

# Ecclesiastes

## Part Six

**Ecclesiastes 8:1** [New King James] *“Who is like a wise man? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man’s wisdom makes his face shine, and the sternness of his face is changed.”*

Note it is **“human”** wisdom that Solomon is referring to, **not** godly wisdom.

**Human political wisdom** is **not** a logical science, it is a psychological art form.

It is gained not by what is logically sound and consistent but by what is relatively opportune [verse 9].

**The two Hebrew words used by Solomon indicate that it is human wisdom that is being referred to.**

*“Shine”* is the Hebrew word *“ôwr”* meaning to **light up or to set on fire.**

*“Sternness”* is the Hebrew word *“ôwz”* meaning impudent – **loud and powerful.**

**Both are part of political human wisdom that allows a person to rule over other people.**

**Therefore an authoritarian human order in society may be irrational and even evil, nevertheless it is better than insurrection.**

**Romans 13:1-7** [New King James] *“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.”*

**This is hardly an acceptable doctrine for many people to accept today, it is a profound challenge to those who seek to be leaders who identify change with progress. Yet such an idea of reform was no doubt strange to the mind of the writer, who construes criticism of authority as simple insurrection.**

The inability to see clearly the outcome of any change, due to being limited to human wisdom, places the onus upon those who advocate or instigate the change.

**Too often so called human reforms which are designed to remove one evil often put others in its place.**

Just as long-term policies based on human wisdom are called to question by the short-term of human life.

**Ecclesiastes 8:2-7** [New King James] *“I say, ‘Keep the king’s commandment for the sake of your oath to God. Do not be hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand for an evil thing, for he does whatever pleases him.’ Where the word of a king is, there is power; and who may say to him, ‘What are you doing?’ He who keeps his command will experience nothing harmful; and a wise man’s heart discerns both time and judgment, because for every matter there is a time and judgment,*

*though the misery of man increases greatly. For he does not know what will happen; so who can tell him when it will occur?"*

**This is saying the same as Paul taught the Roman Church, obey human authorities, inspite of their lack of true godly wisdom, for this is how the Creator God wishes us to react.** In one way we can be judged by our Creator God as to how we would act and react as part of His created family, having been given the gift of eternal life in the Kingdom of God, by the way we respond to human authority.

**Proverbs 9:10** [New King James] *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."*

**Godly wisdom is only acquired when we have great respect and honour of our Creator God, most human leaders do not have such fear of their Creator, even if they feign such a respect, "do religion."**

**Ecclesiastes 8:8-9** [New King James] *"No one has power over the spirit to retain the spirit, and no one has power in the day of death. There is no release from that war, and wickedness will not deliver those who are given to it. All this I have seen, and applied my heart to every work that is done under the sun: there is a time in which one man rules over another to his own hurt."*

The Hebrew word translated "spirit" is "rûwach" meaning breath. The same Hebrew word is used in **Job 32:8** where we are told this makes us different to an animal because through it we receive the ability to plan and think [intellect]. **Zechariah 12:1** This is why I refer to it as our "human spirit" and this is what returns to the Creator God at death [**Ecclesiastes 12:7**] and we cannot have any control over this event, even if we seek to continue artificially the functions of the human body.

**Ecclesiastes 8:10** [New King James] *"Then I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of holiness, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done. This also is vanity."*

**This could be referring to those who regularly perform religious rituals in some "holy" building considering it to be an insurance policy for a life after death, yet still remain in a rebellious attitude against their Creator God. Although humans may forget their evil, the Creator God does not, so this is futile.**

**Ecclesiastes 8:11-13** [New King James] *"Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he does not fear before God."*

If the Creator God does **not** punish us immediately, we must **not** assume that He does **not** care and is not aware, or that the sin if not repented of has no consequences.

The Creator God is well aware of every wrong we commit, and one day we will have to answer for all that we have done, [**Ecclesiastes 12:14; 2 Corinthians 5:10-12**].

**Ecclesiastes 8:14-15** [New King James] *"There is a vanity which occurs on earth, that there are just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked; again, there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity. So I commended enjoyment, because a man has nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry; for this will remain with him in his labour all the days of his life which God gives him under the sun."*

Solomon observes that the reward that this world gives to human beings, righteous or wicked, is not always as even human wisdom and reasoning believes is just.

**Solomon's remedy for this and other unanswered questions about physical life is to live one day at a time, [Matthew 6:33-34] each with its work, food and pleasure. Learn to enjoy what the**

**Creator God has given us and be constantly thankful to Him for these gifts of life. All the time seeking to do what is pleasing to Him.**

**Ecclesiastes 8:16-17** [New King James] *“When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on earth, even though one sees no sleep day or night, then I saw all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. For though a man labours to discover it, yet he will not find it; moreover, though a wise man attempts to know it, he will not be able to find it.”*

Even if we had access to all human wisdom we would still know very little about our Creator God.

**Isaiah 55:7-9** [New King James] *“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. ‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’”*

We are very foolish if we try to fit the Creator God into our mould, to make His plans and purposes conform to ours, instead we must seek to fit into His plans for us.

This unknown future for us as a physical individual should **not** cast a shadow over our faith, joy and work for our Creator.

We can always be sure that the Creator God is in total control of everything, even allowing evil to exist for a purpose, so we can place our total trust in Him.

Do **not** allow what we do **not** know about the future destroy the joy that the Creator God wants to give us today, as we seek to be within His will and presence.

**Ecclesiastes 9:1-6** [New King James] *“For I considered all this in my heart, so that I could declare it all: that the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God. People know neither love nor hatred by anything they see before them. All things come alike to all: one event happens to the righteous and the wicked; to the good, the clean, and the unclean; to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As is the good, so is the sinner; he who takes an oath as he who fears an oath. This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing happens to all. Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished; nevermore will they have a share in anything done under the sun.”*

Solomon continues to give us more wisdom about physical death. Life is a course in which we all as humans run together, all have to overcome certain problems and we all come to the same end.

So long as the race of life is running there is hope for all, even if it appears most are in a hopeless position as far as life after death is concerned. The knowledge that they will eventually die may make the living wise, but for those who have come to the end of this race, hope is gone, for them *“this day of God’s grace”* is past and they must now await a resurrection back to physical life to have their *“day of God’s grace.”*

**Revelation 20:11-13** [New King James] *“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.”*

**The understanding of a resurrection back to physical life was only a vague concept under the Old Covenant.**

**Ezekiel 37:1-14** [New King James] *“The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry. And He said to me, ‘Son of man, can these bones live?’ So I answered, ‘O Lord GOD, You know.’ Again He said to me, ‘Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, “O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: ‘Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.’”’ So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them. Also He said to me, ‘Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, “Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.’”’ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army. Then He said to me, ‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, “Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!” Therefore prophecy and say to them, “Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it,’ says the LORD.”’”*

**This prophecy was one of these limited concepts of a resurrection back to physical life.**

**Ecclesiastes 9:7-10** [New King James] *“Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already accepted your works. Let your garments always be white, and let your head lack no oil. Live joyfully with the wife whom you love **all the days** of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labour which you perform under the sun. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.”*

Again Solomon in His God-given wisdom is encouraging us to have a balanced life, and the encouragement that the Creator God has accepted your life.

We are **not** to stop at that statement but ensure that we are applying the next words.

**Wearing white costumes and having your head anointed with oil were outward signs of a happy and contented life.**

Solomon wrote many Proverbs about marriage and the relationship that a man should have with his wife, only one, **not** as he had experienced in his life, finding out that more is **not** always better.

Note it says *“all the days.”*

The next statement is linked with a loyal and happy relationship in marriage, because we all as married people know that problems at home can be very detrimental to our being able to give of our best in our work.

**Proverbs 18:22** [New King James] *“He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favour from the LORD.”*

**If a man looks on his wife in this way it will help the relationship.**

**Proverbs 31:10-11** [New King James] *“Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain.”*

The husband telling his wife that this is how he sees her will be a great stimulus for her to become what he sees, [verse 28].

How sad it is to be married and not enjoy and appreciate the companionship that the Creator God has designed a marriage to be, [Genesis 2:18, 22-24] this union to be happy and fulfilling it needs to have the right input from the wife as well as the husband.

Solomon speaks about the wife with a wrong attitude towards the marriage union.

**Proverbs 14:1** [New King James] *“The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands.”*

How can a wife do this? [Proverbs 21:9, 19; Proverbs 27:15].

**Ephesians 5:22-33** [New King James] *“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”*

**Guidance for a marriage to be as the Creator God intended is expanded by God through His apostle Paul in his letter to the Christians in Ephesus.**

**Yet this way to a happy and fulfilled marriage is rejected by many who claim to be Christians.**

**Ecclesiastes 9:11-12** [New King James] *“I returned and saw under the sun that, the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all. For man also does not know his time: like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare, so the sons of men are snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them.”*

Solomon is seeking to reduce our expectations in life, reminding us that at this time it is **not** God’s society in which we have to live, that will only start after the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, this time to rule, [Revelation 21:1-6].

Until this “world tomorrow” we live in a world that is ruled by Satan [2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19; John 8:44] where what usually happens is sinful and imperfect.

We must hold on to our perspective as Christians and **not** let the inequities in life keep us from earnestly serving our Creator God by spreading the good news that Jesus Christ brought from God the Father for all of humanity.

**Do not delay this work for we do not know how long we individually have left to serve our Creator God and other human beings.**

**Ecclesiastes 9:13-18** [New King James] *“This wisdom I have also seen under the sun, and it seemed great to me: there was a little city with few men in it; and a great king came against it, besieged it, and built great snares around it. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that same poor man. Then I said: ‘Wisdom is better than strength. Nevertheless the poor man’s wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard. Words of the*

*wise, spoken quietly, should be heard Rather than the shout of a ruler of fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war; but one sinner destroys much good.’”*

**Our society honours wealth, attractiveness and success above wisdom.**

Yet wisdom is a greater asset than strength, although this is often **not** recognised by the majority of people.

Even though it is more effective in solving situations, wisdom is **not** always even heard, wise people going unheeded.

We need to learn from Solomon’s lifetime experience behind this parable to be respectful to wisdom, no matter who it comes from.