

## **Ecclesiastes<sup>10</sup> The Words of the Preacher**

### Lesson 6 Ecclesiastes Chapters 10, 11 and 12

#### **Proverbs of the King**

**Ecclesiastes 10:1** Dead flies make a perfumer's oil stink, so a little foolishness is weightier than wisdom and honor. <sup>2</sup>A wise man's heart *directs him* toward the right, but the foolish man's heart *directs him* toward the left. <sup>3</sup>Even when the fool walks along the road his sense is lacking, and he demonstrates to everyone *that* he is a fool. <sup>4</sup>If the ruler's temper rises against you, do not abandon your position, because composure allays great offenses.

Solomon returns to the use of proverbs to make his point clear concerning the things he has discovered in his life. He states that flies cause the "perfumer's oil" to go rancid and foolishness is more powerful than wisdom and honor. He has also discovered that the wise man leans to the right and the fool leans to the left, showing everyone that he is a fool. However, the man who keeps his composure when the rulers offend will be able to combat the onslaught and gather strength from the support of others.

#### **The Error Seen in this World**

**Ecclesiastes 10:5** There is an evil I have seen under the sun, like an error which goes forth from the ruler- <sup>6</sup>folly is set in many exalted places while rich men sit in humble places. <sup>7</sup>I have seen slaves *riding* on horses and princes walking like slaves on the land.

Solomon sets forth what he says is an "evil" conclusion to an "error" he has seen in the world. For some reason, the fool ends up in the place of prestige and the rich man ends up in the place of abasement. He has seen slaves being carried and rulers walking. Solomon believes this to be an error in societies and is unfair.

#### **More Parables of Solomon**

**Ecclesiastes 10:8** He who digs a pit may fall into it, and a serpent may bite him who breaks through a wall. <sup>9</sup>He who quarries stones may be hurt by them, and he who splits logs may be endangered by them. <sup>10</sup>If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen *its* edge, then he must exert more strength. Wisdom has the advantage of giving success. <sup>11</sup>If the serpent bites before being charmed, there is no profit for the charmer.

The parables in this section are very interesting, yet very practical.

1. Dig a hole and you might fall in it.
2. Burst through a wall and a snake might be there to bite you.
3. Cut stones or logs for a living and you may be injured as you work.
4. It is more work to cut with a dull axe than a sharp axe.
5. Wisdom does provide an advantage!
6. A snake charmer is not successful if the snake bites him before he charms it.

However, Solomon's words are not profound because even the fool understands these simple proverbs.

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## The Word of the Wise and the Fool

**Ecclesiastes 10:12** Words from the mouth of a wise man are gracious, while the lips of a fool consume him;<sup>13</sup> the beginning of his talking is folly, and the end of it is wicked madness.<sup>14</sup> Yet the fool multiplies words. No man knows what will happen, and who can tell him what will come after him?<sup>15</sup> The toil of a fool so wearies him that he does not even know how to go to a city.<sup>16</sup> Woe to you, O land, whose king is a lad and whose princes feast in the morning.<sup>17</sup> Blessed are you, O land, whose king is of nobility and whose princes eat at the appropriate time— for strength, and not for drunkenness.

A wise man speaks “gracious” words, but a fool cannot stop talking. The fool begins his talk with “folly” and ends with “wicked madness.” His words are unpredictable and he wears people down so that they do not know where to turn.

In verse 17, Solomon offers a proverb concerning the blessing of having an older and wiser king. Solomon has seen it all and has changed his mind. His kingdom is better off now that he is older and experienced. Yet, Solomon has some fears. His rule has not been the best for his people and the next verse shows his concerns.

## Indolence and Slackness

**Ecclesiastes 10:18** Through indolence the rafters sag, and through slackness the house leaks.<sup>19</sup> Men prepare a meal for enjoyment, and wine makes life merry, and money is the answer to everything.

Solomon shows his worry. If his house is not built correctly, it cannot function properly. Through slothfulness, “the rafters sag” and through “slackness” in construction, the roof “leaks.”

## A Bird of the Heavens

**Ecclesiastes 10:20** Furthermore, in your bedchamber do not curse a king, and in your sleeping rooms do not curse a rich man, for a bird of the heavens will carry the sound, and the winged creature will make the matter known.

Solomon has learned the lessons of the sinful world well. His words are not safe even behind the closed doors of his bedroom. The king will hear what has been said and retaliate. The rich man will also hear and make things difficult for the average person who has a complaint. It is not fair. To Solomon, food is prepared for enjoyment. Wine is used to make us happy. Money fixes everything. We must be careful about what we say. A little birdie may tell someone and the bird does not care whom he tells!

## Conclusions

**Ecclesiastes 11:1** Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days.<sup>2</sup> Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth.<sup>3</sup> If the clouds are full, they pour out rain upon the earth; and whether a tree falls toward the south or toward the north, wherever the tree falls, there it lies.<sup>4</sup> He who watches the wind will not sow and he who looks at the clouds will not reap.<sup>5</sup> Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things.<sup>6</sup> Sow your seed in the morning, and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good.

The writer makes several conclusions about life. First, he talks about taking chances. Go ahead and "cast your bread" upon the "waters," and it will come back. But be careful not to put all of your eggs in one basket. Dividing our investments into seven or eight baskets is a good way to weather the misfortunes that will come. Misfortunes will come and they can be devastating. When the clouds are full of water, it is going to rain. Misfortunes come not only like the pouring rain, but also like a fallen tree. Where a tree falls, there it will lie. Nevertheless, if all we do is watch the weather, we will never get the crop in; we will never get our work done. In Solomon's mind, just as we do not understand the weather or the creation of life in a mother's womb, no one knows the work of God, the creator of all things. Therefore, work in the morning and work in the evening. Work, work, work so that we might succeed!

### **The Light and Darkness**

**Ecclesiastes 11:7** The light is pleasant, and *it is* good for the eyes to see the sun.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, if a man should live many years, let him rejoice in them all, and let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many. Everything that is to come *will* be futility.

We must absorb all the light now because there will be endless days of darkness when this life is over. Everything ends in futility, according to Solomon.

### **Judgment on All**

**Ecclesiastes 11:9** Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things.<sup>10</sup> So, remove vexation from your heart and put away pain from your body, because childhood and the prime of life are fleeting.

As children and then as young men, we should live a good and pleasant life, following the impulses of our hearts responding to the desires of our eyes. We must do it all because this life is short. We must not be stopped by the heart or pain. Youth comes only once and will last for only a short period.

Finally, Solomon warns us that God will judge everything! It is an interesting point that does not line up with his previous thoughts. Remember that he made it clear that after this life there is nothing. We die and go to the dust. But now he speaks of the judgment of God. When will this judgment take place? Where does this fit in his theology?

### **Remember Your Creator**

**Ecclesiastes 12:1** Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, "I have no delight in them";<sup>2</sup> before the sun, the light, the moon, and the stars are darkened, and clouds return after the rain;<sup>3</sup> in the day that the watchmen of the house tremble, and mighty men stoop, the grinding ones stand idle because they are few, and those who look through windows grow dim;<sup>4</sup> and the doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low, and one will arise at the sound of the bird, and all the daughters of song will sing softly.

Finally, here is Solomon's proper theology. Here is what the writer really thinks as he looks back on his wasted years in regret. Everything that has been written in the past 11 chapters explores how man without God thinks. In chapter 12, Solomon tells us what a Godly man thinks. Before the evil days come, turn to the Creator. Before everything in this world results in meaningless efforts, turn to the Creator. Remember Him "in the days of your youth." If we do not turn to God in our youth, a time will come when we will say, "I have no delight in them". We must turn to God before the events that happen in our lives are over on this earth. In simple words, we must turn to the Creator before we die.

## The Destiny of the Triune Man

**Ecclesiastes 12:5** Furthermore, men are afraid of a high place and of terrors on the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags himself along, and the caperberry is ineffective. For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street. <sup>6</sup> Remember Him before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed; <sup>8</sup> "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "all is vanity!"

A high place is a place of worship. People fear places of worship when they have no relationship with the Creator. People fear evil people with evil intentions on the roads between towns. However, evil people come and go, but nature continues. The trees blossom, the grasshopper "drags himself along," and the caperberry has a difficult time taking root. While all this happens, the triune man faces death. At death, man goes to his eternal home. The word for man used here has to do with man's soul. It is the person he is here in life, the thinking part of man, the part that must choose salvation, the part that must choose the Creator, the part that goes to his eternal home whether it is heaven or hell. That part of man is already in his eternal home while mourners are still in the streets mourning his departure. It is a reminder to remember the Creator, to remember Him before "the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed," a reference to redemption and righteousness. In the Scripture, silver always refers to righteousness and gold always refers to redemption. Before the opportunity to receive redemption and righteousness is over we are to turn to the Creator before "the pitcher by the well of life is crushed" and before the opportunity to have eternal living water is over because of death. Turn to the Creator before the "wheel at the cistern is crushed." Just as the wheel at the cistern stirs the water to keep it from becoming stagnant, so the heart stirs the blood. We are to turn to the Creator before the heart stops its stirring of the blood and life is over. When the heart stops, two other things happen. The body returns to the dust from which it came. The spirit that gives the body life, that energy that causes the body to breathe and our limbs to move is the breath of God and it returns to Him. Therefore, the soul of man goes to his eternal home, his body goes to the dust and his spirit returns to God. Without God, all is meaningless, all is emptiness, all is futile. Life without God is futile.

## The Thoughts of the Preacher

**Ecclesiastes 12:9** In addition to being a wise man, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge; and he pondered, searched out and arranged many proverbs. <sup>10</sup> The Preacher sought to find delightful words and to write words of truth correctly. <sup>11</sup> The words of wise men are like goads, and masters of these collections are like well-driven nails; they are given by one Shepherd. <sup>12</sup> But beyond this, my son, be warned: the writing of many books is endless, and excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body.

Solomon the preacher was a wise man and Ecclesiastes was not his only message. He taught many people many other things which were "delightful" and "truthful" words. In verse 11, Solomon says that the words of the wise men were given by one Shepherd. The collections recorded by these men are like "well-driven nails." Those people who master the words and wisdom from the collection drive the message home. It is wise to study only the collection given by the one Shepherd. There are other books, endless in number, but they are not given by the one Shepherd. Solomon warns that we should study the collection of the one Shepherd, but not all the other books because they are "wearying to the body." There are many books in this category, but the books that claim to be religious and show another way to God are the most dangerous and wearisome.

## The Conclusion to It All

**Ecclesiastes 12:13** The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments,

because this *applies to* every person. <sup>14</sup> For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

The Preacher ends with a final conclusion. He says "when all has been heard." In other words, after he has spent the time to explore wisdom and the folly therein, he has but one conclusion. What is that conclusion? It is two-fold. First he says to "fear God." Do not look at the world and chase all the emptiness it holds. Fear God and worship only Him. Second, Solomon says, "keep God's commandments." God has given us a set of instructions for a reason. Keep those instructions. Both of these commands apply to every person. God will see our keeping the commandments as good. He will see our ignoring the commandments as evil. Every act of every person will be judged. God will pass judgment on everything we do, even the so-called hidden things. To all of this, Solomon does not say, "eat, drink, and be merry for after this there is nothing." That is the way the worldly man thinks. The Preacher knows there is something after this life, a life with God or a life absent from God. Do what is right. Go to the right. Fear God and keep His commandments as soon as you hear of Him. God gave this book to allow us to see how man without God thinks. Living without God results in a sad, hopeless, empty and futile life. Life with God is full beyond measure. Choose God early in life. Do not waste the days of your youth here on earth. Worship God and keep His commandments. We are to study the collection of Scripture given by the Shepherd, the rest of His word, the Holy Bible and put all other books aside.