



ECCLÉSIASTES

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INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHY

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THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

INTRODUCTION

I. TITLE.

The name in Hebrew is “Qoheleth.” The Hebrew word means “preacher.” The word “Ecclesiastes” comes from the Greek Ekklesia, which means “church.” This is exactly what the book is about. Look at the first words of the book, “The words of the preacher...”

II. AUTHOR.

The author of this book calls himself the “Son of David.” There are three reasons we believe this to be Solomon:

- A. Solomon was the only son of David who was king in Jerusalem.
- B. The wisdom theme is appropriate for Solomon. In 1 Kings 3:9 Solomon asks for wisdom and his wish is granted. The Hebrew word for “wisdom” (CHACAM) occurs 50 times in the book.
- C. We know Solomon wrote the Proverbs because Ecclesiastes 12:9 says the preacher “searched out and arranged many proverbs.” We know of no one else, besides Solomon, who did this. We deduce this even though Solomon is not mentioned by name in Ecclesiastes.

III. USE.

This book is read by the Jews at the Feast of the Tabernacles. This feast occurs in late September or early October.

IV. THEME.

All is Vanity.

A series of lessons is given to convince man that striving for:

Wisdom (50 times),

Knowledge (33 times),

Wealth through labor (28 times) and

Makes one a fool (18 times) because he is seeking for that which is “vanity and striving after wind” (30 times).

V. KEY VERSES.

8:12 “Although a sinner does evil a hundred times and may strengthen his life, still I know it will be well for those who fear God, who fear Him openly.”

12:13-14 “The conclusion, when all has been heard is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.”

We live in a world which emphasizes that one needs to look out for himself above all others and that each one of us needs to have and enjoy whatever we want. We *deserve* these things. It implies we need their products to be happy and content. Such is the logic of the world. Solomon says this is truly vanity and striving after the wind.

VAIN THINGS
* * *
A Study in Ecclesiastes

SOLOMON IDENTIFIES 18 THINGS THAT ARE VAIN

1. All the works of men (1:14).
2. Pleasure (2:1).
3. The profit from one's labor (2:11).
4. The quest for wisdom (2:15).
5. The focus on earthly accomplishments (2:21).
6. An over-emphasis or mis-emphasis on life and living (3:19).
7. Competition (4:4).
8. Stockpiling riches (4:7-8).
9. Trying to please everyone (4:16).
10. The foolish use of words and promises (5:4-7).
11. Money (5:10-12).
12. Having wealth but failing to properly use it (6:1-6).
13. Being able to use words masterfully (6:11).
14. Associating with those who do not think soberly about life (7:6).
15. Man's attitude toward evil (8:10).
16. The system of justice and retribution (8:14).
17. The desire to retrieve the past (11:8).
18. Death itself (12:1-8).

**“‘Vanity of vanities,’
says the preacher,
‘Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.’”
Ecclesiastes 1:2**

THE THEME OF ECCLESIASTES

ALL IS VANITY !

A series of lessons given to convince man that striving for wisdom (50 times), knowledge (33 times) and wealth through labor (28 times) makes one a fool (18 times) because he is seeking for that which is "vanity and striving after wind" (30 times).

KEY VERSES

- 8:12** "Although a sinner does evil a hundred times and may lengthen his life, still I know that it will be well for those who fear God, who fear Him openly."
- 12:13-14** "The conclusion, when all has been heard is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. Because God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil."

EXPOSITION OF ECCLESIASTES

CHAPTER 1

- 1:1-2** All is vanity. “Vanity” is a key word in this book. This word means that it is not of redeeming or lasting value (transitory). It is also translated “futile.” He will be talking about all those things which are useless.
- 1:3** Gaining the whole world is of no value (cf. Mk 8:36). The phrase “under the sun” occurs 30 times in the book - see 1:3,9,14; 2:11,17,18,19,20,22; 3:16; 4:1,3,7,15; 5:13,18; 6:1,5,12; 8:9,15 (2 times),17; 9:3,6,9 (2 times),11,13; 10:5. Where can you go and not be under the sun? Nowhere. Therefore, everything under the sun is vanity. It could read - “There is no advantage in whatever he does under the sun.” “Under the sun” = everyone in all places throughout all time.
- 1:4** ...earth... The earth outlives us all. People come and go but the earth remains. There is a false interpretation of this verse by some religious groups today. In Hebrew the word for “forever” is Olam. It means an “indefinite period of time known only by God.” It does not mean that the earth will never be destroyed, but that it will remain indefinitely as long as God allows it to remain. For example, this same word is used to describe other “eternal” things.

Note:

1. Sabbath - Exodus 31:17.
2. Passover - Exodus 12:14.
3. Incense - Exodus 30:8.
4. Burnt offerings - Exodus 29:42.
5. The Aaronic priesthood - Exodus 40:15.
6. Peace offerings - Leviticus 3:17.

As we can see, these things all passed away at the cross of Christ (cf. Col 2:14ff; Rom 7:1-7). Therefore, they were not actually “everlasting” as we might understand it, but that they were going to remain as long as God wills it (see 2 Pet 3:9ff). There Peter clearly demonstrates that this earth will be destroyed and that God will bring about a “new heavens and a new earth” (3:13). The point Solomon is making is that life goes on from one generation to another and the stability of the earth seems to indicate it will always be this way. He is not trying to make a point on how long the earth will last.

- 1:5** Solomon here refers to three examples to show that there is nothing really new - all things follow the same basic pattern: (1) The continual and repetitious cycles of the sun which hurries across the sky only to rise again and repeats the same cycle.
- 1:6** (2) The example of the wind which continues to blow in its circular path for no apparent reason;
- 1:7** (3) The rivers flow to the sea but the sea is not full thus nothing is ever completed. Therefore they continue to go through the same cycle, but the sea never fills up.

This is a passage of Christian evidence: the ancient man had no idea about evaporation and the cycle of water. Yet in this verse the principle of evaporation is discussed. It was not until the 15th or 16th century that “man” discovered this cycle.

- 1:8** Although the creation is active nothing is ever accomplished. Fulfillment will never come. Man, like the creation, will not find satisfaction.
- 1:9** The author makes his point here - “There is nothing new under the sun.” The cycles will continue to repeat forever. History will continue to repeat itself. No new thoughts. No new anything.
- 1:10** The author points out that nothing is new. Not even the things we think are new.
- 1:11** ...no remembrance... There are no new inventions under the sun; no remembrance of things past. We think we find new things, but they are not really new. The next generation does not remember the last one.

This concludes the first section of the preacher’s sermon. He has taken the secular viewpoint; that is, the way one would look at things without a belief in God.

- 1:12** In this second section (vss. 12-18), Solomon begins to list the vain things for which men have sought. By eliminating all of these “vanities” he will demonstrate there is nothing on earth that is of any true value.

Certainly a king would have the resources to research all of the things about to be discussed. There is no logical reason to reject Solomon as the author. It seems that one who later speaks of fearing God (12:13f) would not be making false claims about who he is and what position he holds. Modern criticism, which rejects Solomon as the author, has not offered sufficient proof to reject this son of David as the author.

1:13 He tries to use his influence to seek wisdom and knowledge. As he conducts his research, he will list a number of things that are called “vain” in the text (see the handout for a listing of all the “vain” things). Here are the first six, running through chapter three:

1. All the works done by men - 1:14,
2. Indulge in everything pleasurable - 2:1,
3. All his activities and labors - profitless - 2:11,
4. Striving for wisdom - 2:15,
5. The focus on earthly accomplishments - 2:21 and
6. Overemphasis on life and living - 3:19.

1:14 When one proceeds to list all that man has accomplished what will be found? Anything of value? No. It is all vanity (useless, futile, of no redeeming value).

1:15 ...cannot be straightened... It is futile to try to make straight that which has forever been crooked. Man, in his great wisdom, might attempt to solve some of life’s problems, but he will fail.

While Solomon is not specifically talking about this, this verse provides an interesting truth. Man has long attempted to make straight what God has declared to be crooked. It is impossible to correct evil by trying to make it acceptable. If it is crooked, it is crooked. It cannot be made legal in God’s view.

1:16 He observed wisdom and knowledge. His position has afforded him the opportunity to witness much.

1:17 While recognizing wisdom seems to be the most logical thing to search for, he is also trying to be open to the alternatives: madness and folly. This is why in the next section he is going to pursue pleasure. But even before he begins on this quest he realizes that both were vanity - striving after the wind.

1:18 The world is so full of bad things that “ignorance is bliss.” So much misery, so much pain, so much vanity. Plus, knowledge causes change and change is painful. Especially when you learn things that force you to change from what you have become accustomed to or comfortable with. But it does make you think (Eph 5:12; Josh 23:7; Psa 101:4).

CHAPTER 2

- 2:1** This is the second vain thing - pleasure. He is trying to think of what sensual pleasures this life has to offer and is intending to experience them all. He is going to blitz himself with pleasure. He is going to enjoy himself. He seems to know, however, the outcome before he even begins: it will be vanity.
- 2:2** He begins by considering two of life's hedonistic endeavors: (1) laughter (Hebrew - SEHOQ) which is a superficial gaiety, a type of fun, playing games or partying that neither lasts long nor provides any known benefit. (2) Pleasure (Hebrew - SIMHA) here deals with various activities that provide simple pleasures (such as in serving others or participating in various festivals). He is most likely not dealing with sensual pleasures here. Of laughter he concludes it is madness. It gets old after a while. It does not satisfy you that much. Pleasure, meanwhile, is seen to accomplish nothing. It does not change or improve anything, and it certainly does not answer any of life's puzzling questions.
- 2:3** Now the preacher is going to deal specifically with some of the activities he has attempted. His first attempt has to do with the partaking of wine. Apparently there was not much wine consumed, because you cannot have much if your mind is continuing to guide you wisely. The mind is the first to go when you drink. What Solomon tried did not work though. The mind cannot guide one with wisdom after he has been drinking.

The point is this: Solomon is looking at all of these things to see what is worthwhile for men to do. He cannot recommend these things.

- 2:4-8** He is going to enumerate the works he enlarged. There are here listed nine categories of works he did, or things he built or obtained for himself.
- 2:8** ...many concubines... 1 Kings 11:3 tells us that Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines. The concubine was a mistress or a lover. Notice that he is looking all over the spectrum of possibilities to discover the truly worthwhile things of life.

Think about the application to our society. We accumulate "things" but money cannot buy happiness. Society continues to have this as its goal though. TV fosters it. The rich always have the good life and the poor are always struggling. So Solomon immerses himself in every pleasure imaginable. He had 1,000 women to satisfy his every sensual desire. 1 Kings 11:3 shows his wives caused him to fall away from God!

- 2:9** He was wise enough to see the futility in all these activities and possessions. By claiming that wisdom "stood by me" indicates that he maintained objectivity in all these pursuits.

2:10 ...all my labor... This is a curious thing. With all the vain things which he is going to talk about, there is going to be only one thing that is of some value. That is...labor. The work was the only lasting pleasure he had experienced. The mental exercise, the trying to understand, and the physical exercise was a reward. However, once the work was done, there was no longer satisfaction.

In discovering some satisfaction in the work itself, Solomon reveals an important truth: man should find reward in the things he does. It is not insane for one to like his job. As a matter of fact, one should learn to find satisfaction in his job. It is not the job as much as it is the attitude about the job. You can be happy being a ditch digger.

Note these other passages:

3:22 - Nothing is better than man should be happy in his activities.

5:18 - Enjoy oneself in all his labor.

9:9 - The toil in which you have labored (with your wife). Here he repeats this theme in being happy in your work (also note 2:24; 3:13; 9:9).

2:11 The third vain thing is the profit from one's labor. When Solomon had a moment to reflect over all that he had done, he has to be honest. It is truly worthless. Note how this verse brings together many of the key ideas in Ecclesiastes: labor, vanity, striving after wind, profit, under the sun (this would also include knowledge, fool and wisdom). So in one statement Solomon discredits the value of all the aforementioned activities.

2:12-13 There are virtually three areas to which he has devoted his attention: wisdom, madness and folly. His research has yielded some valuable information. But what about the next king? How will he handle the same perplexing questions? Will he learn anything from what he has discovered?

2:13 His question in verse 12 receives a twofold response. First, Solomon concludes that wisdom is of value, but it is not the solution to all. Second, he concedes that wisdom is that which is like a lamp to a man's path. See notes on verse 26 for all Solomon says concerning wisdom.

2:14 The wise man has eyes and he uses them. He realizes that he needs to be walking soberly. He needs to notice what goes on in life. The fool walks in darkness. "He is in a fog." Both will die though. Wisdom will not stop death and all will have the same fate. Therefore wisdom is not the solution to the problems of life.

This is our first reference to the fool. See notes on chapter 10 for a more detailed study on “the fool.” In Ecclesiastes, like the Proverbs, he is one who lacks understanding because he cannot be taught. Therefore he engages in foolish talk, worthless pursuits, drunkenness and has the tendency to do evil (cf. Prov 10:23; 18:2).

2:15 The fourth vain thing is: the quest for wisdom. You work so hard for it, but then you die. The fool can spend his whole life stupid and will die as well. There is no advantage to wisdom.

2:16 ...remembrance... The wise will not even really leave a legacy. See note on 1:16.

2:17 Death brings an end to wisdom and it makes life itself vain. Life is about the acquiring of wisdom and then you die. All of those years you could have used the wisdom were spent attaining it. “Too soon we get old; and too late we get smart!”

This verse is a summary of all that has been said. Everything is futility and the only actual benefit was doing the work.

Up until now there has been something missing. *God* has been missing. Solomon has said nothing about Him. He will not introduce God into this discussion until verse 24. Here he says he hates life, but he will say three other things about it later:

1. Life is good (3:12; 5:20),
2. Life is given by God (5:18) and
3. Life is full of pleasures from God (9:9).

Having God is what changes his view.

2:18 ...leave it to the man after me... He does not want to leave it to someone else. Who knows what they will do with it?

...fruit... 9:9 - enjoying life. Now he says he hates life and its fruit. Later on he will say he enjoys life. The fruit is the main consideration. If it is left behind, what is the point of accumulating it in the first place? People worry about the money they leave to children. They feel it will be wasted. Their children may be “money happy.” They will not appreciate it.

2:19 Is the one who is going to receive inheritance going to be a complete fool? This is what he is worried about. And, as he feared, Rehoboam was a fool and de-

stroyed the kingdom. It even took fewer than 12 months to do it! (1 Kgs 11:41-12:24).

- 2:20** He despairs of the fruit of his labor because that fruit might be left to a fool. The antithesis to this is 1 Corinthians 15:58. Our toil is not in vain here. We know that our labors are storing up treasure in heaven (cf. Mt 6:19f).
- 2:21** The fifth vain thing. The focus on earthly accomplishments. It is an injustice to leave it to an ingrate. It is better to leave nothing. There is a good lesson in this for the Christian: do not to leave your estates to people who are foolish and who will spend it on their pleasures (see James chapter 5).
- 2:22** “Striving” here is the exertion and effort in order to acquire wisdom. The summary is that all labor and working for wisdom is vain.
- 2:23** The above is true because there is never any real satisfaction to laboring and striving. One never gets any lasting benefit but, instead, gets pain, grief and sleepless nights. He is going through mental and physical anguish. He cannot even rest because of his worries. His head hits the pillow and his mind works through all of the problems.

...all of his days... 2:3; 2:23; 5:17-18; 6:3,12; 8:15; 9:9; 11:9; 12:1 - is obviously used many times in Ecclesiastes. He is emphasizing all of one’s life, from beginning to end. One’s entire life is vain.

- 2:24** This is the turning point! Solomon is now going to show how things can have ultimate value with God. He has been building to a climax. He is like a preacher intentionally leading his audience to adopt faulty conclusions, then suddenly turning on them, showing that these conclusions are true only when one views life apart from God! One’s entire view point changes with God. Everything he mentions is true *without* God, but *with* God it changes.

There are three reasons to support the view that this is a major turning point:

1. God is mentioned only once in 1:1-2:23 (and there only to blame Him for man’s troubles!). From this point on, however, God is the focal point of the discussion,
2. He had a very negative view of wisdom and its worth (1:16ff). From this point on wisdom is very important. We will discuss this point in verse 26 in more detail and
3. His view of the various aspects of life, history and creation have been very pessimistic. He saw nothing good in anything. Now he sees value to life (see notes on vs. 25).

...eat and drink... This is equated with prosperity and enjoyment of life and the things God has provided. They are worthwhile with God. All you have and all you have done has meaning with God's hand. There is purpose and enjoyment. Before this Solomon has taken the pessimistic viewpoint that makes one throw up their hands in despair. Is there anything worthwhile? No. That is, when considered apart from God. This technique is quite effective. He is going to show that there are some things that are good. For example, from this point on he is going to encourage his readers to consider things from the perspective that they have come from the hand of God. That is, one considers life with God in it.

2:25 ...without Him... There is no true value to anything man does, if he does it without considering God's will. When the hand of God is brought in everything changes.

THE VANITY OF LIFE WITHOUT GOD

Without God everything is vain, but with God's hand in our lives we have the following things:

1. Wisdom is good (2:26),
2. Life has enjoyment (2:25),
3. Life has beauty (3:11),
4. Life has gifts (3:13),
5. Life has stability (3:14),
6. Life has purpose (3:18) and
7. Life has joy despite hardship (3:22).

“WITHOUT GOD.” Because of God the perspective changes. Proverbs 3:6 - We ought to acknowledge the Lord in all our ways and He will make our paths straight. God must be the focus. “Without God life is reduced to paychecks, weekends, and cheap thrills” (Avon Malone). Life with God becomes fun and fulfilling. He is not talking about worldliness and materialism, but a proper view of material things as blessings from God.

2:26 ...He has given wisdom... Before he said that wisdom was useless, but now has changed direction after putting God in. He now lists the benefits of wisdom.

ATTRIBUTES OF WISDOM IN ECCLESIASTES

In view of Ecclesiastes 2:24 and the realization that God has His hand in man's labor, notice the following things Solomon mentions about wisdom:

1. It gives success in labor (prosperity) (2:21),
2. It preserves life (7:12),
3. It protects (7:12),
4. It helps in judgments (7:23),
5. It gives strength (7:19; 9:16),
6. It gives joy (8:1; contrast 1:18),
7. It helps others (9:15) and
8. It gives success (10:10).

“Knowledge” here is “experience.” Joy is the heart-felt peace and security that belongs to those in God (cf. Phil 4:4).

The sinner, however, is the one whose focus is on himself. The sinner has no value to his life, except that God uses him to do good things for His people. Outside of this one positive thing, what the sinner does is vanity. The one positive point in this verse is that, ultimately, God is going to bless His people (cf. Prov 13:32; 28:8; 2 Cor 6:10).

CHAPTER 3

Verses 1-8 Give the providential workings of God.

Verses 9-12 Are the practical implications of 1-8.

3:1 ...There is an appointed time... The point that he is making is that we not throw up our hands in despair and give up. This is the view of some. But rather it is to view life optimistically since God is in control. God is the one who is supreme. All of these verbs are going to be used for the purpose of showing that the many pursuits of man, whether they are creative or destructive, whether they are good or evil, are still not done by someone who is self-sufficient. Man is within the control of God. Therefore what man ought to do is ask: "according to God's will, is this the time to do this?"

3:2a This has to do with the beginning and end. Everyone has a beginning and end. There is not a set time but we must remember that what is done in between is what counts. Our time is the LORD's time.

3:2b-3 This has to do with being creative and destructive. A good time to plant is in the spring. A good time to kill (an animal) is when you are hungry.

...tear down... Notice that some things are not worth repairing. It is better to tear it down and build from scratch.

3:4 These have to deal with emotions. A time to weep (Rom 12:15). As part of Christianity this is what we must do. You do not tell a joke at a funeral. There is a time for the right thing.

...dance... When something bad has happened to someone else do not laugh in front of them. A time to mourn is not when you are around happy people.

3:5 ...throw stones... The idea of the existence of enmity or strife between individuals is seen here by many scholars. Regardless, this line has puzzled scholars. There are two main interpretations:

1. Throwing stones would refer to a farmer who attempted to clear all rocks off his land so he could plant, but eventually realizes that there are far too many rocks to clear off and he therefore "throws" the stones he has already collected back into the field. The time to gather would be when a sufficient number of rocks can be cleared in order to use the land (for building or planting).
2. Severing a relationship with someone, which is demonstrated by a symbolic act of casting rocks. In a military sense this would be done in

order to destroy another's property or field. Gathering stones would refer to work being done to prepare the way for a military conqueror (cf. Isa. 62:10).

...embrace... There is a proper place to express affection and certain places that one needs to shun giving affection. For example, young people need to learn that the worship period is not the proper place to display affection. The physical love between husband and wife is not for the public eye.

3:6 This has to do with possessions.

..search... Possibly for lost animals. Remember when Saul was searching for the donkeys. He found a time when to forget them. Too much searching may not be worth it (1 Sam 9:5).

...keep... Children of God evaluate their possessions to see if they possess something that ought to be kept, or perhaps something needs to be discarded (i.e. idols, or anything that would distract one from spiritual thoughts and practices).

3:7-8 These have to deal with human relations. Some scholars see in this mourning (tearing apart) and sewing together (ceasing the period of mourning and mending the clothes of mourning). Others consider this to refer to relationships, where there is a time when a relationship needs to be severed (tearing apart) and other times when a relationship is worth mending (sewing together). Certainly we are to try to be at peace with all men (cf. Rom 12:18), but there are times when we must not yoke ourselves with unbelievers (cf. 2 Cor 6:14).

...silent...speak... This is the biggest problem. Man has always had a problem with the tongue (cf. Jas 3:1ff), and has difficulty knowing when to speak and when to listen (cf. Jas 1:19; Hab 2:20; Rom 12:15; Amos 5:13).

...love... This covers the whole spectrum of tearing down and building up. When is the time to hate? Certainly the Bible teaches that we are to hate evil (Rom 12:9; Psa 97:10; Amos 5:15; cf. Prov 8:13), divorce (Mal 2:16) and a host of things related to the world (cf. 1 Jn 2:15-17). Equally, there are times to strive for peace and other times to go to war.

3:9 Since God determines the ultimate destiny (from vss. 1-8), what personal benefit is there for the worker who toils? The answer to this question is given in the following verses. Ultimately, the wise man uses the plan of God to his advantage. He accepts what God has decreed and set in motion, and fits his life to be in harmony with that plan. He is not stubborn or rebellious in trying to do things at the improper time.

3:10-11 God has made everything beautiful in its time and its place. So while man may question whether it is time to do this or that (vss.1-8), there is a beauty seen when one does things God's way. This can even be applied to the material beauty. The sun has its appointed time to rise and set (cf. 1:5), but the godly man appreciates the beauty of those continual events.

... eternity... Man longs for something that is eternal. Almost any ancient culture has been found to bury objects that would be beneficial in the afterlife. They are buried with food, tools, boats, chariots and, if wealthy, slaves. This longing for something lasting is present with all men, even atheists. This idea needs to be connected with verse 14. What God builds lasts forever. What man builds will be temporary. Therefore, which is wiser - to seek for the works of man or of God? (cf. Mt 15:13; 1 Pet 1:23-25).

...even to the end... Man in this life will not completely understand God's plan. He will never fully understand the mysteries of God. So while Solomon was able to research all that was "under the sun" (1:13), there were still other things that were beyond his capability to research.

3:12 This is the first of the two times Solomon says "I know" (cf. vs. 14). Both are related. In this first occurrence, Solomon has learned that the good things in this life are from God Himself. They are His gifts (cf. Jas 1:17). God changes our perspective on everything. The best we can do in this life is to be happy and to do good (cf. Gal 6:10; Eph 2:10).

3:13 Notice how much he brings God in. Eating and drinking are the tokens of the good life. He understands that these things are the gift of God. When we look at the good homes we can see the good because they are a gift of God. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Even Job realized that it was the Lord who was to be thanked. 1 Timothy 4:3 - Everything is a gift of God and He should be thanked. James 1:17 - "Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above."

3:14 In this second occurrence of "I know" Solomon will demonstrate that the good life mentioned in verses 12 and 13 are secured by God Himself. In relating this point, he lists four things about God and what He does:

1. It is permanent - remains forever (1 Pet 1:25). God is not capable of failure.
2. It is effective - how can you add to something perfect?
3. It is complete - there is nothing to take away from it. This is why it is so foolish for men to add to or take away from God's Word. It is truly perfect in every respect (cf. Rev 22:18f; Gal 1:8-9; 2 Pet 1:3; Jude 3).

4. It is purposeful - it is to cause men to fear Him. Anybody who is remotely thoughtful can see the power of God in the creation. Then, when man considers the magnitude of the creation, he sees himself in a lowly, powerless position. Fear = being in awe before Him. We shake before Him, realizing how much more powerful He is. Hebrews 10:31; 12:28; Matthew 10:28 - God wants us to fear Him in this respect. Fearing God appears in these verses - 5:7; 7:18; 8:12-13; 12:13. "Fear God" is the conclusion.
- 3:15** Notice the contrast with 1:8-11. With man alone all is hopeless. With God there is security and hope. He is talking about the cycles. God is keeping the cycles going. This is a watchful concern. For the Christian it represents security and hope. It will rain again because it is a part of Gods' cycle.
- 3:16** This begins the first of two things Solomon says "I have seen" (cf. vs. 22). In all of his research, what has he discovered? He is now going to tell his readers.
- ...under the sun... Everything does not have its perfect order when man is involved, but it will be right when God is involved.
- ...place of righteousness... A place of righteousness can be wicked (i.e., the temple). Man has the ability to make just about anything good an instrument for wickedness.
- 3:17** This verse begins the first of two things that Solomon has "said to himself." The first observation that he makes concerns the judgment court. There will be a time when the wicked will pay. Matthew 13:30 - Parable of the tares. There will be a separation at the end.
- 3:18** ...they are beasts... The second observation Solomon makes is concerning the character of those who operate without any fear of God. By themselves they are merely beasts (cf. 2 Pet 2:12) - the false teachers are like animals.
- 3:19-20** This is our sixth vain thing: an overemphasis on life and living. With God life is valuable. Without Him it is a pitiful waste. Life is life only with God (cf. Jn 10:10). Also, Solomon is letting man see that there is, on the surface only, a similarity between men and beasts: they both live and die; they both came from the dust and will return to the dust.
- 3:21** ...breath... This is the Hebrew word RUAH (cf. Gk. PNEUMA). It can be "wind" or "spirit." The life of man ascends upward. It is in this verse Solomon sees the difference between the spirit of man and the spirit of the beast. The thought is similar to Psalm 49 in which man and beast are alike in death (vss. 1-12), but very different in what happens after the grave (vss. 13-20). In Ecclesiastes 12:7

Solomon gives the definitive answer to the question on the destiny of the human spirit: it goes back to God who gave it.

3:22 Verse 16 - "I have seen." Verses 17-18 - "I said, I said," There are two "I said's" in between and now another "I have seen" which goes with verse 16. His comments are based upon what he has seen.

He concludes that man should be happy in his activities. Man should enjoy his life with God. 12:7 - What is going to occur after is that the spirit will return to God who gave it. 1 John 3:2 - we will be like Him. Meanwhile, while man lives on in the flesh, it is the intention of God that he should be happy!

CHAPTER 4

Beginning with chapter four, it is difficult to trace any basic argument. Solomon develops his thoughts in a form similar to that of the Proverbs. However, there are some points demonstrating there is organization and purpose:

1. There is repeated emphasis on wisdom;
2. There is a reference to wealth in each section;
3. The bleak presuppositions of the first two chapters are dealt with, but now with the godly viewpoint.

4:1 The oppressed are powerless. This thought is especially troubling to Solomon. As he has observed the behavior of mankind he has witnessed the abuse of power and the misery experienced by the afflicted. The afflicted are without comfort. This emphasizes their sense of helplessness. Equally troubling is the fact that cruel men have power (KOA = strength) to begin with. Why does God allow it? Certainly in the law of Moses God dealt with humane treatment of others: Exodus 22:21-24 - You shall not wrong a stranger, widow or orphan. God will be the avenger of the oppressed. Solomon does not see the avenger coming as often as He should (but in actuality, God wants men to strive for equal rights and justice).

“under the sun”... This shows the universality of the oppression.

4:2 The dead are not going to be oppressed so he congratulates them. He is taking the position of the godless life. Contrast 2:26; 3:22 with this. God gives to those who are good in His sight.

4:3 ...better off... Man is better off not knowing about all of the evil (oppression) done by men to men. This oppression is under the sun - it is everywhere. Where can man go to escape the inhumanities of man? Nowhere, Solomon says. There have been many philosophers who have taken the viewpoint that one would be better off never being born than to witness this evil (cf. Herodotus, Theognis, Sophocles, Cicero, Buddhism).

Again, one needs to see this verse in the total plan of God in mind. As with Asaph in Psalm 73 evil men may *seem* to get their way, but ultimately they will face God in judgment. So from the godly perspective, we may witness this oppression and be saddened by it, knowing that in the end justice will be done. “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord (Rom 12:19ff).

4:4 Here is the seventh vain thing: competition. The motivation for “the top” is only wealth and power. This is vanity. It will not make one happy or fulfilled. Why is

man ever striving to have more or become greater than his neighbor? Certainly such striving is vain and worthless (and, ultimately, this will be demonstrated - cf. Mt. 16:26; Lk. 12:15).

4:5 The one who works so hard to get “on top” loses out while the fool is so lazy he consumes his own flesh. He escapes the “rat race” but is consumed with laziness.

4:6 The one hand “full of rest” is the medium ground. This is the balance each should seek in his own life.

...full of rest... = Contentment with what one has (1 Tim. 6:6).

...two fists... striving after the wind... These are hands striving to grasp as much as possible. Unfortunately those hands will never be at rest because they will never be full.

4:7 This is the eighth vain thing: stockpiling riches.

4:8 Why am I not satisfied with what I have accumulated? Note the parable of the rich fool in Luke 12. God says to the fool, “Who will own what you have prepared?” It is far better to share what one has with others (cf. Acts 20:35). According to the godly perspective, one works in order to have something to share with others (Eph 4:28). We need to understand that there must be a balance. This book does not condemn enjoying the good material things. It is alright to spend a little on yourself. But there must be moderation.

4:9 ...two are better... Companionship will help reduce the difficulties in life. Solomon gives four benefits of companionship: (1) Work is more productive. Studies have demonstrated that two people working alone do not accomplish as much as two people working together. There is someone to help and it will be easier and faster. If someone falls then you have another one to lift him up.

...they have a good return... (2) There is mutual care. Success through a cooperative effort. These two verses really apply to team evangelism. When you go off to a work all by yourself it is easy to grow discouraged. If one falls the other will lift them up. There will be someone to lift you out of the pit. But, this passage is going beyond the physical of falling into a pit. In life, and the struggles that are a part of life, we will need someone to help pick us up. The statistics just prove the enormous advantage of team evangelism. One person will do less than half of what two will do. This is called “synergism.” It is the bringing together of energy. The apostle Paul knew of the advantage of teams.

4:11 (3) Warmth. This principle applies to marriage, although travelers in Israel’s cold winter nights would sleep close together (cf. Jer 36:22,30). One can draw on an-

other's energy. Marriage can help someone "weather the storm." Things are easier because they weather the storms together. It is beautiful how much can be accomplished together.

4:12 (4) Safety. A lone traveler can be more easily overcome, but with others around he is less likely to suffer harm. In this case the strength is like that of the three-ply cord. It is the full measure of strength, very difficult to break. This is perhaps talking about you and me and God. Together we cannot be broken.

4:13 He is talking about the person who feels self-sufficient. This is the way an old person is described. He may think he is full of wisdom, but it is foolish to think that he does not need someone. Everyone needs companionship. Yet a greater principle is seen here as well. A young boy who will listen to other's advice is better than an old king who has lost the graceful art of receiving instruction. No one is too old to learn from others!

...young lad... One attribute for this person was that he had the wisdom to get help. He needed other people.

4:14 This verse seems to be saying that the poor wise lad of verse 13 came out of prison and rose to the position of king, even though he was born poor in the old foolish king's kingdom. This illustrates how far one can go when he is willing to receive instruction.

4:15 This second lad is probably the lad who became king. The emphasis is on the young lad. The "him" he replaces is the old foolish king. Therefore the people rally behind the young boy who has now become king. Although this verse is difficult, this seems to be the best interpretation.

4:16 Eventually the people will also grow tired of the boy who became king. This is the ninth vain thing: trying to please everyone.

CHAPTER 5

5:1 When you come before God you become quick to hear and slow to speak (Jas 1:19; Hab 2:20). You are coming to listen (i.e. learn) and to not speak (i.e. teach). “Guard your feet” would indicate the type of forethought and preparation one has made before they attempt to enter into the presence of God to worship.

...sacrifice of fools... The babbling of your mouth, the offering of vain worship. The fool does not even know this is evil (cf. Mt 15:8f; Jn 4:24).

5:2 Remember your position. Do not do a great deal of talking. Matthew. 6:7 - Do not use meaningless repetition. God knows what you are thinking anyway. Be on guard against hasty or impulsive requests of God. He wants us to give serious thought to what we are going to say and how we are going to say it. God is great (in heaven) and we are finite and weak (on the earth).

5:3 ...through much effort... Here a person is wanting a message from God and is going to great lengths to receive one. The effort is like what one goes through when he has a restless dream. The purpose of sleep (rest) is lost because of the effort expended in the dream. Equally, the fool demonstrates wasted effort with his many words.

5:4 ...When you make a vow... Vows were not commanded by the law of Moses, but were voluntary. Therefore there was always a danger in the vow turning into a bribe. Then again, there was always the danger in one making a rash vow which later he is unable to pay. Again, God wants the worshiper to give serious consideration to his words.

5:5 One might think that God is pleased that one would make a vow, even if he will not be able to pay it. This is woefully incorrect! God *wants* His worshipers to make promises they have every intention of keeping.

5:6 It is not just an unfortunate mistake or an insignificant matter when one makes false vows. It is sin. God would rather one suffer and keep his vow than to change his vow (cf. Psa 15:4). The messenger is probably talking about the priest. Do not tell the priest that vow. Malachi 2:7 - Priest is a messenger of God.

...God be angry... God will make you pay for promises you do not keep. He may not bring punishment immediately (cf. 8:11), but will certainly do it ultimately (cf. 12:14). Certainly this passage ought to be yet one more reminder of the seriousness of worship. Paul was determined to worship correctly and that involved the use of his “mind” (1 Cor 14:15).

5:7 Dreams are just dreams and nothing more. And the multiplication of dreams serves no useful purpose. So also are endless words (vows, promises) to God. The worshiper who offers vain words is in danger of incurring the anger of God. This verse then gives us the tenth vain thing: The foolish use of words and promises.

Leviticus 27 provides a lengthy discussion on vows. By using this section, and others, we find that vows take the following forms:

1. Ask for blessing with promise of return (Num 21:2),
2. A promise made out of gratitude or thankfulness (Jonah 2:9); sometimes this vow is made in response to specific blessings,
3. A dedication of a child to be a Nazirite (1 Sam 1:11),
4. A promise of allegiance or commitment (Gen 28:20-22) and
5. A free-will offering based on a past vow (Lev 22:18).

5:8 Beginning with this verse, and running through 6:12, Solomon is going to consider various aspects of poverty and wealth.

...oppression... Denial of justice... There is someone always more powerful than the one doing the oppressing. But those in high positions often watch out for each other and protect each other. Therefore, when something evil is done, do not be shocked that those in higher positions do not do anything about it. It is common for governments to be corrupt and the officials to protect each other. Ultimately though those in authority are going to have to answer to God.

5:9 ...is an advantage to the land... This verse has provided much difficulty for translators and commentators. The thought seems to be that in spite of government corruption, a king who still sees that the land is productive will ultimately provide some blessings (i.e. food) for those under his authority.

5:10 Here is the eleventh vain thing - money. Solomon is going to enumerate seven reasons why money or wealth is vain:

(1). It cannot satisfy. It is a well established fact that the wealthy soon realize happiness and contentment are not found in wealth.

5:11 (2) It attracts a crowd of dependents. When they know you have it, they want it. This is what happens to the lottery winners or those who inherit large estates. They eventually have to disconnect their phones and remove themselves from

public access. Solomon observes that those “relatives” gather around like vultures who will eventually drain him of all his wealth.

5:12 (3) It disturbs one’s peace. He is talking about insomnia. The laborer sleeps soundly after a day of work. His body is tired and ready for rest. The rich man is not tired. He has folded his hands and been idle all day long.

5:13 (4) It can easily be misused. What Solomon has in mind is not discussed. Was it moral decay? Physical suffering (like sleepless nights - 5:12)? Regardless, the result of his wealth was not good. It is significant to note that Solomon does not mention the way the wealth was obtained. Was it in a sinful, or just, way? Actually, it does not matter. His point is that when it is hoarded or guarded it will not bring a good result (cf. rich fool - Lk 12:13-21).

5:14 (5) It can easily be lost. Here the man of wealth, through some bad investment (NASV) - literally “evil task” - loses all that he had accumulated. The wealth perished very quickly. Perhaps this loss could be attributed to foolish gambling, a misguided venture or in an unforeseen reversal of circumstances (perhaps beyond his control). Regardless, it was quickly lost. And what increases the tragedy is that the once wealthy man now has a son whom he needs to care for, but he no longer has the resources to support this newborn son.

5:15 (6) It cannot be taken beyond the grave. Compare 1 Timothy 6:7 as a parallel.

...carry in his hand... You can work, work, work but you will not be able to take it with you. But heavenly things (treasures) you can take (Mt 6:19-20).

5:16 What a man has in his hands signifies what capital he brought with him. Nothing. What he takes with him will correspond exactly to what he brought with him. The accumulation was futile. You cannot own the wind, so why work (toil) for it?

5:17 (7) Its loss brings great suffering. This man would have been better off always being poor. But since he had a taste of wealth, and then lost it, he now has to endure a number of things. Solomon observes that he eats in (i.e. lives one’s life in):

1. Darkness = misery. Perhaps this refers to the fact that he is so poor he cannot even afford candles, but most likely is talking about the gloom he feels for having lost all that money.
2. Great vexation = cares and frustrations, probably found in thoughts like “if I had only not invested in that,” or “if only I had done this or that...”
3. Sickness = physical strain. There have been many who have committed suicide after losing all of their wealth. Gambling often takes all of one’s

wealth and that one then takes his own life. There is great mental anguish which produces physical anguish when great sums of money are lost.

4. Anger = perhaps reflecting total disgust with himself and what he has done or anger towards those who might have been involved in his loss. It might also include frustrations he feels now, since recent efforts to regain the wealth have failed (i.e. throughout his life - see 1 Tim 6:8-10).

5:18 With this sad story about riches, Solomon shares what he had found out about wealth:

1. Learn to enjoy what you have and what you do. It would be better to never be rich than to expose yourself to the dangers of verses 10-17. Solomon makes three observations about enjoying what one has:
 - a. It is good, meaning that it is a worthwhile endeavor and produces good for self and others and, most importantly, for God;
 - b. It is fitting (literally - "beautiful"), meaning that it is the most satisfactory way for one to live his life. True peace and beauty will be seen in the contented life;
 - c. It is God's reward, meaning that what one has is a blessing from God, therefore he ought to be content and appreciate those things (because he does not live long enough).

It is important to note that the wise man says one ought to find enjoyment in all one's labor - not in slothfulness or laziness. We are to work. It is God's plan (cf. Gen 2:15; 3:17-19; 1 Thess 4:11; 2 Thess 3:10).

5:19 ...every man to whom God has given riches...

2. If one does have wealth, he must maintain a proper perspective on what to do with that wealth and where that wealth came from. Wealth without God brings nothing but misery. Wealth with God can empower one to get the most out of life.

5:20 With God there is happiness. One does not complain about the years of hard work. He is just thankful to God that he has a job and is able to physically do the work. Thus, he has gladness of heart. Whatever situation he is in he can find peace.

CHAPTER 6

6:1-2 Having discussed the proper way to view and use wealth in the preceding verses, Solomon now considers the opposite or improper view. This view, Solomon notes, is both evil and prevalent among men. Here God has given wealth, but unlike the previous man this person does not enjoy the wealth and neither do his sons. The idea here is that this individual does not seem to recognize that it is God who gave him the wealth, even though he is pampering himself with whatever his soul desires. There is no thought to thanking God or considering His will concerning the use of that wealth. As a result, God removes the blessing of the wealth and gives it to a foreigner (thereby removing what satisfaction that would come by his giving it to his sons). Solomon concludes that ...this is vanity and sore affliction... This is the twelfth vain thing: having wealth but failing to properly use it.

6:3 Solomon offers another example of one who fails to recognize blessings from God. Here he discusses a man who fathers "100 children." This terminology is done for the sake of emphasis (as with vs. 6). He has a large family, lives long and is dissatisfied. He dies but no one mourns. He is despised and does not even have a proper burial.

Solomon is now going to make an analogy between the dissatisfied man and the miscarried child. The miscarried child has the following advantages:

6:4 (1) It comes in futility - probably meaning that it comes into a vain, purposeless world.

(2) It goes into obscurity - it never develops a reputation that future generations ridicule and mock. It never makes the foolish mistakes of the man who is always dissatisfied and therefore loses his fortune.

6:5 (3) It never sees the sun - that is, it has never had any of the experiences of those who have lived to see the light of day.

(4) It never knows anything - the stillborn child does not have to remember the bad experiences.

Thus the application to the unfulfilled man is clear: God has given much to him but he never appreciates it. Therefore he is worse off than the child who never has the experiences of life.

6:6 ...goes to one place... He has the same amount of joy as a stillborn child...*none*. They both end up in the same place (Sheol - the realm of the dead). So what use is the long life if it is filled with dissatisfaction and misery? Certainly Solomon

is emphasizing the foolishness of a life lived without God and the worthlessness of that life.

6:7 You work to survive and not for pleasure. You work to put food in your mouth.

...appetite... Soul is not satisfied. Man does not live on bread alone, but on the word of God. Food alone will not fulfill man's deepest needs.

6:8 The answer here is none. Without God there is no advantage to the wise man.

...before the living... Those who have the best in life. If the poor man knows how to walk before the living (knows how to please them) it will not help him. If he spends all of his time doing this then life is gone before he knows it and he has nothing. He will not ultimately benefit from trying to please men. He will benefit from trying to please God.

6:9 The eyes see things you can have. The soul desires things that it cannot have. There may be plenty to see but an inward longing and covetous attitude will take away from the beauty of what you do have; from what the eye sees. Our soul can lust over the beautiful women with the perfect bodies, but the eyes see the wife at home. This is what we should be satisfied with. The "grass is greener on the other side of the fence" philosophy is not good. We need to stop and smell the roses and be content with what we have. "There is no place better than where you are going or where you have been" (cf. Phil 4:10-12).

6:10 You cannot dispute with God. Man has to learn to accept things. We have a phrase, "that is just the way it is, like it or lump it." The moaning will not change anything.

6:11 This is the thirteenth vain thing: using words masterfully. Words of man cannot change the world. There are some things that just are. Smooth words cannot change the sun's rising can they? Your fluency and delivery may be perfect on why it should not rise, but it will. The one thing words might do, however, is increase the futility of life for mankind.

6:12 What is really valuable in this day of life? A person has been given just a little bit of time and he will get the most out of it. This is the attitude that we need to have.

...like a shadow... No substance or value. He is on the stage of life with his one act play. He has a few years. How is he going to use them? To the profit? To the squander?

...under the sun... No man has enough wisdom to explain what is worth living for and what will come after death. No man has this wisdom inside him. Do not let

the TV commercials or any man tell us what the good life is. Man does not know. Michael Eaton - "The preacher is slamming every door but the door of faith." The door of riches and man's wisdom have been slammed shut. None of these doors will give the answer. But he turns to the door of faith. Let God teach man the true value of living.

CHAPTER 7

7:1-8:1 - This section focuses on proverbs which deal with suffering and sin. Their first lines state an obvious truth, and the second truth ought to be equally obvious.

7:1 Some worry more about how they smell than what their reputation is. They look good and smell good but are absolute failures.

...the day of one's death... This is obvious, but also should the first statement be just as obvious. To the Christian there are two positive things:

1. It is the end of all troubles and
2. You are going to be with God.

Notice all the times the word "better" occurs - eight times through verse 10.

7:2 ...house of mourning... When you go to a house of mourning you appreciate the value of life. You are with people who have a value and respect for life. The house of feasting has a "live and let die" attitude.

...living takes it to heart... The living are the ones who go the house of mourning and think about life. They are really thankful to be alive. When a person loses a loved one it is the best time to reach him with the gospel. He has a respect for both life and death. He just saw it hit close to home. He has to be in the right frame of mind. This is the parable of the sower. The soil has to be right. Death encourages one to think about the afterlife.

7:3 When a person has looked death in the face he appreciates life more and is more happy about it. When you walk away from a funeral you are glad to be alive. It is better than laughter because sorrow brings the soberness of a true sense of what is important. We tend to let little things destroy the true happiness of living.

7:4 The wise allow death to provoke thought and meditation. You walk by the casket, you see the body and know it will be you someday. You wonder if the individual made it to heaven or not, but the fool just wants to go party. He does not want to even think about it. "That's too heavy for me, man; let's go party!" The fool's mind is in the house of pleasure.

7:5 The carelessness of people of songs. Songs = happiness. One should not be hearing happy songs when it is time to be thinking soberly. Music may sound pretty but you would be better off listening to the wise. We have the tendency to avoid people who would confront us (wise man) and we associate with nonconfrontive people who sing songs of no value (fools). We seek the path of least re-

sistance, just like water. If you have associated with a wise man he will tell you what you need to do to improve and get your priorities right. He will rebuke you because he is interested in your becoming better.

7:6 This too is futility. It is a pun in Hebrew. SIRIM = crackling of thorns; SIR = pot. He is saying that the fool's laughter is like a sudden flame. It crops up very fast with lots of noise and flash, but is soon gone. The laughter of the fool vanishes quickly. This our fourteenth vain thing: associating with those who do not think soberly about life.

7:7 Wise people get upset when they see someone taking advantage of someone else. They do because it undermines society, that which keeps society strong. We need to be trusting in each other instead of being suspicious. Wise people are interested in a better society.

...bribe... A bribe shows that there is something wrong deep down inside. There is corruption. Thus both oppression and bribery bring about certain responses.

7:8 It is good to get things settled. The anxiety is gone and you can quit worrying about it.

...patience... Patience enables a person to grow. Growth as a person enables you to deal better with other people. We need to learn to be patient with other people.

7:9 There are some people who are very hasty and become angry quickly. Anger lodges deeply (resides) within the fool. Do we quickly get angry? Certainly this is not a characteristic of God's children. A Christian realizes that anger is not an acceptable attribute. Solomon also observes that if one's temper is not dealt with and controlled, then ultimately it will make a permanent home (reside) in the personality (bosom) of the fool.

7:10 The "good ol' days" philosophy. Do not yearn for days long past. It is all right to evaluate the times, but to live in the past is foolish. People are constantly thinking about what used to be, but not what can be. They throw their hands up in disgust and give up on society.

7:11 When one receives an inheritance from a wealthy relative it is a good thing if it is associated with wisdom. Wisdom plus inheritance equals something good. Inheritance minus wisdom equals something bad. As demonstrated in 5:10-17, many things can go wrong when one has wealth. Thus it is imperative that great caution is exercised. Things must always be approached with a godly perspective, considering God's will in the use of those monies. We must be good stewards.

...see the sun... They are living. They see a great opportunity because:

1. They are alive,
2. They have received an inheritance and
3. They have the wisdom to know how to use that inheritance.

7:12 Wisdom is a key word in Ecclesiastes. Notice how many times it occurs just in chapter seven: 4,5,7,10,11,12,16,19,23,25 = thirteen times in chapter 7! Wisdom gives protection. Money can build a fortress around someone, but wisdom keeps you safe even if there is no fortress. There is an advantage in knowing and thinking things out for the best.

7:13 God has set the standards and man cannot altar the basic structure of God's will. Isaiah 5:20 - When God bends something it is bent and man cannot unbend it. One of the applications is this: God has said that homosexuality is wrong and no matter how much man tries to justify it and make it acceptable (i.e. bends and twists it), it will always be wrong.

7:14 Some very important points:

1. Happiness and adversity have their purposes. When one has prosperity the tendency is to be happy. When one has adversity he thinks more soberly (cf. Jas 1:2ff).
2. The constant fluctuation between good days and bad days keeps us dependent on God and not on our own guess work. God has the key to everything. Having an attitude like Paul had in Philippians 4:10-13 is the right attitude. He was content no matter what. Paul adapted through Him who enabled him to do all things. That is the context in Philippians 4.

7:15 There is no explanation for this truth. This is life. It is just the way it is, so be prepared for it. This is like Naboth in 1 Kings 21:13. He died in his righteousness. Also look at Jezebel in 1 Kings 18-21. In those chapters she certainly prospered in her wickedness. Thus, man needs to learn to accept this. Meanwhile he ought to remember that in the end, ultimately, God will deal out justice.

7:16 Solomon now warns man concerning four moral dangers:

First, is the idea of "self-righteousness." Do not act more righteous than you are. Do not act "holier-than-thou." In verse 20 he will say that there is no righteous man. It puts a tremendous strain on one who demands more of himself than he could ever become. Do not be unrealistic.

Second, Solomon warns not to be overly wise. This again is talking about thinking more highly of yourself than you ought to think. The RSV is correct in its translation "Do not make yourself overwise."

Third, Solomon warns against being excessively wicked. This does not prove that wickedness in moderation is acceptable. We all fall short, but we must check that sin and not take it lightly. We must do all that we can to conquer it. What happens to a person who sins and does not take it seriously? He will do it again and will grow worse and worse. This is the fool. He dies before his time (cf. Psa 55:23).

Fourth, Solomon warns against being a fool. The fool in Ecclesiastes (see 2:16), as in Proverbs, is one who is characterized by stupidity and overconfidence. He is easily led and shows no common sense (13:16; 17:24; 26:7-11; 28:26; 29:20).

- 7:18** He is referring to the four dangers mentioned above concerning righteousness and wisdom. There must be a balance. It is God who provides the balance. How does a person obtain balance? The answer is by fearing God. This is the key.
- 7:19** This goes with verse 18 and fearing God. Wisdom and the fear of God are better than the collective wisdom of experienced wisdom. Ten is the perfect number of men. Even if you have a perfect number of wise men, they are not as good as the one man with God.
- 7:20** Romans 3:23 - Have you ever heard of the phrase in a prayer, "Forgive us of our sins of omission and commission"? Omission is the sin of not doing something good. Commission is the sin of doing what you were not supposed to do. You sin with your eyes open. You committed what God said not to commit. The point that Solomon is making is still the same: one must seek for a proper balance in his life.
- 7:21-22** It seems is a part of human nature to say things one really does not mean, like saying something hateful when one is not a hateful person. Do not take everything seriously. We know from our own experience that we have done the same thing with foolish words. This does not omit the sin of the tongue, but we need to have Christ's attitude and be willing to forgive men when they speak evil, while at the same time guarding carefully our own words (cf. Mt 12:33-37).
- 7:23** Wisdom cannot truly solve the problems of life or answer the truly important questions.
- 7:24** A negative answer is expected. No one can grasp God's plan or purpose. This is why the statement in verse 23 is true. What man can learn of lasting signifi-

cance comes from God. Beyond His word are many mysteries man cannot understand. He must, therefore, trust the purposes and plans of God.

7:25 This is a way of saying he did a lot of research. He did much work and wanted to know about all the evil of doing foolish things. He searched to find what is vain, foolish and mad (i.e. without logic or sober thought).

7:26 What woman is not named. Perhaps because any woman that is like this is a danger to man. A woman who has a heart (intention) to dominate, and uses her available resources (hands) to accomplish her will, is to be diligently avoided. The only one, however, who can notice the snares and traps is one who is pleasing to God. If we are trying to be pleasing to God we will escape, but the fool will be captured by her.

Who would know better this truth than Solomon? 1 Kings 11 tells his wives turned his heart away. If he had been pleasing to God that would have never happened.

7:27 Notice the emphasis on the word “discovers” (vss. 24,25,25,26). Thorough investigation will yield discoveries. Solomon, however, admits that some truths have been found, but have brought about further questions which have yet to be answered.

7:28 He is talking about wisdom. It is rare in men, but even more rare in women (2 Tim 3:6). We are only 1/1000 better. Certainly the point is that in either sex wisdom is rare.

7:29 Men = mankind. Here he lays the blame for wickedness squarely on the shoulder of mankind. It is man who seeks what is evil. Man’s practice of evil is evidence that he has a lack of wisdom. And for this lack of wisdom he has no one to blame but himself. God puts man on the path of righteousness and man takes himself off.

CHAPTER 8

- 8:1** Wisdom shows itself in kind and gentle expressions. There is a peace from just knowing and a kindness reflected. The wise man does not demonstrate a haughty or puffed-up attitude.
- 8:2** This is our life with God. We made a promise and God has witnessed that oath (that we will obey the king - cf. 2 Chron 36:13; Ezek 17:13) and He expects us to keep His commands.
- 8:3** This is talking about disloyalty. One is in a hurry to go and do evil, thereby breaking his oath with the king and sinning against God. The king (and ultimately God) can make the evildoer pay.
- 8:4** If the king issues a command his subject will not be able to question him. He has the authority. This concept is defined by Samuel to the people before Saul took the throne (1 Sam 8:10-18).
- 8:5** When you are subject to the law of the land you are wise if you do two things:
1. Know the law, and
 2. Obey the law.
- Keeping the royal law keeps one out of trouble.
- 8:6** All things will work out in time. Maybe he is referring to an oppressive king. Keep on obeying his law for it will all work out in time. A lot of people justify disobedience with their dislike for the ruler. This is not acceptable in God's eyes. We should instead pray for them (1 Tim 2:f) and obey them (Rom 13:1-7).
- 8:7** Part of man's problem is that he does not know the future. Therefore he needs to just trust. He also cannot ask anyone else who knows. Remember this good saying: "I may not know what the future holds, but I do know who holds the future."
- 8:8** Gives us four limitations to authority:
1. You cannot restrain the wind. We just do not have the power to change some things.
 2. Authority over the day of death. We are not able to keep from dying. When the body says no more, it is no more.

3. There is no discharge in time of war. Military personnel are in for the duration. When it is time to fight every man is needed. Every single one, when the battle has begun, must fight. No leaves, no "R and R" (rest and recreation).
4. Evil will not deliver those who practice it. Some think that lies will get them out of trouble, others think that stealing will get them out of poverty. However, this is an illusion. Sin never benefits the sinner!

8:9 Men do not know how to exercise authority without the wisdom and guidance of God. They end up hurting themselves (and probably someone else) if they wander through life without the wisdom of God.

8:10 The wicked are given the honor of a decent burial (cf. Jer 16:6; Deut 21:22ff.; Josh 8:19).

...soon forgotten... The wicked committed evil and no one gave it much thought. No one raised his voice in objection. This too is futility. It is the fifteenth vain thing: man's attitude toward evil. People really do not care much about it.

8:11 Remember this verse. Use it often. This is why people do evil again and again, because there is no immediate punishment. If God had continued to do with man what he did with Nadab and Abihu, the priesthood would have been spotless (Lev 10:1-2). Paul notes that men sin because there is no fear of God in their eyes (Rom 3:10-18 cf. 2 Pet 3:3-4,9; Psa 86:9-15). This also provides a good lesson for today. If our nation (government) would immediately punish wrong doers, we would not have to worry about all the crime.

...the hearts of the sons of men... The problem always begins there. People do evil because there is something corrupt about their heart. We need to guard our hearts as Proverbs teaches us.

8:12 Here we have the theme. It really has a connection with verse 11. When God is in the picture, sin is an empty and stupid lifestyle.

...well... A common Hebrew word portraying the idea of day to day happiness and tranquility. It is for those who fear God. Everyone knows where your priorities are. They can see it openly. Solomon here demonstrates patience to leave the ultimate destiny up to God, as did Asaph in Psalm 73.

8:13 ...shadow... These do not last long. It is because they do not fear God. Solomon probably means that man will not prosper beyond the grave. He will then be facing the wrath of God.

...lengthen his days... He will not live eternally in the good. We are lengthening our days for eternity. We have prepared ourselves for eternity.

- 8:14** ...deeds of the wicked... The righteous man receives the punishment the wicked man deserved. And if that is not bad enough, the wicked man receives the good treatment the righteous should have received. This is our sixteenth vain thing: the system of justice and retribution.
- 8:15** Again he repeats the basic premise. Life can be enjoyed despite all of the evil if God is a part of that life. Here Solomon is saying that we should enjoy life. If you are not then there is a problem. God must be a part of your life.
- 8:16** He gave his all and realized that complete wisdom is unattainable. He worked 24 hours a day to find wisdom but failed. It is not attainable. Man alone cannot find wisdom.
- 8:17** The wise man may have made elaborate claims to know, but we need to be content with limited knowledge. We have to accept that we do not have all of the answers.

CHAPTER 9

9:1 ...love or hatred... The treatment of God is the question. What God will decide to do to man in this life is unknown. That is how you explain one passage that indicates God will bless (i.e. Mt 6:22ff; Mk 10:30); and others that indicate that one will not have much in this life (i.e. Lazarus in Lk 16; Rom 8:31-39). Ultimately God is the one who decides the dispersal of His gifts. God may bless some with great wealth and others will be allotted poverty. We just do not know and since we do not then we need to trust. We need to be like Job who said, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

9:2 "All" refers to the majority of mankind. There is no one who knows the plans of God. This would include death. All men are going to suffer the same end (cf. Heb 9:27-28).

The righteous are not favorably delivered by providence or the wicked always dealt punishment in this life and brought to the grave early. Death does not discriminate.

9:3 He is talking about death. Death is evil and a power of the devil (Heb 2:14; 1 Cor 15:51ff).

If you do evil you are not wise because you have not thought things out. You are acting like the foolish man who has not looked at the evidence. How tragic it is when one foolishly ignores God's evidences and then dies in this ignorance. Paul says they are "without excuse" (Rom 1:18-20).

9:4 There is still hope (while one is alive) that he can make something out of his life. In order to demonstrate this point Solomon offers an illustration. Even though lions were exalted and dogs despised, a live dog is better than a dead lion.

9:5 The dead do not know anything that takes place with the living. There are those today who say that if you are evil you will be annihilated. Solomon is certainly not trying to discuss the theological point of what happens after death. He is merely pointing out that the dead do not know what is going on with the living here and now. They are ignorant.

...memory is forgotten... When you are dead no one remembers. Memory is forgotten. When a good friend moves away it is like a death. It brings a lot of sadness because you have lost him. Psalm 31:12 – "I am forgotten as a dead man." Out of sight and out of mind.

...for the living... This refers to hope in verse 4. Being alive is the advantage and it needs to be taken while they are alive. Their reward is explained in verse 6.

9:6 The chance for influencing is gone when one is dead. You may live on through your writing, but even this is not always absolute. Therefore one has to seize life when he has the chance. Once he dies the opportunity is gone.

...have a share... This is the reward of verse 5. One who is dead will no longer profit from the labor which is done on earth. Certainly the idea of taking advantage of today is a biblical truth - because there may be no tomorrow (Isa 55:6; 2 Cor 6:1-2; Heb 3:13).

9:7 The believer turns his life over to God and then can have that fulfilled life. The believer is not worried about acceptance. He knows he is accepted by God and can eat with a cheerful life.

...go... This is imperative. You *must* enjoy life! God gives man life to enjoy (cf. Jn 10:10). Matthew 6:33 - If we are seeking the kingdom of God first, then God will approve of what we make second, third, etc.

9:8 ...clothes be white... This is not talking about purity. In a hot climate white clothing makes one feel more comfortable. Do things that are going to make you more comfortable.

9:9 We need to enjoy hard work (cf. Rom 12:11; Col 3:23). We also need to enjoy marriage. It is one of the gifts of God that makes one better able to deal with the difficulties of life. Marriage requires three things:

1. The giving of affection,
2. An active search for enjoyment (“enjoy life...”). This requires some seeking. Happiness is something pursued. It will not “just happen” without effort and
3. A life-long commitment (“all the days”).

He also notes two other points about marriage:

1. Life is too brief to give up potential happiness. You can potentially enjoy life with a woman, but not if one does not work at the relationship and
2. It is God’s gift. The woman has been given to you by God. Compare Proverbs’ discussions on the wife.

Since marriage is God’s gift it contains inherent goodness (cf. Jas 1:17).

9:10 In verse 7 Solomon talked about contentment. In verse 8 about comfort and in verse 9 about companionship. All of that leads to verse 10. If we have these

then we can give a 100% effort. We also have control over all of these things. If we do not have these three things then we are not able to “do it with all your might.” Sheol is not a place of opportunity.

9:11 Five accomplishments of life, but none of these is a guarantee for success. Nothing is a guarantee in life:

1. The race is not to the swift. Just because you are the fastest does not mean you will win.
2. The battle is not to the warriors. The best fighting men may still be the ones who are killed. Goliath was a far better soldier than David!
3. Neither is bread to the wise. The wise still may not have any food on the table.
4. The wealth to the discerning. Just because a person is perceptive and makes discerning judgments is not a guarantee that he will be rich.
5. Nor favor to men of ability. Those with the greatest ability may not be shown favor (by kings, bosses, etc.).

He finishes verse 11 by naming two things that upset all human plans:

1. Time, and
2. Chance.

9:12 The seasons of life have three qualities:

1. Unpredictable - man does not know his time,
2. Inescapable - like a fish in a net or a bird in a snare and
3. Abrupt - it “just happens,” falling suddenly.

9:13 We learn by observation. This is how we should learn. The preachers who have the best illustrations are the ones who glean them from what is seen, not from “illustration” books. They see something and understand its learning potential. People of all walks of life have wisdom when they are observant, they think about the world around them.

9:14 Solomon here presents an illustration of a city with two negatives: (1) It is small and (2) it has a few men to protect it. Next, this poor city is facing what logic

would say is an unbeatable foe - a great king who apparently has a fairly large-sized army.

- 9:15** The NASV translates this verse in such a way as to indicate that the poor wise man did in fact deliver the city by his wisdom. An example of this is in 2 Samuel 20:22. Joab was attacking a city and a wise woman wondered why. All that Joab wanted was one man, not the wealth of the city. The fight was for nothing.

But the footnote suggests that the proper translation may be “might have delivered.” If this is the correct meaning, then the man had the potential of delivering the city, but no one thought he knew anything. So no one asked him of his wise counsel. Many people equate poverty with ignorance. Poverty has nothing to do with ignorance.

- 9:16** ...not heeded... This shows that the alternative translation (the footnote: “might have delivered”) is most likely correct. They did not take advantage of the wise man. People today, then, ought to learn that wisdom can be found in all types of people in all walks of life. One would be foolish to assume that a poor man is without wisdom.

- 9:17** ...quietness... When a person replies in a quiet and calm way it indicates wisdom. The ruler who wants to be heard shouts. This is wrong. Quietness implies confidence and assurance, and is more likely to be heard than the loud-mouth chattering of a ruler among fools.

- 9:18** Wisdom is powerful but not as powerful as the influence of a sinner. Satan will use the sinful lives and practices of people in order to enhance his work. Whereas wisdom can neutralize the powerful weapons of war, one sinner can undo whatever good might be accomplished.

CHAPTER 10

- 10:1** The idea is that one mistake and wisdom disappears or stinks. A little folly can devalue much wisdom and honor, just as one sin can destroy a lifetime of good (cf. 9:18). People often remember the foolish mistakes people have made rather than remember the many good (and wise) things that have been done.
- 10:2** ...to the right... Republicans and Democrats. The heart of a wise man keeps him on the right path (cf. Prov 4:23) while the foolish does the opposite.

The Heart A Study in Ecclesiastes

1. Has eternity set in it (3:11),
2. Yet it is still evil (8:11; 9:3),
3. Can be defective (10:2),
4. With God it can be occupied with joy (5:10),
5. With God it finds happiness in sorrow (7:3),
6. It can be wise (8:5),
7. Can be happy and satisfied (11:9) and
8. Can be vexed or full of sadness or trouble (11:10).

...the foolish man's heart... Solomon observes, directs him toward the left, thus his heart is the source of his folly. The left would be the place where the folly occurs.

- 10:3** The fool cannot hide himself. His deficiencies are obvious to all. He is so bad that when he walks down the road everyone knows he is a fool. Just watch him and his dress. Speech or some other action will give him away as the fool.

The Fool A Study in Ecclesiastes

1. Is morally blind (2:14),
2. Is lazy (4:5),

3. He may rise to high positions (4:13),
4. Worships foolishly (5:1),
5. Is talkative (without substance) (5:3; 10:12-14),
6. Is disapproved of by God (5:4),
7. Loves rowdy songs (7:5),
8. Is noisy and shallow (7:6),
9. Is easily angry (7:9),
10. Unreceptive to advice (9:17),
11. Allows his heart to lead to evil (10:2),
12. Lacks common sense (10:3) and
13. Cannot perform the simplest of tasks (10:15).

10:4 The anger of a king (or anyone for that matter) can be calmed by having a cool attitude. Be calm to someone of importance and it will be to your benefit. When he sees your calm demeanor he gives you a chance to explain your position. He will assume by your remaining calm you are right (cf. Judg 8:3). By your remaining calm he will assume that your position is well thought out and rational.

10:5 One of the evils of life is the folly of human judgment. Sometimes men are poor at character evaluations. As a result, one can appoint a fool to a place of authority and ignore those who should rule. The fact that this error is under the sun demonstrates its universal practice.

10:6 Sometimes men with resources do not have opportunity to use those resources, also vice versa (money, talents, etc.). Unfortunately this is sometimes true of the church. Sometimes our best people are unused.

10:7 Here is an example of the above. ...slaves on horses... This is the illustration. Sometimes our best people are the ones sitting in the pews and the others who are least talented are the ones doing everything. This is called an evil. Here the princes (i.e. the best of the land) are struggling to survive while the worst (the slaves) are enjoying the best life has to offer.

10:8 Bold endeavors are sometimes disastrous. He perhaps did not plan well for possible trouble or was too over-zealous in the task. When you are taking on a

job you need to think out all of the pitfalls that can happen. Haman (Esth 7:9ff) was zealous to build a gallows for Mordecai but he, himself, was hanged on it.

10:9 Even seemingly simple tasks ought to be approached with caution. The point is that one needs to be careful no matter how often the task has been done.

10:10 ...axe is dull... The wise man prepares his tools which enables him to be more efficient in his task. Do not go to the job without having the tools ready. Take the time. This is why we are here; to prepare in preaching the gospel. If not, the job could be disastrous. The wise man sharpens his tools and thus is more efficient. This sets a precedence for the future as well.

10:11 He has skill but he is a little slow in playing the music that will charm the snake. His slowness nullifies the skill that existed. The laziness will ruin it. You may have a skill, but if you procrastinate it will eventually vanish.

10:12 The fool's lips consume him in four areas:

1. His reputation (Eccl 10:3),
2. His character (Jas 3:6),
3. His impact for good (Eph 4:29) and
4. They ultimately consume the man himself (Mt 12:36f).

10:13 The fool's talking begins with senseless, illogical talk and ends with wickedness and irrational action. Matthew 5:21-26 - Anger eventually leads to murder. Anger is senseless and illogical and it ends with wickedness. Yet the fool practices it. The tongue is a main topic in all of the Wisdom Books (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon). Sooner or later one's character will be seen by his words. This is the test of whether one is wise or foolish.

10:14 The fool is arrogant and multiplies his words, but he does not know what is happening now or in the future.

10:15 ...does not even know how to go in to a city... Most consider this extremely simple. You just walk through the gate!

Now he talks about what a fool does as opposed to what he says. Even the simplest task the fool cannot handle.

10:16 Wisdom and good sense when lacking in leadership spells certain doom.

...feast... The partying ought to be done after the day's work. The time to relax is after the work has been done. The lazy want to eat now and work later.

10:17 Notice the contrast: woe - verse 16, blessed - verse 17. Solomon has emphasized personal enjoyment before (9:7-10) but it has its place. There has to be moderation and self-control. Many people today reach for a drink the first thing every morning.

10:18 The laziness of a fool does not immediately show itself. It is seen in the more subtle eventual break down. With time you will see that the job is not well done. You may look at a roof and say that is in good repair, but the rain will show. The fool will do something even more stupid. He will look at the roof when it rains and say, "I cannot fix it now because it is raining." Then when it is not raining he will say, "The roof does not need to be fixed!"

10:19 This verse is most likely the fool's theme song. He has three main areas of interest:

1. Food - solely for my personal enjoyment,
2. Wine - so I can get drunk and make my life merry (a shallow type of happiness) and
3. Money is the answer to everything. Now, money can be good if it is used wisely. But this philosophy is the shallow reasoning of the fool. If this verse is serious it would parallel those verses of the Bible that show money can be a snare and a trap but can be used for the good and a very powerful force for it.

10:20 There is a saying, "a little bird told me." It is practical advice about words. The wise man is cautious about what he says at any time at any place.

CHAPTER 11

- 11:1** This is probably referring to a venture of faith. Your investment will bring some return. Put your money out in faith and it will come back. Invest in a worthy project in faith and you will get it back; it will not sink.
- 11:2** It is worthwhile to share. Do not hoard, but share with others. Divide your portions with many. It is worth it.
- 11:3** The point is that some actions have permanent consequences. No one has control over where the rain is going to fall.
- 11:4** Those who try to anticipate everything will wind up doing nothing. Do not procrastinate. We need to do the work and trust God that it will work out. How many times have we said, "I will work on it tomorrow!" We need to take advantage of every opportunity of time.

If we are farmers, we need to plant. If we wait for absolute perfect conditions, then we will never plant. Be wise, but plant in faith. Trust God! Do not procrastinate!

- 11:5** Certain parts of God's work defy explanation. We do not understand all that God does. Ecclesiastes has shown us that the life of faith does not get rid of ignorance. It allows us to forget about it though and have faith. It will work out. Just because we do not know how the bones are formed does not mean that we cannot trust that they will form. It does not mean that we sin if we try to find some answers, but we also need faith.

The final result is that we will not know everything. It does not all have to be explained logically. With faith we are able to accept some things.

- 11:6** Since you do not know the course of the future then you should just give your best effort. Do not wait until tomorrow to do what you can do today. Give the best effort now.
- 11:7** Being able to look at the sun as a gift that only the living possess. Light ought to provide a pleasant attitude because it affords one opportunity. Success is often dependent upon being optimistic. This is the "glad to be alive" attitude.
- 11:8** It is essential that we enjoy life. We are not going to be able to do it in retrospect. When we look back at what we should have done it makes us miserable.

This is not dealing with the after life, it is earthly life.

11:9 Know, (i.e. understand, grasp), is in the imperative. Enjoy life but remember that if you do some evil things, God will make you pay for it. Joy and pleasure are to be controlled in light of God's judgment. Once this is done and you have put God's fences around your activities, then go ahead and enjoy them. Never choose activities that will be a stumbling block to obedience!

11:10 ...Vexation... Sadness, trouble, worry. These things destroy life. It takes the "zip" out of living. It is anti-Christian (1 Pet 5:7; Phil 4:4-6; Mt 6:30).

...put away pain... If you have an opportunity to get rid of pain, then do it. You cannot enjoy life when you are in pain. Religious groups that deny medicine or other types of medical treatment need to consider this verse. Solomon would think their philosophy of suffering, when they can go to a doctor, is foolish. Eat right, live right and eliminate some pain.

Again the point is that God wants man to enjoy living. He wants man to seize every opportunity to enjoy life, especially since life is so short.

CHAPTER 12

12:1 (A bad chapter break here.) This is talking about enjoying youth. But, remember the Creator. Before He comes, and judgment comes, and before the bad days of old age come, we had better be thinking about Him. Without God we cannot enjoy life. Old age will perpetuate that neglect.

12:2 These all represent the capacity of joy, but they all fade away. This is emphasizing the problems of old age. The spring of life is passing away. Take advantage of the joys of living while you can.

12:3 The watchman is seeing things that are not there. The strong are no longer strong, but are bent over. They are no longer physical specimens of strength.

... The grinding stones stand idle because they are no people with power to turn them. Some suggest that the old man's teeth are no longer able to chew his food. At this point he does not even have many teeth left. Notice how all of these correlate to the body.

...look through windows... The eyesight has dimmed.

12:4 ...sound of the bird... It indicates that he is not sleeping well.

12:5 He is talking about old age. The preacher is really drawing his conclusion. Now is the time to take advantage of life, because the time will come when it will be too late!

...grasshopper... idea of an old man who can barely move his stiff limbs.

...caperberry... was a stimulant used to revive.

12:6 Re-read verse 2. Everything of value then is no longer of value.

... golden bowl... suspended with a chain. It is very beautiful but when old age comes the chain (cord) snaps and the golden bowl shatters.

...wheel at the cistern... Apparently this wheel (which let down the pitcher) breaks it and it goes off the pulley and down it goes, being crushed as it hits bottom.

12:7 Physical deterioration is returning to dust. Physical bones are healthy, but they will grow old (2 Cor 5:1-4). We now have the capacity to turn to God and do what is right. We have our bodies and our minds to search for God in the fullest. We will one day reach the point when we will be dull and old. We may not have the capacity to turn to God then.

...return to God who gave it... Solomon has found the answer to 3:21 - Here is that answer to this question (Acts 7:59; Lk 23:46; Heb 9:27). This is one of the few hints of continued existence.

12:8 The eighteenth vanity: death itself. Since all ends in death, death becomes the ultimate vain thing.

12:9 The wise man really thinks about the best way of expressing these truths. Every preacher, teacher, parent, etc. must consider the best way to communicate God's truth.

12:10 How can we teach others these truths? There are four elements that encompass the work of the teacher:

1. Find delightful words. They are pleasing and well spoken. They are much more effective than those spoken haphazardly and carelessly. Tell them that they are doing wrong, but do not do it rashly. Do not have a condescending attitude. 2 Timothy 4:3 - With great patience and understanding. Do not be "holier-than-thou."
2. Write. This is another way of spreading God's message (and is what Solomon did!).
3. Preach words of truth and write words of truth.
4. Correctly support them. The best points to make are the ones that God has already made. No one can make better points.

12:11 When we preach God's words we are moving people to action. Like well-driven nails the point is driven home and it accomplishes what you wanted it to.

...they are given by one shepherd... They are given by God. God is the source of His message and He is then claiming inspiration (Lk 1:1-3). Inspiration does not mean that the writer does not have to do research, but that the final message will be inspired.

12:12 ...but beyond this... Referring to books beyond God's book. It is weary to the body because ultimate knowledge cannot be found. You can read, read, read, but they will never lead to ultimate knowledge. Do not focus on man's material. Study the Bible, but read books. This is the book of truth (Jn 8:32; 17:17).

Writing has been shown to exist since 3500 BC. Solomon lived about 960 BC. For over three thousand years before Christ there has been writing. Would not Solomon be surprised to know how many books there are today!

12:13 It is as if you were in a court room and everybody is presenting their cases. Now the judge will conclude. Solomon, the man who has done all that is in this book, now concludes that we should fear God and keep His commandments.

This is in the right order. Fearing God does precede keeping His commandments. People who do not fear God will not keep His commandments. When you fear Him you recognize His power and authority and that you will have to answer to Him. This is what Solomon was saying to the young man. Do what you want, but you will have to answer to God. These are the only things that are not called vanity by this writer. They are the beginning and the end. They are the ultimate and cannot be outdone (cf. Psa 111:10; Prov 1:7; 9:10).

...applies to every person... The reason why this is a great statement is because it is all encompassing. These are wise words to all people of all times.

12:14 Why should we fear God? Because He will bring every act to judgment. This is the basis of our behavior. Everything will be exposed before God; good or evil (Jn 5:28-29; 2 Cor 5:10). It shows the all inclusiveness of God's judgment. Every sin in public or private will be exposed. There is life after death implied here, but not actually taught. There is something to be living for (cf. Rev 20:11-15; Rom 2:6-10; Mt 16:27; Acts 17:30-31).

"... in reality the author says nothing more in these last verses than he has been saying throughout the book - enjoy life while you can. This can be accomplished only by fearing God; for God is in control and He can be expected to reward righteousness and punish evil" (*Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 594).