

# Ecclesiastes<sup>1</sup>

## Chapter 1

- ¶1. Sayings of Ecclesiastes, the son of David, King in Jerusalem.
2. Vanity of vanities, says Ecclesiastes. Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!
3. What does man have that lasts from all his labor which he does under the sun?
4. A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth endures forever.
5. The sun also rises, and the sun sets, and then it hastens to its place where it rises.
6. The wind goes toward the south, and then around to the north, continually going around until the wind returns according to its circuits.
7. All the rivers go to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place to which the rivers go, there do they go again.
8. All things are wearisome; man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing.
9. Whatever has been, the same shall be, and whatever has been done, the same shall be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.
10. (There is a Word of whom He says, “Behold this one! He is new.” He already existed from eternity, he who was before us.)
11. There is no memory of former things. And of the things which will follow, there will also be no memory among those who come afterward.
- ¶12. I, Ecclesiastes, became King over Israel in Jerusalem,
13. and I applied my heart to seek out, and with wisdom to ponder over all that is done under heaven, this miserable grind God has given to the sons of man to be occupied with.
14. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and behold, the whole thing is vanity, and a chasing after wind.
15. What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted.
16. I spoke with my heart, saying, “Behold, I have become great, and I have surpassed the wisdom of all who were before me over Jerusalem, and my heart has perceived great wisdom and knowledge.”
17. And when I gave my heart to know wisdom and to understand madness and foolishness, I came to understand that this, too, was a chasing after wind.
18. Indeed, in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

## Chapter 2

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. “Qoheleth”. The word suggests a gatherer of the Assembly of God or one who speaks to the Assembly.

- ¶1. I said to my heart, “Come now, I will prove you with mirth. Look into pleasure!”  
And, behold, this also was vanity.
2. Of laughter, I said, “It is maddening,” and of pleasure, “What does it accomplish?”
3. I sought wholeheartedly to please my flesh with wine, yet my heart wisely guiding *me*, and to lay hold on foolishness, perchance to discover that there is good in this for the children of men who labor under heaven, their days numbered.
4. I made my great works: I built houses for myself; I planted vineyards for myself;
5. I made gardens and orchards for myself, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees;
6. I made for myself pools of water, from them to water a forest of saplings.
7. I bought male slaves and female slaves, and I had servants born in my house. Moreover, I had a greater possession of herds and flocks than all who were before me in Jerusalem.
8. I gathered for myself both silver and gold, even treasure from kings and the provinces. I prepared for myself singers, men and women, and many concubines, the delights of the sons of men.
9. And I became great, and I surpassed everyone who was before me in Jerusalem; also, my wisdom remained with me.
10. And nothing my eyes desired did I keep from them, nor did I withhold from my heart any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor. And this was my reward for all my labor.
11. Then I looked on all my works which my hands had made and all the labor which I had labored to do, and, behold, the whole thing was vanity, and a chasing after wind, for there is nothing lasting under the sun.
12. And then I turned to consider wisdom, and madness, and foolishness. What *will* the man who comes after the King *do* with the things that have already been done?
13. Then I saw that there is more benefit in wisdom than in foolishness, as there is more benefit in light than in darkness.
14. The wise man’s eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness, and yet, I perceived that one event happens to them all.
15. And I said in my heart, “What happens to the fool is also going to happen to me. Then, why am I so very wise?” And I said in my heart, “This also is vanity.”
16. For there is no remembrance of the wise man as well as of the fool, forever; for in the days to come, what has been will all be forgotten. And how does the wise man die? Just like the fool.

17. Then I hated this life, for the work done under the sun was evil to me. Truly, the whole thing is vanity, and a chasing after wind.
18. And I hated all my labor which I had wrought under the sun, which I will leave to the man who will come after me.
19. And who knows if he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet, he will become master over all my labor which I have done and by which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This, too, is vanity.
20. Then I turned about; I was heartsick over all the labor which I had done under the sun,
21. for there is a man whose labor is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in skill, but to a man who has not labored on it will he leave it as his portion. This also is vanity, and a great evil.
22. For what does a man have for all his labor, and for his heart's chasing *of the wind*, in which he has labored under the sun?
23. Surely, all his days are sorrows, and his busyness, vexation; even in the night, his heart does not rest. This, too, is vanity.
24. There is no good in the man who eats, and drinks, and makes his soul see good in his labor. Truly, I perceived this because it *came* from the hand of God.
25. For who can eat, or who can enjoy pleasure more than I?
26. For to the man who is good before Him, *God* gives wisdom, and knowledge, and joy, but to the sinner, He gives the busyness of gathering and collecting, to give to the one who is good before God. This also is vanity, and a chasing after wind.

### Chapter 3

- ¶1. For everything, there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven:
  2. a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
  3. a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to tear down, and a time to build;
  4. a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
  5. a time to cast stones away, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
  6. a time to gain,<sup>2</sup> and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away;
  7. a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to be silent, and a time to speak;
  8. a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.
9. What is the worker's lasting benefit from that which he has done?
10. I have seen the busyness that God has given to the sons of man to keep busy with.

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<sup>2</sup> or, "seek to acquire"

11. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also put the world<sup>3</sup> in their heart, so that man cannot discover what God has done, from beginning to end.
12. I know that there is no good for them except to rejoice and do good during their lives.
13. Yea, surely, that every man eat, and drink, and see good from all his toil, it is a gift from God.
14. I know that everything God does, it will be forever; to it, there is nothing to add, and from it, there is nothing to take, and God has done it so that men might fear before Him.
15. That which is has already been, and what is to be has already been. But as for God, He seeks who is persecuted.
16. And again, I saw under the sun, wickedness in the place of judgment, and wickedness in the place of righteousness.
17. I said in my heart, "God will judge the righteous as well as the wicked man, for there is a time here to every purpose and upon every work."
18. I said in my heart concerning the state of the sons of man, "God tries them, that they may see that they are but a beast."
19. For what happens to the sons of man also happens to the beast; one event awaits them all: as the one dies, so dies the other. Yea, they all have the same breath, so that man has no advantage over the beast, for all is vanity.
20. They all go to one place. They are all from the dust; and they all return to the dust.
21. Who knows the spirit of the sons of man, that it goes upward, and the spirit of the beast, that it goes downward to the earth?
22. And I have seen that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, since that is his portion. For who will bring him to see what will be after him?

#### Chapter 4

- ¶1. Then I returned, and I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun, and, oh, the weeping of the oppressed! But there is no comforter for them, for in the hand of their oppressors is power. Yea, there is no comforter for them.
2. And I commended the dead who have already died, more than the living who are still alive.
3. But better than both of them is he who has not yet been, who has not seen the evil work which is done under the sun.

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<sup>3</sup> or, "age".

4. Then I saw all the effort and all the skillful work, that it provokes envy in man toward his neighbor. This also is vanity, and a chasing after wind.
5. The fool clasps his hands and eats his own flesh.
6. Better is a handful with quietness than two hands full with toil and a chasing after wind.
7. Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun.
8. There is one, and there is not a second; he has neither son nor brother, and yet, there is no end to all his toil. For his eyes are not satisfied with riches, and *he does not ask himself*, “For whom do I toil, depriving my soul of its good?” This also is vanity, and it is evil busyness.
9. Two are better than one because they have a better reward for their toil.
10. Moreover, if they should fall, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for there is not another to lift him up.
11. Again, if two lie down together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm *alone*?
12. And though a man prevail against one, two will withstand him, and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.
13. Better to be a poor and wise youth than to be an old and foolish king who no longer knows to take advice.
14. For out of the prison-house, he goes forth to become king, even though he was born poor within his kingdom.
15. I observed all the living who walked about under the sun with that youth, the other one who rose up in his stead.
16. There was no end to all the people, to all those over whom he was; and yet, those who come later will not rejoice in him. Truly, this also is vanity and a chasing after wind.

## Chapter 5

1. Watch your steps when you go to the house of God, and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know they are doing evil.
2. Do not be rash with your mouth, for your heart must not hastily utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore, let your words be few.
3. Truly, a dream comes with a multitude of busyness, and a fool’s voice comes with a multitude of words.

4. When you make a vow to God, do not delay to repay it, for He takes no pleasure in fools. What you have vowed, pay!
5. It is better that you make no vow than to vow and not pay.
6. Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands?
7. Truly, with a multitude of dreams, both vanities and words are multiplied. But you, fear God!
8. If in a province, you see oppression of the poor and a violent taking away of what is just and right, do not be surprised at that, for one higher than the high is watching; and there are higher ones over them.
9. Indeed, the bounty of earth is for all who are on it; the king is himself served from the field.
10. He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver, nor the one who loves wealth, with abundance. This also is vanity.
11. When goods increase, they increase who consume them; so, what benefit are they to their owners, other than seeing them with their eyes?
12. Sweet is the sleep of the laboring man, whether he eat little or much, but the abundance of the rich man will not give him the relief of sleep.
13. There is an enervating evil I have seen under the sun: wealth stored up by its owners for its loss
14. when that wealth perishes in a bad venture. And he fathered a son, but in his hand, there is nothing.
15. Just as he came out of his mother's womb, naked, he will return, just as he came. For he will take nothing of his labor which he would carry away in his hand.
16. And this, too, is an enervating evil. In every respect as he came, so shall he go. And what benefit does he have who labors for the wind?
17. Moreover, each of his days is consumed in darkness, and he is greatly vexed with his disease and wrath.
18. Behold, I have seen what is good and what is beautiful: *it is for a man* to eat, and to drink, and to experience, during the days of his life which God has given him, good from all his toil in which he labors under the sun, for that is his portion.
19. Also, *for* any man to whom God has given wealth and possessions, and given him power to enjoy it, and to bear his portion, and to rejoice in his labor – this, itself, is a gift from God,
20. but he will not much remember the days of his life. Truly, God afflicts according to the pleasure of His heart.

## Chapter 6

- ¶1. There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy upon mankind.
2. A man to whom God has given wealth, and possessions, and honor so that there is nothing lacking for him of anything that he desires, and yet, God does not enable him to enjoy it, but a stranger enjoys it. This is vanity, and it is an evil disease.
3. If a man beget a hundred children, and live many years, so that the years of his life are many, and yet his soul be not filled with good and he have no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better than he
4. (for into vanity he came, and into darkness he will go, and by the darkness will his name be covered).
5. Yea, it did not see the sun, and yet, one finds no more rest than the other.
6. Even if one lives a thousand years, twice over, or one sees no good, are not all going to the same place?
7. All the toil of a man is for his mouth, and even at that, his soul is not filled.
8. But what advantage has the wise man over the fool? What does the poor man have who understands how to walk before the living?
9. Better is the sight of the eyes than wandering desire. This also is vanity, and a chasing after wind.
10. Whoever already exists, his glory has been determined, and it is known that he is a man, and he is not able to contend with him who is mightier than he.
11. Seeing there are many things that increase vanity, what advantage does man have?
12. For who knows what is good for man while he is living out the number of the days of his vain life, which he will spend like a shadow? For who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun?

## Chapter 7

- ¶1. A good name is better than good oil, and the day of death is better than the day of one's birth.
2. It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for that is the end of all men, and the living will take it to heart.
3. Sorrow is better than laughter, for by the sadness of the countenance, the heart is made better.
4. The heart of wise men is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.
5. It is better for one to hear a rebuke from a wise man than for one to listen to a song of fools.

6. Truly, like the sound of thorns under a cooking pot, so is the laughter of a fool.  
And this also is vanity.
7. Truly, oppression drives a wise man mad, and a bribe destroys the heart.
8. The end of a thing is better than its beginning. A patient spirit is better than a proud spirit.
9. Do not be hasty in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools.
10. Do not say, "How is it that the former days were better than these?" For you are not asking wisely about this.
11. With an inheritance, wisdom is good, and is a benefit to those who see the sun.
12. For wisdom is a defense, and money is a defense, but the benefit of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who possess it.
13. Consider the work of God! For who can make straight what He has made crooked?
14. In the day of prosperity, be happy, and in the day of adversity, consider. God works them both together, to the end that man should find out nothing after him.
15. I have seen everything during the days of my vanity. There is a righteous man who dies in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who lives long in his wickedness.
16. Do not be overly righteous, and do not be too wise. Why should you destroy yourself?
17. Do not be overly wicked, and do not be a fool. Why should you die before your time?
18. It is good that you should lay hold on this, and also that from this you should not relax your grip, for he who fears God will come forth from them all.
19. Wisdom gives strength to the wise man, more than ten rulers who are in the city.
20. Truly, there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and does not sin.
21. Also, do not take to heart all things that are spoken, lest you hear your servant cursing you.
22. For your heart also knows that many times, you, yourself, have cursed others.
23. All this have I tested by wisdom. I said, "I will be wise," but it was far from me.
24. That which is far off and exceedingly deep, who can find it out?
25. I turned about with my heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom and the Reason, and to know wickedness, folly, and the foolishness of madness.
26. And I found more bitter than death, that woman whose heart is snares and nets. Her hands are chains. He who is good in God's sight escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her.



27. Consider this that I have found, says Ecclesiastes, *having observed* one thing after another to find the Reason
28. (which my soul continually sought out, but did not find): one man among a thousand have I found, but a woman among all these have I not found.
29. Besides that, consider this that I have found: God created man upright, but they have sought out many devices.

## Chapter 8

- ¶1. Who is like the wise man? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom causes his face to shine, and the hardness of his face is changed.
2. As for me, *I say*, obey the command of a king, and in consideration of the curse of God,
3. do not be hasty to go from his presence. Do not take part in an evil thing, for he does all things as he pleases.
4. Seeing that authority is in the word of a king, who can say to him, "What are you doing?"
5. He who keeps a commandment will not know an evil thing, and the heart of the wise man will perceive time and judgment.
6. Truly, to every purpose, there is time and judgment, for the wickedness of man is heavy upon him.
7. Truly, he does not know what will come to pass; yea, who can tell him how it will be?
8. There is no man who has control over the spirit, to retain the spirit; neither has he control in the day of death. Yea, there is no discharge in that war. Wickedness will not deliver those who possess it.
9. All this have I seen while applying my heart to every work that is done under the sun. *There is* a time when one man rules over *another* man to his own hurt.
10. And I have seen wicked men properly buried, who had come in and gone out of the holy place, and yet, they were forgotten in the city where they had done so. This also is vanity.
11. Because sentence against evildoing is not carried out quickly, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.
12. Though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and *God* prolong his life, I still know that it will be well with those who fear God because they are afraid at His presence.
13. And it will not be well with the wicked man, and *God* will not prolong his life; *his* days will be like a shadow because he has no fear at the presence of God.

14. There is a vanity which is wrought on earth, namely, righteous people to whom He causes it to happen according to the work of wicked people, and wicked people whom He causes it to happen according to the work of righteous people. I said that this also is vanity.
15. Then I praised joy, for there is nothing good for a man under the sun, except to eat, and to drink, and be merry, for this will go with him through his labor during the days of his life which God gives him under the sun.
16. Then I gave my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on the earth, that neither by day nor by night does one see sleep with his eyes.
17. And I saw all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. Even though a man labor to search it out, he will not find it. Indeed, even if a wise man determines to know it, he will not be able to find it out.

## Chapter 9

- ¶1. But all this I took to heart, even to make all this clear, that those who are righteous and those who are wise, and their works, are in the hands of God. Whether it be love or hatred, no man knows the whole thing that is before them.
2. All things *come* alike to all; one event happens to the righteous people and to the wicked, to the good and clean and to the unclean, to him who sacrifices and to whoever does not sacrifice. As is the good man, so is the sinner; the one who swears and whoever is afraid of an oath.
3. This is an evil among everything done under the sun, that one event *comes* upon all, for the heart of the sons of man is full of wickedness, and madness is in their heart during their lives, and after that, *they go* to the dead.
4. Whoever is chosen to be among the living has hope; therefore, a living dog is better than a dead lion.
5. For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, nor do they any longer have a reward; the very memory of them is forgotten.
6. Also, their love, and their hate, and their envy is soon perished, and they have no more portion forever in all that is done under the sun.
7. Go, then, and eat you bread with joy, and drink your wine with a cheerful heart, for God has now accepted your works.
8. Let your garments always be white, and do not let oil be lacking on your head.
9. Enjoy life with the wife whom you love all the days of your life of vanity which *God* has given you under the sun, all the days of your vanity, for it is you're portion in life and your labor in which you toil under the sun.

10. Whatever your hand finds to do, do with your might, for there is no work, or reason, or knowledge, or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.
11. I returned, and I saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift ones, nor the battle to the mighty, nor yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to those with understanding, nor yet favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all.
12. Man certainly does not know his time. Like fish taken in a deadly net, and like birds taken in a snare, sons of man are entrapped at an evil time when *a trap* falls upon them suddenly.
13. This wisdom also have I seen, and it was great to me:
14. *There was* a little city, and the men in it were few. And there came against it a great king, and he surrounded it, and built great siege-works against it.
15. And a poor wise man was found in it, and he delivered the city by his wisdom, and yet, no man remembered that poor man.
16. And then I said, “Wisdom is better than strength,” and yet, the poor man’s wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.
17. The words of the wise are heard in silence more than the shouting of a ruler among fools.
18. Wisdom is better than weapons of war, and one sinner destroys much good.

#### Chapter 10

- ¶1. Dead flies make the oil of the apothecary to give off a stench; *likewise*, a little folly carries more weight than wisdom and honor.
2. The heart of the wise man is at his right hand, but the heart of the fool at his left.
3. And also, as a fool walks in the way, his mind is deficient, and he says to all, “I am a fool.”
4. If the spirit of a ruler rises up against you, do not go away from your place, for submission will make great offenses go away.
5. There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, that is, an error that comes forth from the ruler.
6. Foolishness is settled in many high places, and rich men dwell in a lowly place.
7. I have seen servants on horses, and princes walking on the ground like servants.
8. He who digs a pit will fall into it, and. serpent will bite him who breaks through a wall.
9. He who quarries stones will be hurt by them; he who splits logs is endangered by them.

10. If the iron is blunt, and if one does not sharpen the edge, he must use more strength, but wisdom is a help in doing right.
11. If, when there is no charming, the serpent bites, there is no benefit to the master of the tongue.
12. Words from the mouth of a wise man *bring* favor, but the lips of a fool swallow him up.
13. The beginning of words of his mouth is foolishness, and the end of his talk is evil madness.
14. Though the fool multiplies words, a man does not know what will be, and who will tell him what will come to pass after him?
15. The labor of fools wears them out, for he does not know how to get to a city.
16. Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child and your princes eat in the morning!
17. Blessed are you, O land, when your king is a son of nobles and your princes eat at the proper time, for strength, and not for drunkenness!
18. By much slothfulness the beam-work sinks down, and by idleness of hands, the house leaks.
19. Bread makes for laughter, and wine makes life merry, but money answers everything.
20. Do not curse the king, even in your mind, and in your bedchambers, do not curse a rich man, for a bird of the sky will carry the voice, or that which has wings will report the matter.

## Chapter 11

- ¶1. Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for after many days, you will find it.
2. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight, for you do not know what evil will come upon the land.
3. If the rain-clouds are full, they pour out rain onto the earth, and if a tree falls, whether southward or northward, in the place where it falls, there will the tree remain.
4. Who watches the wind does not sow, and who observes the clouds does not reap.
5. Just as you do not know of the way of the spirit, or the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.
6. In the morning, sow your seed, and at evening, let not your hand be slack, for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.
7. Sweet is the light, and it is good to the eyes, to see the sun,

8. but if a man live many years and rejoices in them all, let him remember the days of darkness, that they will be many. All that comes is vanity.
9. Rejoice, young man, in your youth, let your heart be glad in the days of your youth, and live in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these things, God will bring you into judgment.
10. Turn sorrow away from your heart, and put pain away from your flesh, for youth and childhood are vanity.

## Chapter 12

- ¶1. Remember also your Creator during the days of your youth, while the evil days are not come and the years draw near in which you say, "I have no pleasure in them";
2. while the sun is not darkened, nor the light, nor the moon, or the stars; or the clouds return after the rain;
3. in the day that the keepers of the house tremble; and the strong menace bent over; and the grinders cease because they are few; and those that look through the lattice grow dim;
4. and the doors are shut in the street when the sound of the grinding-mill is low; and one rises at the sound of a bird; and all the daughters of music are become weak;
5. and they are afraid of what is high; and terrors are in the way; and the almond tree blossoms; and the grasshopper is a burden; and desire fails because man goes to his eternal home and those who wail walk about in the street;
6. before the silver cord is cut; or the golden bowl is crushed; or the pitcher over the spring is broken; or the wheel is crushed at the cistern.
7. Then will the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.
8. "Vanity of vanities!" says Ecclesiastes. "This vanity of vanities!"
9. And furthermore, Ecclesiastes, who was wise, continually taught the people knowledge, and he weighed out, and made search, and assiduously set in order many proverbs.
10. Ecclesiastes made diligent search to attain to words pleasing to *God*. And what was written was right; he wrote words of truth.
11. Words of wise men are like goads, and like nails fastened by masters of constructions, provided by one shepherd.
12. And furthermore, my son, by these things be warned. There is no end to the making of many books, and much study makes for weariness of the flesh.

13. The conclusion of the matter, *when* all has been heard, *is this*: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole *duty* of man.
14. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil.