he still pursued his course.

Verse 26

He now knew by experience "the bitterness that is more bitter than death". C.f. Young's Literal, "I am finding more bitter than death". It is worse than death, because you cannot escape from this bitterness. It is ongoing in its effect. You cannot undo the damage of folly with this type of woman. She is a trap to the man and void of understanding. Her heart is snares and nets and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth Elohim (i.e. keeps his law), shall escape from her, but the sinner shall be taken by her". Solomon was speaking from his own desolating experiences. He had followed the path of transgression that Adam had taken. The divine commentary of these events is recorded in 1 Kings 11:3: "and his wives turned away his heart".

Verse 27

In this state of guilt before Elohim, he strove to discover a way of undoing his actions. In his efforts he "counted one by one" (i.e. weighed one thing after another to find out 'the reason', or conclusion). He could not find it! But in the process he had discovered something more precious to him than any other knowledge. There would come one who would be able to redeem.

Verse 28

Yahweh's judgment upon Solomon had highlighted his problem, (1 Kings 11:1,4,9-13). He had allowed his wives to turn away his heart from serving the one true God. But Yahweh would still perform His purpose as promised to David in 2 Sam. 7:12-16. There would come a seed who would establish David's throne for ever. Solomon had already acknowledged that there is not a just Adam upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not (v. 20). Now he sees beyond man in his present state and finds one Adam among a thousand. Expressed in another way he found a unifier who had the right to redeem and restore mankind. One out of the whole family (thousand) of Adam.

ECCLESIASTES SEVEN

Verse 29

In all Solomon's experimentation he discovered that Genesis 3 is absolutely true! Solomon had been grasping for equality with the Elohim and "Lo, this *only* have I found, that Elohim hath made Adam upright; but *they* have sought out many inventions" (Roth — devices). They have followed fig-leaf devices to cover up sin and it does not work! Paul, aware of this real danger in the brethren warned: "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as Gentiles walk, in the *vanity* of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart — put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4:17-24). Also in writing to the brethren at Philippi, he exhorted them: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God thought it not a thing to be grasped at to be equal with God". This is the very opposite to Solomon's endeavours, and following the theme seen in Ecclesiastes, Paul desired that his brethren follow after Christ, "Holding forth the word of life; that he may rejoice in the day of Christ, that he has not run in *vain*, neither laboured in *vain*" (Phil. 2:16).

By looking into the epistles we have discovered that not *all is vanity*, and that there is a purpose in it all. The one unifier among the family of Adam, the very one that Solomon so desperately needed after his sin against Yahweh, is in fact the Lord Jesus Christ. "O, the depth of the riches both of wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out" (Rom. 11:33).

The discovery of the "One among a thousand" who excelled in wisdom and became the Redeemer now leads to the consideration of him as a King.

The One Among A Thousand

The Son of Adam: the Seed of the Woman

The Lord Jesus Christ

The Holy *One* who was denied — Acts 3:14

The Just *One* — Acts 7:52

By *one* man the offence, even so

By the obedience of *One* — Rom. 5:17-19

All *One* in Christ Jesus — Gal. 3:28

Chapter Eight

Verse 1

“Who is as the wise?” It is not Solomon, for he said “I said I will be wise but it was far from me” (Eccl. 7:23). “And who knoweth the interpretation of a thing?” Is it the one among a thousand of 7:28? “The wisdom of a man causeth his face to shine, and the hardness (Heb. — strength) of his face is changed”. Both effects were seen in the glory of the Transfiguration of the Lord who was the Word made Flesh “and his face did shine as the sun and his raiment was white as the light” (Matt. 17:2). “The fashion (*eidos* — view or form) of his countenance was altered (*heteros* — caused to be different)” (Luke 9:29). In the ultimate sense “they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament” (Dan. 12:3). Solomon advises the reader to show that respect or fear due to the King by —

Verse 2

— keeping the “king’s commandment”. Respect for the authority of a king is essential to the welfare and development of his subjects. That same respect for *our* King must also be in evidence. The oath of allegiance is a vow that we have to our God, concerning our commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 3

Don’t be hasty in resentment or persist in opposing the king, because his word will be accomplished and God will “render to every man according to his deeds” (Rom. 2:6).

Verse 4

The advice to the subject people of a Kingdom is very relevant for those who, “although heirs, as long as they are children, differ nothing from a servant, though they be lord of all” (Gal. 4:1). Our attitude of willingness, and pleasure in the service of our Lord is of vital importance to the running of the Household. “Where the word of a King is there is power; and who may say unto him, what doest thou?” This recognition of his superiority promotes an unquestioning submission.

Verse 5

“Whoso keepeth (*shamar* — to guard, hedge about) the commandments shall see (*yada* — to know by experience) no evil thing”. This evil is the breaking down, tearing apart process which will ultimately destroy a person unless he responds; c.f. Ps. 34:21: “evil shall slay the

ECCLESIASTES EIGHT

wicked". There is great benefit in keeping the commandments of our King, because our whole mind is redirected to view events through Yahweh's eyes. The wise, knowing this, will come to understand the blessings associated with making the right decisions at the right time, or "discerning both time and judgment". The subject of time and judgment now becomes the next theme of his search.

Verse 6

In every pursuit there is the involvement of "time" and the need to make decisions (judgment). Because man will not always be right and cannot always choose the right time to act, "misery" or evil (*ra*) will be the outcome, and this is part of God's purpose; c.f. Rom. 8:19-23: "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now — waiting for the adoption or "the revealing of the sons of Deity" (v. 19).

Verse 7

Man's inability to have all the right answers, the fear of the unknown and future events, all weigh heavily upon him, and "who can tell him when it shall be?" God alone has that power; c.f. Amos 3:7, "Surely the Lord Yahweh will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets". The word of God has all the answers, but will man humble himself to accept them? It is the awareness of this wilful antagonism and desire for absolute power that is so common to man that now brings Solomon to see his true position before God.

Verse 8

Equality with the Elohim that man is subconsciously striving for is not within his grasp, for "there is no Adam that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit". The 'instrumentally formative power,' or spirit, is not under man's control. "Neither is he potentate in the day of his death". The day man dies, he is seen to be powerless to control his own life and in this the righteousness of Yahweh is seen. God is vindicated in His warfare against sin and "there is no discharge in that war". All of Adam's race will find the truth of that statement. Even the wicked who has spent his life manipulating and deceiving to save himself, also ends in death and he cannot deliver himself.

Verse 9

The wicked and his ways now become the consideration of v. 9-11: "all this have I seen, and applied my heart to every work done *under the sun*". It is the observation of Koheleth as he views his subject peoples of the kingdom, that there is a time when "Adam lords it over Adam to his hurt" — RSV.

ECCLESIASTES EIGHT

Verse 10

And then the wicked dying without hope “carried into the tombs, out of the holy place were praised in the city because they had done this” (c.f. Sept.). The Hebrew is difficult to understand but gives the idea expressed in the Septuagint version. It is a shame that these wicked ones were praised. “This is also vanity”. What had they achieved? Nothing, and now they are dead and buried.

Verse 11

In seeing the reactions of those that remain as they praise the wicked that have died, Koheleth comes to understand that the carnal mind is “not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7). When therefore the “sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily”, the heart of man is “fully set within them to commit wickedness” (Roth). Animal thinking can only be affected by ‘reward and punishment’ and when there is no immediate punishment, the need is not recognised.

Verse 12

Although a sinner commits wickedness one hundred times, and life continues as if he had done no wickedness, yet Koheleth knows (*yada* — by experience) that it shall be well with those that fear Elohim and are aware of their all-seeing eyes. This creates an attitude of awe in the saints, as they stand before Elohim in their every-day life in full realisation that one day those same Elohim will be involved in their judgment.

Verse 13

But the wicked cannot gain this advantage and he cannot extend out his days as a shadow lengthens because “he stands not in awe before God” (Roth).

Koheleth has come to recognise the difference between those that “see the Sun” and therefore “know Elohim” and those that follow the course of wickedness of Genesis ch. 3.

Verse 14

But righteous men may not necessarily be rewarded in this life. In fact it can appear almost the reverse that the wicked may appear to be blessed. The wicked however doesn't see that the end of his wickedness is judgment, so he continues in his folly.

ECCLESIASTES EIGHT

Verse 15

On examining the lot of 'Adam' and trying to find "things that are better for him, he found that there was no better thing "under the sun" than that man should "eat, drink and be merry" during his labour (the days of his life), "which Elohim giveth him under the sun". See how Koheleth acknowledges that Elohim is controlling man's life. In all his investigations a strong awareness of the work of the Elohim has developed. This is evident in verse 16-17.

Verse 16

When he applied himself to "know wisdom and to consider the business that is done upon the earth", he concluded that "there is one who did not sleep day or night". This led him to —

Verse 17

— consider *all* the work of Elohim, who labour day and night. In contrast, the sons of men, in their limited position, do not have the ability to find out the true work that is done by the Elohim even under the sun. We can only perceive a small fraction of that great work. Even if we "labour to seek it out" we "cannot find it. Even though a wise man thinks that he knows it, he shall not be able to find it out". While the personal searching of the Word of God is rewarding, and super-abounding with blessings, we only perceive a small portion of the mind of Yahweh. This is illustrated very well by the example of Paul the Apostle — 1 Cor. 13:12, "now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known". It is this hope of wholeness or completed perfection of the saints in glory which encouraged Paul as he struggled with the issues of life.

Chapter Nine

Verse 1

It is a great comfort to know that “the righteous and the wise and their labours are in the hand of Elohim”, and Paul explained why, “for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). God’s good pleasure is to bring us to the Kingdom, so “in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths” (Prov. 3:6). This does not necessarily mean that only ‘good’ will happen to us. Apparent ‘good’ or ‘evil’ towards us is no proof that God is loving us or hating us in terms of the enmity He established in Genesis 3:15; c.f. 2 Tim. 3:10-13, 1 Thess 3:2-4.

Verse 2

Life is a picture of good and evil, regardless of where a person stands in relationship to Yahweh. There is, however, purpose in the difficulties and tribulations of the saints, for these will ultimately bring about blessing. Yet the one event happens to all alike, “Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away” (Psa. 144:4).

Verse 3

Roth — “This was a misfortune in all that is done under the sun, that one destiny had they all”. This “destiny” is death through Adamic condemnation; “in Adam all die” — 1 Cor. 15:22. But this is not the only effect of Adam’s transgression. The human mind is “full of wickedness and madness was in their heart while they lived and after that they went unto the dead” (Roth). What a terrible vindication of Yahweh and a revealing of the horror of sin-stricken nature. “Madness” — (Sept. *perifero*), carried about in a circle of Eccl. 2:2. This madness is typical of the circular reasoning common to man, unaffected by the Word of God. His starting point is a false premise, and through his circular logic he concludes that his thinking is true, and for this reason he is never able to see the real issues clearly.

Verse 4

The advantages of “the living” over “the dead”

“Whosoever was united to all the living, for him there was hope” (Roth); c.f. Isaiah 38:17-19, “they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth”. “Behold now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation” — 2 Cor. 6:2. “For a living dog is better than a dead lion” — depicting the two extremes of the animal kingdom; the skulking scavenger and the regal master of all the beasts. The Lord Jesus, in his drawing of the woman of Canaan to a declaration of her faith, used the

ECCLESIASTES NINE

example of a dog as descriptive of the Gentiles. "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs", and as flesh bows before Spirit, she declared: "Truth Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table" (Matt. 15:26-28). So the 'living dog' of the Gentiles had opportunity to gather the Word of God, but Judah, like a dead lion, failed. In this contrast, it is important to perceive the issue as "the living" compared with "the dead", not the dog compared with the lion. What then is "better"? It is the class called "the living" which is *better* than "the dead". See notes chapter 7:2.

Verse 5

"The living *know* that they shall die: but the dead *know not anything*". If we view the two classes spoken of, we see the principle of resurrectional responsibility which is based upon knowledge. The knowledge of 'the living' that 'they shall die' is seen as an advantage, but 'the dead' being ignorant "know not anything neither have *they any more* a reward for the *memory of them* is forgotten"; i.e. "*they shall not rise*" (Isa. 26:14). The Lord Jesus spoke of 'the living' class when he said "the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the (memorial) graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth" (John 5:28).

Verse 6

Of *the dead*, Solomon declared "their love, and their hatred and their envy, is now perished". The three words, love, hatred and envy which express affection, personal intense hatred, and intense zeal or jealousy, are all emotions which cause one to agonise over issues and to develop character either one way or another. These emotions are now perished in death, the purpose of the person's life is finished — "neither had (past tense) they any more a portion (allotment) for the olahm, in anything that is done under the sun"; i.e. they have now lost their opportunity to develop their love of the Olahm.

Verses 7-9

In contrast to "the dead", Solomon now speaks to "the living", those who have come to know the Truth. But the language is even more explicit. It is clear that he has now singled out those who have covenanted themselves to Yahweh: "Go thy way eat thy bread with joy and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works". Together with the joy is also the responsibility to conform to God's requirements: "Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment" (v. 7). The Spirit proclaimed, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment" (Rev. 3:5). This

ECCLESIASTES NINE

'overcoming' is accompanied by 'great pressure' and having washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14), the benefits of that washing are to be maintained through that great pressure. So in the terms of Eccl. 9:8, "Let thy garments be *always white*".

The attitude of mind associated with the washing of the robes, is beautifully expressed in Ps. 45:7 — "Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows". Solomon picks up the same principle stating: "and let thy head lack no ointment" (Eccl. 9:8).

The preparation and sanctifying influence of the Spirit Word seen in verse 8, prepares the way for the benefits of verse 9. The husband, whose head lacks no ointment, is in a position to consecrate his wife, anointing her head with his mind, which is based on the thinking of Christ. He may then "live joyfully with the wife" whom he lovest all the days of the life of his vanity. The parable of restoration and glorification is then continually outworked in their life together. This is the portion (or what God has allotted us) in life and in our labour under the sun. There is then a clear purpose in life, and far from being an aimless existence, life is designed to give us understanding when coupled with the wisdom obtained from God's Word. The net result of all this is God Manifestation in our life.

Verse 10

Understanding the purpose of our life and the state of those in the grave, places greater responsibilities upon us. Diligent application and zeal for the work, becomes the hallmark of those who understand the Truth and know the total absence of device (intelligence), knowledge and wisdom in the grave. "Behold *now* is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). Now is our opportunity to develop the attributes the Lord Jesus Christ will be looking for in his Bride when he returns.

Verse 11

Having considered the position of those covenanted to Yahweh, Solomon now turns his mind to another group called "them all". Their life is so different from "the living", for they are associated with "the dead". On three occasions Solomon uses the expression "I returned" to denote a viewing of people's lives, Eccl. 4:1,7; 9:11. There is an uncertainty in life c.f. v. 5. The effort expended will not necessarily guarantee that man will achieve his objectives: "Time and chance (events beyond his control) happeneth to *them all*" (cp. chapter 7:18).

ECCLESIASTES NINE

Verse 12

Man is not all-seeing. So many events of life are beyond his ability to perceive and these can totally upset his calculations and force him to recognise that he is feeble and cannot control his life. Suddenly he is like a fish caught in a net, or a bird in a snare and in spite of all his efforts to extricate himself, like the bird, flapping and fluttering, he is trapped with no way out.

Verses 13-16

There is a wisdom under the sun which Solomon assessed as great. It involved the deliverance of a city by the wisdom of a poor wise man, yet that deliverance went unremembered by others. Solomon himself, however, remembered it. This provides an insight into his ability to see issues differently from the majority of his subjects. It is this regal ability to observe matters and to perceive true wisdom that exalts a man above his fellows. This wisdom has its parallel in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ; c.f. 1 Cor. 1:27-31, "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord". Who is then prepared to remember the words and works of our 'poor wise man' — our Lord Jesus Christ? Only those who have the perceptive mind of the King-Priests of the future age.

Because of the character of human nature, true wisdom does not guarantee honour from fellow man, but Yahweh will honour the man of true wisdom. "Them that honour Me I will honour" (1 Sam. 2:30); c.f. Isa. 53:3,10 — "He was despised and we esteemed him not — the pleasure of Yahweh shall prosper in his hand".

Verse 17

Under what circumstances are the words of the wise heard? Only in a state of 'quiet' (*nachath* — descent). It speaks of man in a subdued state, when he is more ready to accept advice. In contrast, Solomon knew of the inability of fools to hear even when the ruler shrieked his commands. In our own lives, it is when we are subdued by difficult events and the fire of selfwill is quenched that the wisdom of the Word of God can then penetrate into an accepting mind and gain response.

ECCLESIASTES NINE

Verse 18

Wisdom, with its ability to gain victory when a man is overcome and subdued is better than weapons of war because they are only successful when the warrior has the ascendancy; c.f. 2 Cor. 10:4, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds".

One sinner (one who misses the mark) may undo all the good of the wise. Failing to see the issues involved in the Word of Truth, he misses the point of the message and, governed by an animal mind, he plays havoc with the ecclesia of God; c.f. Achan — Josh 7:1-12, 2 Tim 2:17-18, "Their word will eat as doth a canker of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and have overthrown the faith of some".

In all these verses from Eccl. 9:13-18 and the other references, the language is that of warfare. Wisdom of the Word is the great weapon to use in our warfare against sin, but the results of even one failure will have a far-reaching effect.

Chapter Ten

Verse 1

With his great depth of experience, Solomon relates an appropriate example of the principle in Eccl. 9:18. Folly is not always confined to the foolish and the effect of one slip by a wise man ruins his reputation for wisdom and causes others to doubt his whole ability and advice. Like dead flies in the oil of the perfumer, the contaminating influence of folly can ruin a whole life.

Verse 2

So with the danger of folly undoing the benefits of wisdom, the wise man makes sure that understanding is ready to use; "a wise man's heart is at his right hand". It is in this position to use as a prop or support when he requires it. C.f. Ps. 17:7, 80:17 where the Lord Jesus Christ is seen as the man of the right hand. True wisdom, embracing the understanding of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, becomes a support to the wise, but the fool, whose heart is "at his left", trusts in a broken reed and his heart will fail him in his time of need.

Verse 3

When the fool walks, his understanding is seen to be no support to him and it lets him down. Because he cannot see himself from Yahweh's view, he is oblivious to this and unconsciously proclaims himself a fool.

Verse 4

In his observations about the fool, Solomon now thinks upon the impact of a fool as a ruler, and how to combat this evil. How can you practise wisdom when the King has a hot temper? "Gentleness pacieth such as have greatly erred" (Roth). Gentleness becomes the curative for the malady.

Verses 5-7

The process of evil may also be seen in the ruler, when he makes mistakes. The ruler as the supreme authority, can 'never be wrong'. Yet if he sets unworthy people to places of honour and the proven well-established aristocracy is demoted, then a reversal of roles takes place with the servants riding on horses and the princes walking as servants.

Verse 8

As he considers the reason for these actions, Koheleth discovers a 'high-handed' arrogant attitude within the ruler and his mind is now

ECCLESIASTES TEN

seeking out the consequences of this attitude. He finds that retribution is inevitable. The man who digs a pit for another, falls into it. The man who breaks a fence (a dry stone boundary wall) is liable to be bitten by the snake living in it. Here is a significant principle which has its roots in Genesis ch. 3. Adam was placed in the garden of Eden (an enclosure of pleasure) to till it and to keep it, i.e. to cultivate it and to hedge it about, to guard it from loss or injury. He was to learn these principles in preparation for his bride, who in the language of Song of Solomon 4:12 was a "garden enclosed", and Song of Songs 2:4 "his banner over me was love".

In Eve, the enclosure of love was broken down. The serpent, having challenged God's Law, evoked within Eve, doubts, desire and ultimately rebellion against God and against her husband's leadership over her. Eve, with her mind now espoused to the Serpent's mode of thinking, was like a garden surrounded by a wall with a serpent dwelling in it.

The enclosure or fence was no longer effective as a barrier; it had been 'pierced through' by the effect of the diabolos or false accusation of the serpent mind. That serpent mind, now dwelling in the enclosure of Eve's mind, plunged its venom into the unsuspecting man. He had not kept his garden enclosed.

Elpis Israel described the scene on page 84: 'Standing now in his presence, she became the tempter, soliciting him to sin — she found him "a young man, void of understanding" like herself. He accepted the fatal fruit "and ate with her", consenting to her enticement, "not knowing that it was for his life". In the words of Ecc. 10:8, "The serpent shall bite him".'

Verse 9

Part of the judgment of Gen. 3 was the state of conflict between man and his environment. There are therefore always occupational hazards with activities involving labour, especially vigorous labour. The two examples given of the quarry man and the woodsman teach important spiritual principles.

The quarry man: "Whosoever removeth (tear away) stone, shall be hurt (carved out, crushed). C.f. Psa. 118:22, "the stone which the builders refused the same is become the head of the corner" (Matt. 21:42-44), "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall it shall grind him to powder".

The woodsman: He that cleaveth wood shall be endangered (torn, cut up) thereby; c.f. Isa. 37:21-38 where Sennacherib's servants declared, "I will cut down the tall cedars thereof and the choice fir trees

ECCLESIASTES TEN

thereof; and I will enter into the height of his border and the forest of Carmel" (v.24), but Yahweh replied: "I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake and for my servant David's sake" (v. 35). In the attempt to overthrow the trees of Yahweh's heritage, the nations involved will be hurt in the process.

In all the examples given there is a graphic picture of the conflict against sin. So the battle between man and his environment, whether it be nations, rocks, forests or people, is all indicative of the unsettled state of continual conflict which can only be resolved when the earth is full of the glory of Yahweh.

Verse 10

In any state of conflict, careful preparation will save a lot of energy. "If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength". How often do we try to wage the warfare against sin with the minimum of preparation and expect to gain the victory by our own strength? Considerable energy is dissipated within an ecclesia trying to overcome the results of poor preparation in the lives of brethren and sisters. How simple is the answer! "But wisdom is profitable to direct", or "But preferable is the able pursuit of wisdom" (Roth). Wisdom leads us in her ways — "I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment" (Prov. 8:20).

Verse 11

The wisdom of the Word has the power to direct our lives in right paths, but what happens when we delay in putting it into practice? We get hurt. "If the serpent bites before it is charmed, there is no advantage in a charmer" (RSV). So the charmer must do his work without delay — c.f. James 3:6-10.

Verses 9-11 have shown three key issues of life:

- * We can be maimed by our own actions;
- * If we apply wisdom it gives the greatest benefit for the effort expended;
- * We can also be maimed if we delay to act.

Verse 12

"The words of a wise man's mouth are grace" — they have the ability to bestow favour upon him because they indicate a 'superior order of things within'. C.f. Matt. 12:35, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things"; "But the lips of a fool will swallow him up". C.f. Prov. 18:7, "A fool's mouth is his destruction and his lips are the snare of his soul".

ECCLESIASTES TEN

Verse 13

What then is the effect of the fool's speech upon himself and upon others? After beginning as foolishness, ultimately his words will cause "mischievous madness" or evil calamity. They will finally break down and destroy. An example of this foolish state of mind is shown in the Pharisees: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it". Revealed then as the seed of the serpent, the fool's lies will finally destroy himself and others.

Verse 14

With a mind that cannot discern true wisdom, multiplying words is of no avail: "be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools". As Koheleth considers the effect of the transgression in Eden, he also sees the limitations placed upon Adam and his posterity — "Adam cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him?". This is a further demonstration of the frustrations under which man labours. Adam, or mankind, has the desire for the Olahm in his heart (Eccles. 3:11) without really understanding this desire or how it affects him. Without the Word to guide him, man will only discover dissatisfaction and the desire to pursue excellence without ever being able to attain it.

Verse 15

The ineffectual labour of the fool only produces weariness because he doesn't know how to go to the city. This is a striking parallel to the frustrations of verse 14. He has no sense of direction and in the type of a man labouring to the point of weariness, yet still unable to enter through the well-trodden path into the city, we see those who, "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:3). In their ignorance, they expend all their labours upon that which satisfies not. The Lord Jesus gave the same message to his disciples — "Let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind, and if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:14). This is typical of the sons of Adam who have lost sight of the way of the tree of life.

Verse 16

Solomon now laments the impact of a foolish ruler upon his

ECCLESIASTES TEN

dominion. Woe when the king is a child or a servant, and there is no real control. Therefore the rulers do what they please in self-indulgence — “the princes eat in the morning”.

Verse 17

The land can only be blessed when the ‘royal character’ is seen in the king and his princes show true dedication and not self-indulgence. These principles are essential for the welfare of an ecclesia. When true dedication is practised, the benefits become evident within the lives of brethren and sisters and their families. True shepherds will feed the flock and not destroy it. Self-indulgence, evincing lack of concern for the brethren, will always promote a falling away and an ultimate weakening of an ecclesia.

Verses 18-19

The thoughts of Koheleth follow the process of folly in the rulers and their subjects. He sees that folly encourages an abandoned life given over to vice. This is portrayed in the picture of a decaying house, while in verse 19 escapism is practised. Not facing the need for restoration of the house, the dulling influence of the wine so typical of Babylon, will “make glad the life” (A.V. margin). Typical of those influenced by the thinking of the world, “money answers everything”. The history of Israel demonstrates the number of times the kings tried to buy off the invading forces of the nations. While God’s house became ruins they lived a life of debauchery and expected that the giving of their treasures (which in reality belonged to Yahweh) would buy them out of trouble. C.f. Hag 1:4-5, Ezek. 16:10-18, 2 Kings 16:17-18.

Verse 20

With obvious injustices the frictions and frustrations of life give rise to unwise comments. Even when you think that you are ‘safe’, the gossip has the habit of being repeated and coming out in the most inopportune times. “For a *bird of the heavens* might carry the voice” (Roth). The messenger of the rulers, depicted by this phrase, might tell the matter to the king — and judgment will come.

Chapter Eleven

Verse 1

“Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days”. Planting seed involves sacrifice. Part of what would normally be used as food to sustain, must be surrendered in hope of gaining more. “Cast” — *to send forth* is the same expression that describes the sending of a ship overseas. The shipowner is prepared to sacrifice in the interim anticipating that he will ultimately gain the benefit from his actions. In all these things effort must be applied to gain the benefit, but it is not done in ignorance. Vision and enterprise must dominate, otherwise fear of failure would stop the work. To gain this vision and confidence to act, wisdom is required. In this verse we not only have advice for everyday life, but also, a picture of the principles involved in our labour in the Truth. We must be prepared to sacrifice to gain the victory through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 2

In any labour there is risk involved. Things are not always under our control. So we must spread the risk. “Give a portion to seven, and also to eight.” The farmer knows that some crops may fail while others may thrive. This is a pattern in life, not just applying to crops of the field; c.f. Mark 4:3-20 — the parable of the sower. Every faithful sower in the Ecclesia will see the need to sow and cultivate the Word in the hearts of all members, yet it is God that gives the increase. “Thou knowest not what *evil* shall be upon the earth”. Refer to the theme of “evil” chapter 6. Evil, as a key theme of Ecclesiastes, is important to our understanding of the Elohim. They use ‘evil’ to bring man down from his lofty self-appointed position so that he may be helped to understand his true state before God.

Verse 3

There are some events that man cannot change or control and the most obvious of these are in his dealings with his environment. “If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth; and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north in the place where the tree falleth, there shall it be.”

Verse 4

Does this knowledge stop man from doing anything in life? No, because if we are over-cautious, or easily discouraged, then nothing will be accomplished. Taking the same message into the ecclesia we see the need to labour without discouragement, and whatever is done in faith

ECCLESIASTES ELEVEN

which comes through hearing the Word, will ultimately reap the benefit although there may seem to be set-backs in the way, c.f. Phil. 3:13-14.

Verse 5

In every aspect of our life we can discover that God's wisdom is greater than our ability to understand it all. Just as in the natural creation, so also in the spiritual creation in Christ Jesus, we do not know the "works of Elohim who maketh the *all class*," or '*the whole man*' of Eccl. 12:13; c.f. Col. 1:12-17.

Verse 6

As Koheleth demonstrates our ignorance in so many aspects of life, he now shows our total dependence upon providence. "In the morning sow thy seed, and until evening do not withhold thy hand, for thou knowest not whether shall thrive either this or that or whether both alike shall be fruitful" (Roth). Part of our education in the Truth is to discover that we do not have all the answers, and when we make any decisions in the Truth, it must be done with full confidence in Yahweh's providential care for His children. With this attitude we shall learn to trust Him through all the experiences of life.

Verse 7

In contemplating the subject of morning and evening in verse 6, Solomon is drawn to consider youth and old age. "And the light is sweet", i.e. it is something to be relished. Light has the power to overcome darkness; light is one of God's attributes; light enables a man to see and, if we follow light to its source, we shall "*behold the sun*". Solomon declares that this is one of the things that is "good", here translated "pleasant". When a man "beholds" the sun with discernment (as the Hebrew suggests), he discerns the light of the Truth and the reason why the sun is said to "rule the day" in Genesis 1:16. Paul, speaking of the ecclesia, says "ye are all the children of light and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (1 Thess 5:5).

Verse 8

Using the same parabolic language Solomon sees the need to temper the rejoicing in light over many years with the knowledge that in this life there is an end — "the days of darkness, for they shall be many, all that cometh is vanity". With the awareness of old age, what should this knowledge do to us?

ECCLESIASTES ELEVEN

Verse 9

Solomon commends his younger readers to brighten up with glee in their youthful years. They are to let their hearts cheer them in the days of youthful looks before these youthful looks give way to the worries of life, as responsibility develops through knowledge and weighs heavily upon them. This advice is so timely for our young people today. There is great delight and happiness in younger years. They can pursue the ways of their heart and of their eyes, but there must be a tempering restraint in their life with the knowledge "that for all these things Elohim will bring thee into judgment". The effect of this restraining knowledge will only control a person through fear of punishment. The inevitable result of this is a state of conflict.

Verse 10

In this state of conflict, the emotions of sorrow, anger and provocation (all described by the same Hebrew word), are inevitably present, because human desire leads to the manifestation of evil. Solomon now *commands* the removal of these by the use of an imperative expression "Remove (Heb — *suwr*, an imperative hiphil conjugation meaning to 'turn off') c.f. —

Josh 24:14 (put away) strange gods that your fathers served.

Jer. 4:4 (take away) the foreskins of your hearts.

Ezek. 21:26 (remove) the diadem, take off the crown.

Zech. 3:4 (take away) the filthy garments.

All these statements involve the absolute command of a ruler. Put away evil from thy flesh, "Put away" (Heb — *abor*, to cross over). This involves the same principle as baptism, which is why Abraham was called the "Hebrew" — from *abor*.

Because evil will destroy a person, Solomon tells youth to cross over from the side of evil. C.p. notes — Ecc. 6:1.

With the tragic knowledge of his own personal failure in 1 King 11:1 Solomon warns against a particular type of evil. His advice to young people is to avoid the situation where emotional impulses may govern their actions and cause them to compromise the divine principles of the husband/wife relationship. The evidence is provided in the Hebrew used to express his concern.

The Hebrew for 'flesh' — *basar* is a euphemism for the physical organs of man. The expression "for childhood and youth are vanity" also draws out the same theme. Childhood (Heb. — *yalduwth*, boyhood, girlhood), 'youth' (Heb. *shacharuwth*, dawning, i.e. the state of arousing) are vanity or transient.

The maturing of young people may be a time of great blessing or

ECCLESIASTES ELEVEN

intense distress. It is our awareness that childhood and youth are vanity and part of that greater vanity in life, that helps to keep those "youthful years" in perspective and to ensure that the "vessels of Yahweh" are kept holy.

His command to youth is the same as that which Yahweh gave to Israel, c. f. Isa. 52:1,11,12; and that which Paul gave to the Ecclesia — 2 Cor. 6:14 — 7:1. He now develops his advice to young people.

Chapter Twelve

Koheleth has been drawing all the threads of his thoughts together; the vanity of life, man out of harmony with his environment, man's weariness in his struggle to gain satisfaction, the frustration of failure, the conflict of standards, the wearing down process of evil, the limiting factor of time when man can only be truly satisfied by the Olahm, the awareness of the Elohim in his life, the apparent anomaly of the wicked prospering and the righteous suffering, the difficult task of trying to be consistent, the superiority of wisdom over folly. Now he sees the grand work of Yahweh promised to David his father, creating a new creation after the Law of 'the ascending Adam' of 1 Chron 17:17, with the Lord Jesus Christ as its Head (Eph. 2:10). So intense is his desire to see the "whole" work completed that he brings the young man face to face with the deteriorating nature that he bears. If young people are confronted with suffering and death, they will discover the brevity of life, and the anguish and emotions involved in it. Then they will be in a better frame of mind to seek and to accept the way that Yahweh has provided to complete the "whole man" of Eccl. 12:13.

Verse 1

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." God is to be memorialised as *our Creator*, in such a way that we recognise Him. This is the meaning of the Hebrew for 'remember'. It requires our acknowledgment that we are His creatures, and the development of a very personal relationship with Him. With youth there is need for restraint until the knowledge of God and His ways develop a conscience in the individual. This is satisfied by the fear of judgment (ch. 11:9). The constructive effect of seeing God as a Creator, however, is to understand His final purpose of filling the earth with His glory. This is why the command "to remember" is personal. It is the individual that needs to see God as his Creator. "While the evil days come not" — i.e. before the wearing down, crushing consequences of sin-stricken nature take their toll in approaching old age. C.f. Prov 15:15 — "All the days of the afflicted (depressed in mind or circumstances) are evil". There comes a time when it is said, "I have no pleasure in them".

Verse 2

The failing powers of old age, the "evil days" of verse 1, are from Yahweh as part of the judgment in Eden. They are days of "breaking in pieces", and form an apt description of the process of judgment involved in "dying thou shalt die" (Gen. 2:17). This is graphically illustrated in the following verses.

ECCLESIASTES TWELVE

Verses 3-7

The Themes of Ecclesiastes Ch. 12 are based on Genesis Ch. 1,2,3

Ecclesiastes 12	Genesis
v.1 God as a creator	1:1
v.2-6 The process of death, dying thou shalt die	2:7
v.2 The sun, moon and stars	1:14-18
v.7 The return to the ground: dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return	3:19
v.10 "That which was written was upright even words of truth"	2:16-17
v.11 "The words of the wise are given from One Shepherd" i.e. Yahweh Elohim	2:16
v.12 Of more than these beware (RSV)	3:1-5
v.13 Fear God and keep his commandments for this is the whole man	2:16-17
v.14 Elohim will bring every work into judgment with every secret thing whether it be good or evil	3:11

The theme of Evil or (breaking to pieces) is described by parallel figures, covering man and his environment, both in the process of decline.

Verse 8

"Vanity of Vanities all is Vanity!" Transient life is over and Yahweh is vindicated in "dying thou shalt die". Even the Hebrew shows that death is a process of deterioration culminating in cessation of life and dissolution into dust of the earth.

But this is not the end of the matter for those who are truly wise! They understand the need for redemption.

Verse 9

R.S.V.: "Besides being wise, Koheleth also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging proverbs with great care". In this he understood the meaning of Proverbs 25:2, "It is the glory of Elohim to conceal a thing or purpose: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter".

Verse 10

Koheleth sought out words (Heb — *cheph'ets* to incline to), words which would turn a person to gain true satisfaction. (ref A.V. margin — words of delight). The only words which man may incline to and

ECCLESIASTES TWELVE

gain delight from are words of the Olahm — c.f. Eccl. 2:26, 3:11,14, 7:11-12, 12:13. He is dealing with the only subject that can satisfy a man's mind. "That which was written, upright words of Truth". How beautiful are the words of Truth; they have authority, sensitivity, and perception; c.f. Mark 1:22, "He (Jesus) taught them as one that had authority and not as the scribes". In prayer to the Father he sought the sanctification of his disciples through the Word of Truth — John 17:17.

A Declining Man and His Household Ecclesiastes 12

- * The ability to behold light becomes darkened and finally veiled — v.2
- * Keepers of the house — (the arms) tremble, agitate in fear — v.3
- * Strong men (the legs: to twist or twirl) bow (rest) themselves — v.3.
- * The grinders (teeth) cease (desist from labour), few are left — v.3.
- * The lurkers at the lattice (the eyes) are darkened (light with-held) — v.3.
- * Doors shall be shut (the mouth — Heb. *deleth* swinging doors) — v.4.
- * The sound of the grinding is low (loss of appetite) — v.4.
- * He shall rise up at the voice of the bird (Heb. a little hopping bird); light sleep easily disturbed — v.4.
- * The daughters of music shall be brought low — hearing diminished — v.4.
- * Afraid of that which is high (fearful of heights and outside stairs) — v.5.
- * Fears (terrors) in the way (in the narrow way) — v.5.
- * Almond tree shall flourish in white blossom. Gesenius suggests Heb. *naats* — condemned or rejected. Normally accepted as *nuwts* — to blossom. Either is showing the signs of approaching death — v.5.
- * Grasshopper shall be a burden (reflexive — dragging itself along); every movement of the once strong legs is now a burden — v. 5.
- * Desire (Heb. the caper berry for condiments) shall fail; stimulation of all desires is failing — v.5.
- * Man (Heb. *adam*) goeth (is going) to his house of the Olahm; i.e. man ignorant of the Truth, not responsible, is about to perish forever.

ECCLESIASTES TWELVE

- * Mourners go about the streets (professional mourners are preparing for the impending death) — v. 5.
- * The silver chord be loosed or the golden bowl be broken, (the central nervous system continues on until it ceases in death) — v. 6.
- * The pitcher (used for gathering living water) be broken (perfect tense — broken to pieces) at the fountain (i. e. there is nothing to gather the water in); the senses are gone — v. 6.
- * The wheel broken (Heb. cracked) at the cistern (the source of water is now unable to be used) — v. 6.
- * The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to Elohim who gave it. This completes the vindication of Yahweh from Genesis 3:19 — v. 7.

A Declining House — Ecclesiastes 12

- * Servants (keepers of the house trembling) no longer capable of guarding the house — v. 3.
- * Strong men shall bow (the burden bearers who carried supplies to the house now rest) — v. 3.
- * Grinders cease (little need for the millstones to grind corn) — v. 3.
- * The bright eyes of the woman no longer look out of the lattice because they are now old — v. 3.
- * Swinging doors for drawing water are now closed — v. 4.
- * Noise of grinding muffled — v. 4.

Involved in the declining house is also a secondary theme of —

Light And Water

- * Both are contained in vessels symbolic of the living household. These vessels are now deteriorating.
- * Silver chord — Golden bowl (the oil lamp falls from its chain, empties its contents and the light goes out) — v. 6.
- * The pitcher broken at the fountain (smashes to pieces so that water can no longer be collected) — v. 6.
- * The wheel broken (cracked) at the cistern, has now fallen to the bottom of the well, making the source of water unusable — v. 6.
- * The house crumbles to dust — v. 7.
- * The spirit or power originally given by Elohim for the whole household to exist is now withdrawn. The day of opportunity is over — v. 7.

ECCLESIASTES TWELVE

Verse 11

“The words of the wise are as goads” because they stimulate into action and provide a sense of direction, and while they may hurt, the benefits are great. They also provide stability — “as nails fastened, or set and built into a wall with outstanding ability to support”.

Those who set them into the wall are the leaders of assemblies (or collection of learned men), and the words are given from One Shepherd. Their source is unique. It is from Yahweh himself. These words are from men of inspired lips and their impact is great; c.f. Heb. 4:12-13, “The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do”.

The exposure to that Word will reveal:

- Yahweh and His wisdom;
- Man and his folly;
- The great work of redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 12

R.S.V.: “And of more than these beware” — anything more than what is based upon the Word of God is dangerous. Today, more than ever before, there is a plethora of literature available. Some offer only confusion of thought with little sense of direction.

“Much study (Gesenius — greatly addicted; Sept — revolving the mind) is a weariness of the flesh” — a fatigue. It creates a mental warfare raging inside the human mind where the individual is trying to decide which idea is the right one. ‘The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God!’ and will only break down and destroy. Contrast this with the discovery and acceptance of Bible Truth which will still create fatigue, because it involves a warfare between flesh and spirit; but by the same principle of Eccl. 5:18,19 it will also create joy and contentment in that labour and it is “the gift of God”.

Verse 13

“Let us hear the conclusion (Heb — termination) of the whole matter”. There is an end to the vanity — “The creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom. 8:20-21).

ECCLESIASTES TWELVE

Therefore “Fear Elohim and keep his commandments (Heb. *shamar*, guard from loss or injury)”. The reverential respect of Elohim and the desire to put His commandments into practice to fulfil them can only come to a man who has discovered the true power of the Word of God and its outworking in his life through providence.

When he knows the character of Yahweh, the nature of man, and the work of redemption, he will put his knowledge into practice. This produces *The Whole Man* of Eccl. 12:13. There is only one man that has ever attained to that state of wholeness. “He is before (superior to) all things and in him *the all things* consist, and he is the head of the Body, the Ecclesia; who is the beginning, the firstborn out of the dead; that among all he might be first in rank. For it pleased the Father that in him should all *fulness* dwell” (Col. 1:17-19). The ‘fulness’ in Christ or the ‘whole man’ of Ecc. 12:13, is our hope because ‘in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily and ye are complete in him’ Col. 2:9-10.

The completeness, or wholeness, of Christ was achieved because he was “*The Word made Flesh*”. The very thing that man’s mind was to be satisfied with was accomplished only in him. Solomon, in gaining knowledge and wisdom to rule and judge God’s people, discovered the power of this Truth.

Verse 14

Therefore his final advice given to the reader is to remember that Elohim, who are involved in the work of our creation and minister unto us all the days of our life, will bring every work into judgment with every secret thing whether it be good or whether it be evil.

The events of Eden reveal how the Elohim in judgment drew out from Adam and Eve every secret thing involving the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. This is the pattern that will be followed with us. “By thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matt 12:37). For the saints, the work of creation will then be completed and the multitudinous Son of Man will stand as the “whole man” in the glory of the Father.

The labour of the Elohim from the work of creation onwards will now be rewarded as they see the work of their hands brought to perfection in immortality. The glorious multitude, called out from the nations formed into vessels of honour now standing before the throne, will be fitting testimony to the Truth of Solomon’s words that

“whatsoever Elohim doeth it shall be for the Olahm”.