

Ecclesiastes

Part Five

Ecclesiastes 6:1-2 [New King James] *“There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men: a man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honour, so that he lacks nothing for himself of all he desires; yet God does not give him power to eat of it, but a foreigner consumes it. This is vanity, and it is an evil affliction.”*

Solomon is looking carefully at his own life in Ecclesiastes and in these verses is admitting that God has given him riches, wealth and honour, yet he as yet, at the end phase of his life, found no lasting satisfaction.

All he seemed to have accomplished is to add to the value of the life of certain people who have come into his life, especially his foreign wives.

Ecclesiastes 6:3-6 [New King James] *“If a man begets a hundred children and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with goodness, or indeed he has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better than he, for it comes in vanity and departs in darkness, and its name is covered with darkness. Though it has not seen the sun or known anything, this has more rest than that man, even if he lives a thousand years twice, but has not seen goodness. Do not all go to one place?”*

Even if a person lives a long life, all that they have accumulated is left behind, so in the end is meaningless to that person.,

If a person has not used their body, mind and human intellect to find true satisfaction in acts of love and compassion, they are no better than a stillborn child that has yet to experience life in a future resurrection, [Revelation 20:11-13].

Everyone dies, and both rich and poor end up in the grave, along with the stillborn child.

Many people work hard to prolong life by improving their physical condition which is of profit to our lives.

1 Timothy 4:8-10 [New King James] *“For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For to this end we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe.”*

Such dedication and use of time would be far more profitable if spent on our spiritual health.

How short-sighted we are to work hard to extend this physical life and not take the steps that the Creator God requires for Him to give us the gift of eternal life, [Romans 6:23].

Ecclesiastes 6:7-9 [New King James] *“All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the soul is not satisfied. For what more has the wise man than the fool? What does the poor man have, who knows how to walk before the living? Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.”*

All human labour is to satisfy the physical body by providing physical strength and energy along with satisfying the mental aspect of life, yet we are never satisfied.

A little will serve to sustain us comfortably and a great deal can do no more.

The poor person has comfort as well as the richest when they know how to conduct their life before their Creator God.

What can be better in the sight of our eyes, both physical and mental, than faith and trust in the Creator God for our present life and our eternal life to come?

Any other attitude in life is a “*roving appetite*” that will never find satisfaction, but will always be seeking to feast of physical pleasures.

Ecclesiastes 6:10-12 [New King James] *“Whatever one is, he has been named already, for it is known that he is man; and he cannot contend with Him who is mightier than he. Since there are many things that increase vanity, how is man the better? For who knows what is good for man in life, all the days of his vain life which he passes like a shadow? Who can tell a man what will happen after him under the sun?”*

The Creator God knows and will, if we let Him, direct everything that happens in our life.

Psalms 139:1-4, 16 [New King James] *“O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.” ... “Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.”*

How foolish is it to contend with our Creator God who knows us completely, desiring only what is best for us, and can see the future?

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

To show how grateful we are for all the Creator God has done for us and is doing for us now on into the future, this is the attitude to life we should have.

The Greek word translated “*bodies*” is “*soma*” meaning whole life, physical body, mind and “*human spirit*” [**Job 32:8; 1 Corinthians 2:11; Proverbs 20:27**].

Our Creator God will then proceed to renew our minds, so that it is in total harmony with His, allowing Him to offer us the gift of eternal life in His presence.

Solomon is showing very clearly that human beings are **not** able to take total control of their own destiny. In all our plans we should look to our Creator God, present plans in this brief life as well as any future life after physical death.

Our physical life is to be reckoned in days, it is fleeting and uncertain, with little to be depended on.

We need to turn to our Creator God, trust in His mercy extended to us through the life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ and submit to His will; nothing else will bring us lasting joy and satisfaction.

Ecclesiastes 7:1-6 [New King James] *“A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one’s birth; better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men; and the living will take it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for by a sad countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise than for a man to hear the song of fools. For like the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool. This also is vanity.”*

The “*precious oil*” is referring to an anointing oil that was used when a person was given a great honour by the people.

Solomon reminds us that to be known as trustworthy is of far greater value in life than being honoured by other human beings.

It is only on the day of our death that the Creator God will know if we have fulfilled the very reason He has given us life, that is to develop a life that is in His “*likeness*” [Genesis 1:26-27] that is a reflection of His character as expressed in the “*fruits*” of the Holy Spirit, [Galatians 5:22-25].

Many people avoid even thinking about death, refuse to face it and are reluctant to attend funerals.

Solomon is **not** encouraging us to think morbidly, but he knows it is very helpful to think clearly about death.

It reminds us that there is still time for change, time to examine the direction of our lives, time to confess our sins and find forgiveness from our Creator God.

Ecclesiastes 7:7-10 [New King James] *“Surely oppression destroys a wise man’s reason, and a bribe debases the heart. The end of a thing is better than its beginning; the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools. Do not say, ‘Why were the former days better than these?’ For you do not inquire wisely concerning this.”*

The Hebrew word translated “*oppression*” is “*osheq*” meaning fraud or deceitful gain, this can confuse those who would otherwise judge fairly.

Bribes are given to hurt those who tell the truth and help those who oppose the truth.

Any person who takes a bribe or is involved in extortion is indeed a fool, no matter how wise they considered themselves to be beforehand.

To finish what we have started takes hard work, wise guidance, self-discipline and patience.

Anyone with vision can start a project, but vision without wisdom often results in unfinished projects or goals.

A patient person who continues to work on a project or change in their lives is better than a person who boasts about what they have only started.

Anger is the sign of the lack of wisdom and discretion.

It is the sign of great strength of character to overlook words and actions of another human being who has brought you harm, [**Proverbs 19:11**].

For usually it is harsh words that stir up anger, [**Proverbs 15:1**].

To judge the present by the past as we remember it is foolish, for ultimate wisdom is to accept with patience the real condition which is the present and seek to point it towards a better future.

Ecclesiastes 7:11-12 [New King James] *“Wisdom is good with an inheritance, and profitable to those who see the sun. For wisdom is a defence as money is a defence, but the excellence of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who have it.”*

We need to use wisdom with an inheritance if it is **not** going to end being a curse, [**Proverbs 20:21**] also wisdom in life is as good as a well-used inheritance, for it gives a good life to all who have it and use it.

Ecclesiastes 7:13 [New King James] *“Consider the work of God; for who can make straight what He has made crooked?”*

The Hebrew word translated “straight” is “tâqan” meaning composed or set in order and the Hebrew word translated “crooked” is “avath” meaning perverted, subverted, turned upside down.

These words are referring to the laws of God, both physical and spiritual.

Solomon is referring in context to God’s spiritual laws and humanity has been trying to do exactly what Solomon tells us ever since humans were first created, [**Genesis 3:1-6**].

This has continued throughout every generation, all the time prompted by Satan who is the “father of all lies” [**John 8:44**] and who has blinded the vast majority of people to the truth, [**2 Corinthians 4:3-4**] as he still remains in control of this world, [**1 John 5:19**].

Solomon is pleading with us to give up trying to change what an all-wise Creator God has set in place and get in harmony with His way of life.

Ecclesiastes 7:14 [New King James] *“In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: surely God has appointed the one as well as the other, so that man can find out nothing that will come after him.”*

The Creator God allows both good and bad times in our lives so that we **cannot** predict the future or count on human wisdom and power.

Humans usually give ourselves credit for the good times. Then in bad times we call them “acts of God” and blame Him for them without having thanked Him for the good times.

Hebrews 12:7-11 [New King James] *“If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”*

Most what we call “bad times” involve the discipline of our Creator God, as He accepts us as His child and seeks to develop holiness, character like His, in us.

We should also look on our Creator God as our “coach” who is pushing us to our limit to ensure we win our “race” in this life, [1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Hebrews 12:1-4].

Ecclesiastes 7:15 [New King James] *“I have seen everything in my days of vanity: there is a just man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs life in his wickedness.”*

The Hebrew word used to translate “just” and “righteousness” both come from the same root word “tsâdaq” meaning to clear oneself, to cleanse or **justify oneself**.

When we add the word “his” to righteousness we see this is not the righteousness of the Creator God, which can only come through faith in Jesus Christ, [Romans 4:13, 16, 18-24] then receiving an imputed righteousness.

“Wicked” and “wickedness” both come from the same Hebrew root word “râa”.

When we carry over this understanding of the language being used, to the next two verses, the meaning becomes clearer.

Ecclesiastes 7:16-17 [New King James] *“Do not be overly righteous, nor be overly wise: why should you destroy yourself? Do not be overly wicked, nor be foolish: why should you die before your time?”*

This is Solomon exposing the righteousness that comes from legalism, a false self-righteousness.

Such a person can become righteous and linked with that wise, in their own eyes, because they are deluded by their religious acts.

Such people become so rigid or narrow in their religious views and with the judgement of others who do not conform to their views, that they lose sight of the true reason for becoming righteous or holy, that is, to honour a holy Creator God, [**1 Peter 1:15-16**].

Matthew 5:20 [New King James] *“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

This can **only** happen if we through faith in Jesus Christ that His righteousness is credited to us as already mentioned above.

The Scribes and Pharisees were as yet unable to understand the true way to righteousness [that is being *“right with the Creator God”*] this is one reason why Jesus Christ corrected so fiercely at times.

The same applies with wickedness, for excessive wickedness opens up our minds and bodies to our arch enemy Satan, who is seeking to destroy any future we may have with our Creator God, [John 8:44; Revelation 12:10].

Ecclesiastes 7:18 [New King James] *“It is good that you grasp this, and also not remove your hand from the other; for he who fears God will escape them all.”*

It is essential that we understand how we can be deluded by Satan into a false understanding of true righteousness and not drawn into a pit of excessive wickedness that is so easy in the Satan-influenced society in which we live.

Ephesians 2:1-3 [New King James] *“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.”*

Describing Satan as *“the prince of the power of the air”* is very vivid when we consider the power of the internet, television or radio today, most of it aiming to prompt us to do evil against the Creator God, our fellow human beings, or ourselves.

Ecclesiastes 7:19 [New King James] *“Wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten rulers of the city.”*

Solomon later gives us an example of a man using such godly wisdom, [**Ecclesiastes 9:13-15**].

In society today we see the lack of wisdom in the political and municipal leaders that rule us, who are multiplied in many towns and cities.

Ecclesiastes 7:20-22 [New King James] *“For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin. Also do not take to heart everything people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you. For many times, also, your own heart has known that even you have cursed others.”*

Solomon then mentioned one sin that most people would **not** consider a sin, but it is **not** loving our neighbour as we should.

Ecclesiastes 7:23-25 [New King James] *“All this I have proved by wisdom. I said, ‘I will be wise’; but it was far from me. As for that which is far off and exceedingly deep, who can find it out? I*

applied my heart to know, to search and seek out wisdom and the reason of things, to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness.”

Solomon, the wisest man in the world, confessed how difficult it was to act and think wisely.

Solomon is confessing that no matter how much we know, there are always many mysteries we will never understand.

So thinking that you have enough wisdom is a sure sign that you do not.

Ecclesiastes 7:27-28 [New King James] *“‘Here is what I have found,’ says the Preacher, ‘adding one thing to the other to find out the reason, which my soul still seeks but I cannot find: one man among a thousand I have found, but a woman among all these I have not found.’”*

When we look at Solomon’s “*track record*” we could **not** expect to find a prudent, virtuous man, having “*married*” so many women for political reasons, [**1 Kings 11:1-8**].

Add to these wives many concubines, women who were acquired by purchase or a war captive to act as a slave.

The point that Solomon is making is that **not** that women are unwise but that hardly anyone, man or woman, is upright before God.

Ecclesiastes 7:29 [New King James] *“Truly, this only I have found: that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.”*

God created human beings to live a life that would eventually characterise His own life, [**Genesis 1:26-27** “*likeness*” refers to character]

Instead humanity in every generation has left God’s path and followed their own downhill road to wickedness and pain.

Broken marriages are part of that lack of loyalty and trust, both of which are part of the Creator God’s character.

This life of wickedness and pain is the utmost to which human wisdom can attain.

Humans have fallen from the original state that God created them, and through their own “*cleverness*” have brought about their own undoing, which could be fatal, [**Matthew 24:21-22**].

Without the influence of their Creator God in their lives humans are at variance with themselves.