

# Eccelesiastes

As the Philosophical Foundation of the Bible



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# Introduction:

## Introduction

The biblical book of Ecclesiastes is my personal favorite. Twelve short chapters packed with an unbelievable amount of theology/ biblical philosophy. In my opinion, it's the most succinct summation of biblical philosophy in the Bible. Also, in my opinion, I believe it serves as a "Cliff's Notes" text for the book of Job. The commonalities between Ecclesiastes and Job are too numerous and too consistent for them to have been an accident. I can easily imagine Solomon reflecting on the book of Job as he's putting his thoughts together for Ecclesiastes.

I believe there are three basic themes to be aware of as you read the book:

- juxtaposition
- paradox
- the circular reference

**Juxtaposition:** The act or an instance of placing two or more things side by side. *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 11th ed.*

**Paradox:** **1:** a tenet contrary to received opinion **2 a:** a statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense but is perhaps true **b:** a self-contradictory statement that at first seems true **c:** an argument that apparently derives self-contradictory conclusions by valid deduction from acceptable premises. *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 11th ed.*

**Circular Reference:**

**"I AM WHO I AM"**

*-Exodus 3:14 (NKJV)*

A circular reference is when you use the item being defined to describe the item being defined as God does in this case. When God explains who he is to Moses, he refers back to himself. There's a line of thought I've come across which believes Moses was trying to learn God's name in order to manipulate/ control him in accord with his Egyptian education/ upbringing. God tells Moses exactly who he is but doesn't give him any information he can actually use. God lets Moses know he's without beginning or end, which sums up who God is in his entirety. However, it's also a riddle Moses can ponder this the rest of his life (as can we) and never have enough knowledge to challenge God's supremacy. Which is also, exactly the point.

The circular reference is especially important in the Bible as it shows the inherent link between the "Old" Testament and the "New"-the two *cannot* be separated. The "Old" Testament isn't. It's just as relevant today as it was several thousand years ago-in principle. That's the key however-principle! Yes, some of the laws may no longer apply however, the principles they were meant to teach us do. Those principles are inherent to God's character and thus, it's impossible for them to lose relevance/ go "out of style"/ cease to apply. Anyone who says otherwise is a heretic at best and probably fully apostate.

6 Moreover He said, "I *am* the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."  
And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

*-Exodus 3:6 (NKJV)*

58 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

*-John 8:58 (NKJV)*

In the two quotes above God and Jesus are essentially doing the same thing. They are in the "present" speaking about the past as if it *is* the present. In the Exodus example Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had already been dead about 300-400 years. God speaks about them as though they are still in the present, as if time has no relevance to him. It's the same thing with Jesus except, he expands the time window. He's speaking circa 30-33 AD. He refers to Abraham some 1,500 years or so prior (past tense) but then states, "I AM" (present tense). This mirroring of what God said has several implications: 1. Jesus and God are one and the same entity (which is why the religious leaders were so angry at this statement), 2. although time appears to be linear from our point of view, perhaps it is in fact circular in nature. I have no desire to go off on any metaphysical rabbit trails however, it's something to consider.

This barely scratches the surface of what the book of Ecclesiastes has to offer. Let's get started...

# Ecclesiastes 1:

1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

*-Ecclesiastes 1:1 (NKJV)*

The first verse is obviously the author (presumably King Solomon-although there is some debate) identifying himself to his audience.

2 “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher; “Vanity of vanities, all *is* vanity.”

*-Ecclesiastes 1:2 (NKJV)*

Verse 2 is where the text of Ecclesiastes really gets started. This verse sets the context for the chapter as well as the entire book.

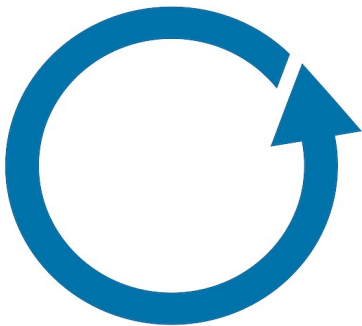
**Vanity: 1:** something that is vain, empty or valueless.

**Vain: 1:** having no real value; IDLE, WORTHLESS **2:** marked by futility or ineffectualness; UNSUCCESSFUL, USELESS **3:** *archaic*; FOOLISH, SILLY

*Definitions from: Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 11th ed.*

Do you remember the circular reference mentioned in the "Introduction"? Here it is again. In order to define the item, the author refers to the item. This serves two purposes: 1. to set the context (as already mentioned) for the chapter then the book, 2. it magnifies the meaning of the vanity. As we ponder things which are vain, empty or valueless we'll come to understand they are even more vain empty and valueless.

Think about the vanity of life as exemplified in the endless cycles presented in the first chapter.



v. 3-the endless cycle of toiling under the sun to make a living, etc.

v. 4-generations come and go.

v. 5-the sun rises then goes down endlessly.

v. 6-the wind whirls about continuously.

v. 7-the rivers continuously fill the sea and never run dry.

v. 8-the eye does not see enough and the ears do not hear enough.

v. 9-that which has been is what will be, what has been done will be done again.

10 **Is there anything of which it may be said,**

**“See, this *is* new”?**

**It has already been in ancient times before us.**

11 *There is* no remembrance of former *things*,

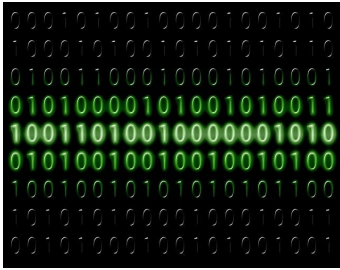
Nor will there be any remembrance of *things* that are to come

By *those* who will come after.

*-Ecclesiastes 1:10-11 (NKJV)*

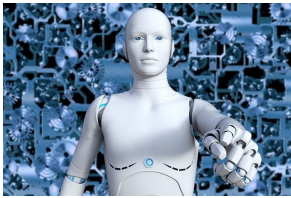
The bold print in the text for verse 10 was my doing. I believe this to be one of the keys to the text. What if, instead of being a platitude, there really is (literally) *nothing* new under the sun?

**What about computers? Those are new.**



Are they really? Our computers are based on a binary code of 1's and 0's. DNA is a "computer" code but is much more powerful. It's based on a quadratic code of A, G, T, C and the amount of information which can be held in a teaspoon using the DNA code is hard to fathom. I'm not going to venture out of my "lane" here and talk about genetics/ computer programming, etc. It's already been done. Instead, do some research online on your own. Look-up DNA, the cell, the human body. Please consider, "The Case for a Creator" by Lee Strobel<sup>1</sup>. It's on You-Tube. It's mind-blowing! If you're feeling especially frisky and *really* want your mind twisted into an unrecognizable shape, consider watching: "Origin of Life Crisis: Rice's Dr. James Tour Calls Out Bad Science at Harvard"<sup>2</sup> on You-Tube.

**What about robots?**



What about them? Look on You-Tube for "robot parkour". There are some really amazing things available. It's incredible what we've been able to do in that department. Then, look-up "parkour", and be even more amazed. If there's a mathematician out there please consider doing the calculations on what would be required ("software"/ "hardware") for a human being to perform parkour (processing capacity/ power, visual resolution of the eye, communication across all body systems, etc.) with no lag in real-time perception and performance. I'm sure it's hard to comprehend. If robots, etc. are "new", why do they always emulate forms (animals/ humans) which already exist?

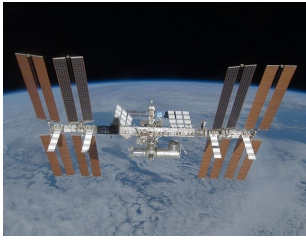
**What about cars and airplanes?**



What is a horse? It's an "engine" which converts fuel into energy. That energy is then channeled to move things. It has an onboard "computer" to run all the necessary functions to make movement possible. Horses can also procreate-something automobiles can't do. Attach a chariot to it and you have a "car". Yes, automobiles are faster today than they were. Nonetheless, how do we measure engine power today-"horsepower".

Why do we have aircraft? Because we studied birds and pondered, "How do they do that...fly?" The principles of lift, aerodynamics etc. were discovered by studying birds. What is a bird? It's an "engine" which converts fuel into energy and uses homing radar and it's onboard computer system for flight, navigation, reproduction (something aircraft can't do), etc.

## What about the space station?



Are you referring to the habitat which moves through space and has climate control and systems for food and water and sleep and rest and resources for up to 6 inhabitants to perform their work?

Are you really going to make me do this? Fine...What is planet Earth, which currently has a population of 8 billion? It's already been done. There's nothing new under the sun-literally. It's impossible for there to be because, God has not created anything new (that we know of).

## The Grief of Wisdom

In verses 12-14 the author finishes this chapter by summing up the endless cyclical nature of life as a "...burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised."-*Ecclesiastes 1:13 (NKJV)* The idea being this keeps us busy and in some way makes us stronger and more fit.

15 *What is crooked cannot be made straight,*

And what is lacking cannot be numbered.

*-Ecclesiastes 1:15 (NKJV)*

The point of verse 15 is we're caught in a never ending loop of living. Regardless of how that makes us feel there's no way out of it. We simply have to deal with that reality. I think there are two basic ways we'll feel about that: 1. it will create a sense of despair, or 2. it will create a sense of security. The author (presumably King Solomon) admits he gained much wisdom, more than anyone before him, and it was all for nothing. It was, "...vanity, and grasping for the wind." It's made worse by the fact that:

18 For in much wisdom *is* much grief,

And he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

*-Ecclesiastes 1:18 (NKJV)*

Why is that?! At some point we must come to the realization we "create"-*nothing*. Everything we do is modeled on something which already exists. We "discover" things *only* because they already exist and therefore can be discovered. We must come to the realization all of this is at the pleasure of someone we cannot manipulate and to whom we are indebted for *everything*!

This is of course extremely damaging to the human ego. It is what it is...

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## Ecclesiastes 2:



### Recap:

As you think about the fact we're all caught in a cycle of living, how does that make you feel?

- Entrapped because the space, although secure, is constricting and you desire to know what else is "out there" or,
- Secure, because you know what's inside and you can move freely while being confident you're protected from what's "out there".

As we ponder the endless cycle of life and ultimately how pointless it all is, I think this awakens a desire in all of us to search for meaning and significance. How do we do that? One of the most obvious is to pursue accomplishment. I think chapter 2 flows very naturally from the ponderings in chapter 1.



4 I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. 5 I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all *kinds* of fruit trees in them. 6 I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove. 7 I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me. 8 I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, *and* musical instruments of all kinds.

*-Ecclesiastes 2:4-8 (NKJV)*

The author (presumably Solomon) mentions in verse 1 testing his heart with mirth for the purpose of enjoying pleasure. Are we wrong for wanting to be happy? Are we wrong if we pursue pleasure? Is it wrong to gratify our flesh if we continue to guard our heart with wisdom?

Not necessarily, is the best answer I can give. We all have physical needs (food, shelter, relationship). These are not evil in and of themselves. We can't allow ourselves to use those needs as justification to sin. On the other hand, not providing for our basic needs and those of the people God has placed in our lives to care for, is likewise sinful. There should be no guilt for taking care of ourselves and others.

Should we aspire to be affluent or even wealthy? The best answer I can give is, "Perhaps..." Perhaps, what?

- Did it come about because of a 'love of money'?
- Did it come about at the expense of other moral considerations?
- Did it come about as a result of exerting undue influence over others to achieve your goals?
- Was the attainment of affluence or wealth the sole driving value for acquiring it?

If you've answered (honestly) "yes" to any of the above or more than one, perhaps you should re-think your goals so you don't become more guilty before God.

Wealth *gained* by dishonesty will be diminished, But he who gathers by labor will increase.

*-Proverbs 13:11 (NKJV)*

If our affluence or wealth comes about as a result of increasing skill at what we do and a habit of being wise and saving while living frugally, there's no need for guilt. As our means to provide grows so will our results. This is simply to be expected. Over the course of time, the results will be profound if implemented steadily.



In verses 12-16 the Teacher acknowledges being wise is better than being foolish. Even though this is the case the same fate happens to both: death. So what's the benefit of being wise as opposed to foolish if all of our wisdom will ultimately come to nothing? Why not indulge ourselves in foolishness and self-gratification?

17 Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun *was* distressing to me, for all *is* vanity and grasping for the wind.

*-Ecclesiastes 2:17 (NKJV)*

Have you had this conversation with yourself yet? Have you begun to hate life and hate the labor in which you're toiling under the sun because it only seems to be for the good of someone else? What are we getting for our toil? When will the burden end? Has this created sorrow in your life? Do you feel ill at ease even in the night when you should be able to sleep peacefully?

You're not alone. I'm not making light of how you feel. Be assured, it's all been done in ancient times before us. There's nothing new under the sun. Perhaps you feel a little insulted at that. I hope not, but am sorry if that's the case. Perhaps that sounded patronizing. Again, I hope not but, I am sorry if that's the case. What's the answer?

24 Nothing *is* better for a man *than* that he should eat and drink, and *that* his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God.

*-Ecclesiastes 2:24 (NKJV)*

Try to find a genuine sense of gratitude for the labor and accomplishment you're involved in. Realize this labor is a gift from God and he does genuinely want us to enjoy life. Life was not meant to be an unbearable burden. Being able to produce and accomplish is a good thing. It's part of His charge to mankind to fill the earth and subdue it. Perhaps this is easier said than done. Nonetheless, this will be worth some reflection. Please do so.

## Ecclesiastes 3:



As we enjoy life, doing the work God has granted us to do, what's the worst thing which happens to us?

### We achieve success...

I'm sorry, what?! Remember, in chapter 1 the author mentions God giving us this "burdensome task" as a means of "exercising" us. Instead of thinking about it as "toil" or a "burdensome task", let's think of it as *desirable difficulty*. How often have you heard of the hardworking individual who spends their life providing for him/ herself and their family; they make good choices, work diligently, plan for the future, especially the day they can retire. The day comes when they can reach their goal and retire. Within a short time they die. How often do you hear the reason for this was they no longer had a purpose in life? Why is that?

It turns out spending their days in labor was rewarding. Granted it was/ is also tiring. However, having something worth working toward (the future) keeps us: hopeful, motivated, inspired to move forward and make sacrifices in the short term, for a long term good. This *is* an exceedingly good thing. Then one day, it's gone...now what? Puttering around a garden doing menial tasks may sound rewarding. Perhaps it is for a short time, as the relief of years of labor can be put aside. However, it will quickly lose its appeal.

Even in the Garden, Adam and Eve had a mission beyond simply frolicking in the meadow in their *au naturale* state. They were tasked with "tending" the garden, whatever that meant. I don't get the impression it was overly exhausting; it was nonetheless, something for them to do. After the fall, their burden became greatly increased. This was obviously a curse. I believe it was also a hidden blessing, to a degree. Idle hands are the Devil's playthings, or so I've heard. If their workload increases because sin has entered the world then they should have less time to sin. Human ingenuity being what it is, mankind found time to increase the level of sin regardless of their workload. This degradation of early society is what eventually led to God bringing a cleansing flood to enact a "Great Re-Set". This will be covered more in the Genesis study; I don't want to veer too far off track right now.

5 *Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have.* For He Himself has said, "*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*" 6 So we may boldly say:

*"The LORD is my helper;*

*I will not fear.*

*What can man do to me?*

*-Hebrews 13:5-6 (NKJV)*

We're called to be sincerely grateful/ content with what we have. What does the quoted verse **NOT** say? It doesn't say, "Settle for what you have." But...isn't that contradicting the spirit of the passage? Not necessarily. It does require wisdom. Have you ever noticed someone who's ungrateful for what they have? How do they act? If they try to acquire more, do they become entitled? Do they become committed to acquire more regardless of the cost? Hebrews 13: 1-4 is admonishing us not to do that. Let's paraphrase: be *genuinely* grateful for what you have, wherever you're starting from. Enjoy it, God is with you and desires to bless you. I'm *not* promoting the prosperity gospel in any way. Take the opportunities to better your situation, as they come up, and use them for your good, without venturing into greed or other sins to do so.

What are we in right now? An endless cycle. Work for the future guided by hope and desire. Achieve the goal for which we worked and find the pay-off isn't as glorious as we imagined thus, it becomes a source of bitterness. Find a larger goal that gives us hope and...repeat *ad nauseum*. What's the answer to defeat this cycle?

What if we focus more on the moment? What if we acknowledge this is an endless cycle and we focus on genuinely enjoying the stages of the cycle?

9 What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? 10 I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied. 11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.

*-Ecclesiastes 3:9-11 (NKJV)*

If we can thoroughly engage with the moment from a perspective of sincere gratitude, I believe this will allow us to overcome the trap of the boom-bust cycle. Read each of the things listed in verses 2-8 and remember the idea of juxtaposition from the Introduction. There are natural cycles to life that we're meant to be fully engaged in. We rob ourselves of a lot of joy by being detached from them or not being fully present in them. Should we have the attitude from times past of, "Just live for today/ the moment"? No, we're not called to be hedonistic in any way. Verse 11 from the quote above mentions we should keep eternity on our mind as a time will come where God demands an accounting for things done in the past (also in verse 15 and 17).

Ironically, when we are fully engaged in the moment we inadvertently find ourselves in more sets of endless cycles. Each of the pairings from verses 2-8 are juxtapositions but, they are also cycles. There's no getting out of it. Life truly is a grasping after the wind.

What if we live fully in the moment but turn our attention outward? Won't that relieve the pressure of the vanity of life?

Unfortunately, all this seems to do is magnify the fallen state of the world. Being stuck in the despair of the vanity of life, the injustice and inequities of society come to our attention. Wouldn't it be beneficial to engage the culture and try to save it from itself? Perhaps...but can you really (save society from itself)? Does society *want* to be rescued?

This unfortunately leads to the view that we are no better than animals, as stated in verse 18. What's the point of doing anything as it all ends in death anyway? Why should we try? And this sets up the tie-in to chapter 4 perfectly.

## Ecclesiastes 4:



1 Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun: and look! The tears of the oppressed, but they have no comforter—on the side of their oppressors *there is* power, but they have no comforter.2 Therefore I praised the dead who were already dead, more than the living who are still alive.3 Yet, better than both *is he* who has never existed, who has not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

*-Ecclesiastes 4:1-3 (NKJV)*



### Jihadis For Jesus

God warns us, in Deut. 4:2 (and many other places) to refrain from adding to or taking away from his word. Verses 1-3 above are a part of his Word. Part of me hates having to print them because Jihadis for Jesus cults (activist groups who've commandeered the faith to introduce an alternative gospel to lead astray as many as possible) have misrepresented the faith and perverted God's good intentions by hijacking the language. There's nothing new under the sun, it has all been done before. I don't want to derail the conversation but, I will need to (briefly) contrast biblical Jesus vs. Che Guevara Jesus (the lord and savior of the Jihadis for Jesus cults) so we can have a proper context for the discussion that follows.

**Oppress:** **1a:** *archaic:* SUPPRESS **b:** to crush or burden by abuse of power or authority **2:** to burden spiritually or mentally: weigh heavily upon.

**Oppression:** **1a:** unjust or cruel exercise of authority or power **b:** something that oppresses esp. in being unjust or an excessive exercise of power **2:** a sense of being weighed down in body or mind: DEPRESSION.

*Definitions from Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 11th edition.*

Unfortunately, too many have allowed themselves to be programmed to react reflexively and viscerally to various trigger words. Some of those being: oppression, oppressed, oppressors, and power, all of which are found in verses 1-3 above. Like Pavlov's dogs, individuals as well as groups, must respond in a certain manner when they've been cued and stimulated. Upon being exposed to certain trigger words one is obligated to suspend critical thinking and react with intense emotions and sentimentality. Any context beyond the immediate explosive emotional state is to be disregarded and one is required to fully lose oneself in an intense emotional experience. Anything less than this proves the individual does in fact hate the oppressed class and is part of the oppressor group.

Let's talk about an example. Circa 2020 there were a lot of riots around the world. Theoretically this was all in the name of "justice" and to fight oppression, etc. Is that really the case?

Think about someone who had their business destroyed as a result of these (mostly peaceful, although fiery) protests. They shed tears as a result of having their lives unjustly upended, destroyed (without due process). There was no one to comfort them because the power (of the mob, the mainstream media, corrupt religious organizations, governments, etc.) was on the side of the oppressors and against the innocent, without justification.

Since we'll be talking about oppression we need to think of it in an objective sense; Not in a secular subjective sense where a double standard is deployed to claim "oppression" for an extreme minority while justifying oppressing the majority (the "cry bully").

### **Let's have a quick recap...**

Chapter 1: We realize everything is cyclical, regardless of how we feel about it, we're stuck in a cycle we can't escape from.

Chapter 2: To deal with the entrapped feeling we focus on pursuing our self interest and making life better. There's nothing inherently wrong with this. The satisfaction doesn't last and we become unsettled again.

Chapter 3: The answer seems to be to embrace the cycles and live "in the moment" (while keeping an eye on eternity). This helps for awhile but, ultimately will not be satisfying for long either.

One of the biggest dangers to becoming increasingly self focused is to feel the world is increasingly against us. Because the "injustice" of our own entrapment is oppressing our mind, the natural overflow of our heart is for our mouth to begin speaking about the "oppression" all around us. Becoming hyper-sensitive to oppression we see it everywhere. There's oppression under my bed, in my closet, in my sandwich, everywhere outside, everywhere on t.v. Everything is made of oppression. Yes, things have in fact become this ridiculous. This ends in a fatalistic and nihilistic attitude; it would be better if nothing existed since *everything* is so corrupted by "oppression"!

Of course the answer, and the desire, is to become a "Jihadi for Jesus" and set the world straight. Too many times this is a superficial reaction to try and deal with a deeper issue. The situation isn't as dire as it's portrayed to be by the media and other corrupt organizations as mentioned previously.

Relationships are an answer to all this (well, sort of...). Having grounded individuals with whom we have common interest can go a long way in keeping us from becoming extreme in our views. It's *not* about compromising or always finding a "third way". It *is* about being *balanced*, with the help of those with whom we have *mutual* respect. This is *not* to be confused with those who will create a hivemind which only validates those errors we've already come to believe.

Verses 13-16 relate how we may be surprised from whom enlightenment may come. It could be from an unexpected source. We also never know how we may benefit others. Even if we, or someone else comes from nothing and has a significant impact for good, it will be forgotten eventually. Even though we strive for the good of others, to some degree it's self serving. In the long run, it, like us, will be forgotten by time.

In the end relationships, helping others, doing good, overcoming oppression, all of it is vanity.

**So, what's the point of it all...?**

## Ecclesiastes 5:



1 Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil.

*-Ecclesiastes 5:1 (NKJV)*

Chapter 5 is a summary for what we've read so far but also serves as a transition for the next seven chapters.

We're stuck within a cycle and even more distressing smaller cycles within bigger cycles. Life is just going in circles. Pursuing our own interests is not wrong, necessarily, but will not satisfy. Enjoying being in the moment can bring some relief, for a time, but will not satisfy in the long term. Focusing outwardly and helping others, having relationships and the like will provide some comfort and allow us to be useful but, is to a large degree self promoting and will not fulfill us completely. This can lead us to despair and despondency or if allowed to go unchecked-complete insanity (eventually). Nothing is more self destructive than a life of geometrically growing discontent.

### What do we do?

The *only* thing which can save us is to have a higher purpose. We *must* have something greater than ourselves to which we belong to give context and meaning to our lives. Something outside of the trap of life we're involuntarily a part of which will give us hope. We need someone to explain the chaos and the way through it and to reassure us *there is* light at the end of the tunnel and it's worth sacrificing for.

### There is however, one very important thing to consider...

When coming to God, it must be to *learn*, not making the mistake of believing it's to teach. One very serious downside to those who've accomplished a lot in their personal life is the belief they've nothing to learn. One of the greatest lies to be told is that those who are successful in career, school, the secular world, etc. are automatically qualified to be in the ministry and lead people spiritually. *Nothing* could be further from the truth! Although someone has a long list of self aggrandizing honorifics after their name (PhD., mDiv, B.S., etc.) they may in fact be the least qualified to teach people about God. Theoretically, they've learned skills which can be applied to the ministry and should be helpful. In reality, they've built their house on a foundation of sand. Secular professors who are enamored with their false gods (Karl Marx, Che Guevarra, Howard Zinn and other hyper intellectualized imbecilic pseudo-intellectuals of their perversion) have codified the impressionable young minds with errors. The young minds, and older minds who are aroused by the philosophical pornography of those mentioned in the parentheses, are incapable or unwilling or both to recognize and correct those errors on their own. They should undergo years of training (deprogramming) by qualified elder boards before being allowed to play games with the eternal state of the flock they are unfortunately shepherding. This however, is a separate and very lengthy discussion of it's own and not the main topic for this time.

### What's the point?

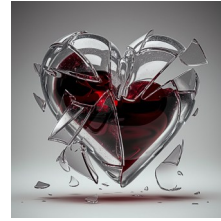
#### The point...

We have to understand our lives here are fleeting and brief (vanity) in respect to eternity. There's a lot going on to keep us on edge and distracted and ineffective (chapter 5 verses 8-17). God has a sincere desire for us to thrive and be content. This is *not* an advertisement for any sort of prosperity gospel mindset. He does want us to be genuinely happy in the midst of our pursuits. The *only* way this can happen is to keep our eyes focused on Him throughout those pursuits and distractions and all the things which keep us on edge.

18 Here is what I have seen: *It is* good and fitting *for one* to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for *it is* his heritage. 19 As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor—this *is* the gift of God. 20 For he will not dwell unduly on the days of his life, because God keeps *him* busy with the joy of his heart.

*-Ecclesiastes 5:18-20 (NKJV)*

## Ecclesiastes 6:



**Before beginning our study of chapter 6, we need to set the stage a little:**

Chapters 1-4 were very meticulous. There was a linear natural progression through the analysis of the state of life. We realize things seem to be pointless and we ask, "What's the point of it all?" In an effort to find meaning and purpose we pursue self interest and achieve success (chapter 2). This is a good thing but does not satisfy long term. We find joy in the cycles of life and focusing on being fully engaged in the moment (chapter 3). This is satisfying-for awhile, but eventually ends. Having these things stripped away from us we focus more on the world around us (chapter 4). This magnifies and distorts the "injustices" we see. Becoming a "white knight" or a rescuer does provide some exhilaration as we come to the aid of others but, like everything else fades with use. We have a nagging in our minds there has to be something greater than ourselves and everything around us to help us make sense of it all (chapter 5).

Because our logical, meticulous examination of the nature of life does not answer all of our questions we become disoriented and our emotions take over. Thus, we have the classic cycle of the battle of the intellect vs. the heart. One more cycle within a series of existing cycles. Such is the genius of the book of Ecclesiastes.

This introduces us to chapter 6. This chapter seems a little more erratic in its presentation. It seems less linear as if all the thoughts triggered by the careful analysis of chapters 1-4 break down and all try to come out at once. It sort of reminds me of a miniaturized version of the Psalms or Proverbs. When reading or listening to this section (chapters 6-11) I find it best to pull back a little and focus on the overall theme being presented then drilling down to the specific points. Because this section of Ecclesiastes seems to be more kinesthetic in nature, a logical over analysis is a less appropriate method to study it and an introspective and thoughtful method more so.

### **May I ask you a question?**

If your loved one had a life threatening injury, would it be beneficial for you to receive help in the shortest time possible; or, would it be better to spend as much time as possible contemplating what action to take?

One point of Ecclesiastes is to ask ourselves questions to make us think, and struggle through the challenging theological questions which are common to us all. The book of Job is very important for this reason also. The goal behind this *is* to resolve our doubts so our faith can be made complete ("...I believe; help my unbelief."-Mark 9:24).

Unfortunately, one of the most popular perversions of the faith today (...what will be done has already been done in ancient times before us...) is theological erotica. This philosophical silliness manifests itself in those who fetishize pseudo-intellectuals such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Simone de Beauvoir and others of their perverse ilk as the true apostles of the faith. Whereas those twelve unfortunate, simple, uneducated blue collar workers called by Jesus are just part of the system of patriarchal oppression which needs to be overthrown. *Viva la revolucion!*

The (mistaken) idea exists that questions should be asked simply to be asked, so that more questions can be asked and *nothing* should be resolved. This requires a very special kind of stupid which can only be enabled by a "higher" (mis-) education at an elitist institution. It is however, very titillating for the practitioner and gives him/ her social cover with his/ her peer group as being educated well beyond their actual level of intelligence. This is great for egotistical banter over cocktails, but not so great for preparing one to stand before their Creator and give a justification for His gracious gift of life to them.

1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! 6 For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, 7 **always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.** 8 Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; 9 but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.

-2 Timothy 3:1-9 (NKJV)

6 For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, 7 **always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.**

-2 Timothy 3:6-7 (NKJV)

Bold text in the quotes is mine for emphasis.

The conflict between the intellect and the heart will come up from time to time and in varying degrees as we continue through life. What has been resolved before will probably need to be resolved again. This is simply the nature of working out our faith with fear and trembling for the duration of time God will grant us to be a part of this world. This is *not* an excuse for or a justification of choosing to become stuck in a perpetual limbo and pretending this foolishness is in fact evidence of some secret wisdom.

### So...Ecclesiastes chapter 6...

1 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it *is* common among men: 2 A man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor, 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.

-Ecclesiastes 6:1 (NKJV)

For what more has the wise *man* than the fool?

-Ecclesiastes 6:8 (NKJV)

Who knows *how* to walk before the living?

-Ecclesiastes 6:8 (NKJV)

Since there are many things that increase vanity, How *is* man the better?

-Ecclesiastes 6:11 (NKJV)

12 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?

-Ecclesiastes 6:12 (NKJV)

These quotes/ questions seem vaguely familiar, as if what is being printed now has already been printed before. If not word for word then at least in principle. Please read the entirety of chapter 6 on your own while keeping these questions in mind. After that, please review chapters 1-5, again while keeping these questions in mind.

## Ecclesiastes 7:



When we become unsettled because we had clarity (or so we thought) and then we find our intellect at war with our emotions, what do we do? When we begin to question life and our purpose in it and wonder, "What's the point", what do we do? When we begin asking questions and we experience the unintended consequences of those questions spawning even more questions, how do we find our way out of that hot mess? Should we just give up and concede our life and dreams as liquidated damages? Is there a solution?

1 A good name *is* better than precious ointment...

*-Ecclesiastes 7:1 (NKJV)*

2 Better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting...

*-Ecclesiastes 7:2 (NKJV)*

3 Sorrow *is* better than laughter...

*-Ecclesiastes 7:3 (NKJV)*

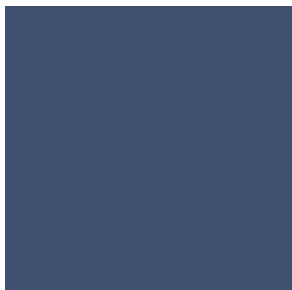
5 *It is* better to hear the rebuke of the wise than for a man to hear the song of fools...

*-Ecclesiastes 7:5 (NKJV)*

8 The end of a thing *is* better than its beginning; the patient in spirit *is* better than the proud in spirit...

*-Ecclesiastes 7:8 (NKJV)*

The ellipses (...) at the end of each of the above quotes is my doing. Even if the quote was a full sentence I'm indicating it's part of a greater quote. Leaving out the full quote will change the context. The rest of the missing quote will give clues as to why the partial quote is true. I just wanted to focus our attention on the idea of something being better than something else. Please read the entire chapter for full and proper context.



Cadet Blue (a dark blue mixed with gray) is the greatest color invented! Anyone who disagrees is obviously silly. This blue with these specific formulas: **R:** 24.8, **G:** 31.8, **B:** 43.5/ **H:** 217.5, **S:** 43, **V:** 43.5/ **Html:** 3f516f is the most sublime thing you'll ever see. It's visual nirvana! Pristine white, specifically Baker Box White which blinded me after painting the bathroom-true story (ish), is visual perfection. Charcoal Gray is the third most amazing color created! There can be no dispute to these facts!

"I'm sorry...what do your subjective color preferences have to do with anything?!"

One way to start untangling the mess of yarn which happens when we become disoriented and our intellect is at war with our emotional nature is to realize there are things which are objectively better than other things. A clear sense of ourselves (subjectively) helps us keep our life in order, until...it's threatened or upended. Once that happens the only way to resolve this impossible dilemma is to have an objective source outside of our subjective selves which tells us how we fit in and reveals our purpose, value, etc.

This logical consideration (verses 1-14) is all fine and good until...

Our emotional nature kicks in and begins listing all the exceptions to the rules in order to unsettle whatever resolutions we had just made (verses 15-28). But what about...(insert exception here)?

And here comes one of the biggest questions we all have. Unfortunately, for many this is a dealbreaker for their faith:

15 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.

*-Ecclesiastes 7:15 (NKJV)*

There is a just *man* who perishes in his righteousness,  
And there is a wicked *man* who prolongs *life* in his wickedness.

*-Ecclesiastes 7:15 (NKJV)*

**IF: God THEN:** why evil/ bad things happen to "good" people, etc.?

This question is much bigger than I can address here. It will be considered in depth when we get to our study of the book of Job. The book of Job is designed around that question in particular. In the meantime, here are some things to consider:

**Part 1:** the "good" suffer misfortune, injustice and the like...

- What if...someone dying "early" guarantees their eternity with God. What if a longer life would have led to them rejecting the faith and missing God's grace? Only God knows...
- What if..."hardship" is instead a desirable difficulty (like weight training) to prepare the individual for something great in the future? i.e. Joseph being unjustly treated by his brothers and Potiphar...read what he tells his brothers later; David spending years on the run from Saul in the wilderness; take your pick of biblical heroes. Hardship is part of the classical "heroes journey" which is why everyone admires it but so few are willing to submit to and endure it-it's a form of romanticism...
- What if...the "early" death of a "righteous" man will inspire others to turn to God? I wonder what impact Stephen's death may have had on Saul as he held the coats...for goodness' sake-Jesus' example. He died at 33 (ish) and look at the impact that's had...
- What if...God simply decides for (insert God's own reasons here) it's time for that person to die? Why are you overly concerned about it (not to be callous or uncaring)...what is your personal stake in this matter that you choose not to accept it? You do understand your time is now one day closer than it was yesterday-right? Perhaps we should spend less time worried about what's happening in the world (yes, it *is* important) and more time making sure our "house" is in order for *when* (not "if") our time comes...
- I'm sure there are other reasons (too many to list here). When you think of them, give them some honest thought.
- 

**Part 2:** the "wicked" live long and prosper...

- Psalm 98:3, Isaiah 45:22, 1 Timothy 2:4: all allude to God's desire for *everyone* to be in a right relationship with Him. *Everyone* without exception traces back through Adam (the son of God). God does not want any of his children to be lost.
- What if...God gives a long life to a "wicked" person to maximize the time they have to repent? What if this will be a topic of discussion on Judgment Day? "You thought you didn't need me." "Remember that time (insert blessing here that changed the course of their financial future for the better) and look how long I protected you to give you time to turn to me." "Why didn't you?" What will they say? This dynamic is loosely alluded to in Ezekiel 36: 31-38 where God says he will bless Israel after they come back from exile *so that* they will look back on their sinful behavior and be ashamed because of his grace/ generosity.

- 2 Thessalonians 2:10 makes reference to God intentionally moving against those who do not love the Truth and hardening them in that position for the purpose of their destruction. What if...the individual is so corrupt they're irredeemable. Being affluent or "blessed" they'll have no reason (in their mind) to acknowledge a need for change. As such their fate will be sealed. What if this is God's desire for this person so he can maximize his wrath against them on Judgment Day when he avenges Himself (avenge-to repay injury for injury)?
- What if the masses, seeing someone who is wealthy and living in a completely corrupt manner inspires them to make changes to propagate justice in that society or to be courageous and live a righteous example and call others to do the same because of the evil they witness?
- Again, there are too many to list. When you think of them, give them some honest thought.

25 With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; with a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless; 26 With the pure You will show Yourself pure; and with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd. 27 For You will save the humble people, but will bring down haughty looks.

*-Psalm 18:25-26 (NKJV)*

34 Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

*-Matthew 12:34 (NKJV)*

15 To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. 16 They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

*-Titus 1:15 (NKJV)*

Too often when someone has a complaint against God, it's really just a projection of something they have happening internally. One of the most popular iterations of this today is "racism". Everyone and everything is "racist". This is a little more of a conversation than I can get into now, but will try to at some point in the future. What I've observed is that those who cry the most about "racism" are in fact the most racist. Their ideology is founded on a double standard. They give themselves an unlimited blank check to say whatever they please but hold everyone else to an impossible standard based on their whims. Again, later...

29 Truly, this only I have found: that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes."

*-Ecclesiastes 7:29 (NKJV)*

The author of Ecclesiastes (as he was carried along by the Holy Spirit 2Peter 1:20) could not have ended this chapter in a better way. God has made us upright but...because of our inconsistencies with life *and* doctrine, etc. we ventured off into many schemes. What God has made straight, we've made crooked. The only way to correct this is for us to submit our subjective selves to an objective source (God) to provide context for our lives and get everything back in it's proper place.

## Ecclesiastes 8:



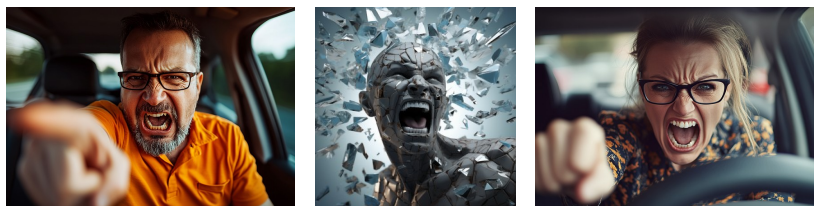
On the one hand I understand why they made a chapter 8 but, on the other hand I don't. Chapter 8 is a continuation and reinforcement of chapter 7. It almost could have been one long chapter. So, what's the purpose of chapter 8? I'm going to take things out of order, a little bit; I think it'll help bring clarity to the chapter.

One of the most troubling questions we all (believers and non-believers) face is the: "If God then why (bad things happen to "good" people, do the evil prosper and flourish, etc)...? This was mentioned in chapter 7. This is also a central question to the book of Job. We'll study it in depth then.

14 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.

*-Ecclesiastes 8:14 (NKJV)*

Realizing we're stuck in endless cycles that seem to be going nowhere, this question will inevitably come up and hit even harder than it would have otherwise. This is true because of the frustration of pursuing things which are good and right and beneficial to ourselves and others, but don't ultimately satisfy our deepest need. Even more insidious is thinking this malicious side of life is God's intent. Because we're in an elevated state of angst, this error in our thinking becomes more plausible as a legitimate line of thought. Once that happens the answer is obvious, God is at fault for our turmoil/ suffering. Because God is at fault then he is in fact sadistic and the enemy. Because he is the enemy he must be opposed and Heaven must be overthrown. Therefore-**JIHAD!** This rebellious attitude will unfortunately manifest itself in the real world in various ways; take a look at the world today.



9 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.*

*-Ecclesiastes 8:9 (NKJV)*

One very sinful downside to the savior complex/ slacktivist Christianity is to demonize those who don't instantly bend the knee and confess activism as lord. Those with the sense to slow things down and examine a little what may, in fact, be happening find themselves in the "out-crowd" while the "in-crowd" is rabidly calling for their demise. Tragically, those who prefer to give in to their self-stimulatory lusts of the flesh and have contempt for slowing things down will, ironically, suffer the unintended consequence of working for their own destruction, and never realize it.

There are too many references throughout the Bible for the principle of: God will *not* be mocked, a man (and woman-the "sinless" sex) *will* reap what he (she-women have no exemption regardless of what society wants us to believe, they may claim unlimited victimhood now but God will strip that nonsense away on Judgment Day and they *will* be held individually accountable for their sin) has sown. A man/ woman reaping what he/ she has sown is not just a threat, it *is* a promise. This promise is very consistent throughout *all* of scripture. Adoni Bezek is one example in the Old(er) Testament. The Psalms are loaded with references about one setting a trap for his neighbor and falling into it himself, and the like. The New(er) Testament has references to being judged by our own standard, etc. I can't list them all here because they're so common.

### **The point...**

It *is* overwhelming to know without doubt life is vanity, a chasing after the wind. It is not helped by the fact we can easily observe things, which in our opinion, are not "fair" or "just".

2 I say, "Keep the king's commandment for the sake of your oath to God. 3 Do not be hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand for an evil thing, for he does whatever pleases him."

*-Ecclesiastes 8:2-3 (NKJV)*

The reality is this: God *is* sovereign, He does what he does for his own reasons and does *not* justify Himself to us. This is a bitter realization for our intellect but...it is what it is and there's no way to get around it. This *will* create a conflict with our emotional side. Either we accept it or, we won't. It doesn't change the reality we face. We're called to be obedient nonetheless and have no justification for becoming angsty and fomenting rebellion.

16 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, 17 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 labors 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*.

*-Ecclesiastes 8:16-17 (NKJV)*

### **Why is all this important?**

The clock is ticking. We're *all* headed toward a morbid date with an inescapable destiny. Our faith needs to be resolved *before* (not "if") that happens.

I'll end this study of chapter 8 with the title for the next section, inserted by those who wrote the New King James translation:

## **Death Comes to All...**

## Ecclesiastes 9:



3 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. 4 But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

*-Ecclesiastes 9:3-4 (NKJV)*

One interesting aspect of the last few chapters of Ecclesiastes is their interwoven nature. An example of this is chapter 9 which actually begins in chapter 8 verses 10-17. The author, as he was carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21) starts to foreshadow the discussion in the coming chapter with a transition in the previous. I believe this also helps to reinforce the cyclical nature of the conflict between the heart and the mind.

In the New King James version, the authors place the same heading at the beginning of chapter 9 as they did in chapter 8 verse 10. Let me reprint it here:

### Death Comes to All...

3 This *is* an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing *happens* to all... that *they go* to the dead.

*-Ecclesiaste 9:3 (NKJV)*

As we've discussed up to this point, life is full of vanity, futility, chasing after the wind. This trap is made worse by the fact the clock is ticking and winding down very quickly for all of us. When it expires we have an inescapable date with destiny. *Time is of the essence!*

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.

*-Ecclesiastes 9:3 (NKJV)*

I believe there are two primary responses to this dilemma based on two very basic dispositions an individual will have. 1. the individual will recognize his/ her need to resolve their faith before it's too late, and will take appropriate action 2. the individual will feel entrapped and resentful and will fight back in an attempt to overthrow Heaven to overcome this obstacle. Unfortunately, #2 isn't possible. From God's perspective evil has already been defeated and every knee has already bent and confessed, "Jesus *is* Lord" (Isaiah 45:23 and Philippians 2:9-11). This is simply part of the filtering process whereby each individual is given an honest chance to choose for themselves where they wish to take their eternal stand.

4 But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

*-Ecclesiastes 9:4 (NKJV)*

We do however, need to be fully convinced of God's grace for us. As long as we're alive, there's hope we'll come to our senses and make the correct decision. What is God's will for us?

9 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 labor which you perform under the sun. 10 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.

*-Ecclesiastes 9:9-10 (NKJV)*

Under no circumstances does this express or imply a justification for a "prosperity gospel". Our *purpose* is not to work and accumulate. Part of our *responsibility* is to work and provide for those with whom God has entrusted us. One of the most difficult things we'll have to overcome is...ourselves. We must overcome our misconceptions about God and his character. Whether we've been negatively influenced by others and then project our own issues onto God, or whatever the case, we need an accurate view of God and His intention toward us.

**Thus...**

We transition into chapter 10, starting with chapter 9 verses 13-18. Here's the title for the next section as provided by the authors of the NKJV:

## **Wisdom Superior to Folly...**

## Ecclesiastes 10:



As with the previous chapter, chapter 10 really begins with chapter 9 verses 13 through 18. As stated earlier in chapter 1, there's nothing new. What has been is what will be, what has been done is what will be done. It has all been done in ancient times before us.

As we ponder the maze of thoughts which have overwhelmed us as we try to find our way out, we realize we're simply going in circles. We start where we ended, we end where we started and there's no end to it. The mind battles with the heart, we cycle back through arguments we've already made to re-adjudicate them as if they've been presented to us for the first time.

One way to begin to find light at the end of the tunnel is to realize there *is* an order to things. There *are* some things which *are* better than others. Intuitively we all know there are objective guiding principles which dictate life. This was referenced in chapter 7.

5 There is an evil I have seen under the sun, as an error proceeding from the ruler: 6 Folly is set in great dignity, while the rich sit in a lowly place. 7 I have seen servants on horses, while princes walk on the ground like servants.

*-Ecclesiastes 10:5-7 (NKJV)*

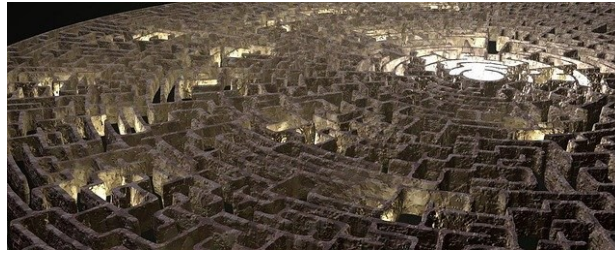
I think this is the perfect verse to sum up this chapter. It says a lot. Nothing will make the consequences of the perversion of the proper order things more evident than having unqualified people in positions of power/ influence. A very real example of this today is the once prestigious Ivy League schools. It used to be a degree from one of these institutions would guarantee the holder a certain degree of fanfare by an adoring crowd. These days such degrees are becoming a joke. I'm seeing more and more very wealthy businessmen stating publicly they refuse to hire graduates of these institutions as their actual skills are questionable. These once great institutions have chosen to make the mistake of discarding merit for a participation trophy method of education. It's taken some time for them to reap the harvest of the seeds they've sown but now, the crop is ready to come in.

Unfortunately, this inversion of reality also manifests itself in other ways as well. Good is now called evil, evil is now called good, etc. This is being seen across every aspect of our society, and the world. As the "theater kids" (performers/ slacktivist class, etc.) have been mistakenly enabled to believe that because they have specialized knowledge in one thing, their opinion on everything is valuable and unassailable, the world increasingly devolves into chaos.

**But...**

Why is it true that some things *are* objectively better than others? Why *is* there an objective form of truth? Why *are* there standards for best practices? From where do these principles come? How can what is crooked be made straight? How do we resolve the hot mess of all these micro-cycles within macro-cycles within meta-cycles which keep us endlessly spinning in circles?

## Ecclesiastes 11:



7 Truly the light is sweet, and *it is* pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun; 8 But if a man lives many years *and* rejoices in them all, yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they will be many. all that is coming *is* vanity.

*-Ecclesiastes 11:7-8 (NKJV)*

Chapter 11 builds on what chapter 10 started. Once we begin accepting the truth that there are things objectively better than other things, that there is an order to the universe and the like of which we've already spoken, we need to settle in and get to work. That will involve going through the cycles.



Image by **OnzeCreativiteit** courtesy [www.pixabay.com](http://www.pixabay.com)

The work-so to speak of going through the cycles is not an endless spinning in place without advancement. There are those who mistakenly believe the point is to simply chase your own tail. They will probably make statements such as, "The journey is more important than the destination." Of course we should enjoy the journey, we're on it and it's a large part of what we're engaged in. When it comes to the reality of eternity, the destination is of paramount importance. If we don't arrive safely in Heaven the journey wasn't worth it.

Those who make statements like the aforementioned will most likely exhibit a great disdain for any type of authority or certainty. They've probably deluded themselves into thinking ambiguity is the magical mcguffin which must be pursued at all costs. Individuals of this ilk are more than likely prone to other forms of magical thinking. They'll probably be communal, wear the proverbial "rose tinted glasses", will make the mistake of thinking the goal is to form a consensus and the like.

"The work" so-to-speak is more like the screw in the image above. We're going through cycles at frequent intervals. We don't seem to be making much progress but every cycle does in fact advance us (linearly) toward the end goal.

As it says in verse 7 above, "...the light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun..." However, verse 8 reminds us we'll need to work through a lot of the darkness to get to the light.

## Ecclesiastes 12:



### Finally...

Remember, the circular reference is one of the most important themes in the entire book of Ecclesiastes. We finish off with a reminder that the way to find our way out of the maze which is life and all its conflicting and circular thoughts is to point our attention toward God. The supernatural brilliance of the Holy Spirit as he guided the author (presumably Solomon) as he wrote, is evidenced in one final picture drawn in a literary way.

The book of Ecclesiastes ends:

8 “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher,  
“All *is* vanity.”

*-Ecclesiastes 12:8 (NKJV)*

At the same point at which it began. Thus, we have come full circle.

2 “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher;  
“Vanity of vanities, all *is* vanity.”

*-Ecclesiastes 1:2 (NKJV)*

9 And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out *and* set in order many proverbs. 10 The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and *what* was written was upright—words of truth. 11 The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd. 12 And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books *there is* no end, and much study *is* wearisome to the flesh.

**13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:**

**Fear God and keep His commandments,**

**For this is man’s all.**

**14 For God will bring every work into judgment,**

**Including every secret thing,**

**Whether good or evil.**

*-Ecclesiastes 12:9-14 (NKJV) (bold print mine for emphasis)*

Verses 9-14 above exist outside of that circle created by the book of Ecclesiastes. Thus, the *only* way we can make sense of all the confusion of life, is to have a reference outside of that confusion which can provide us guidance and context for it all. We must have a point which is separate from and not influenced by the vanity and endless cycles in which we're stuck to provide us direction. Otherwise we have no hope of being freed from the confusion..

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