

Ecclesiastes Chapter 7

These sayings are much like those in the Book of Proverbs and demonstrate that Ecclesiastes also supports the wise approach to life. Mourning and sorrow are better than feasting and laughter (verses 1-3), because they cause a man to reflect wisely on the brevity of life. The laughter of the fool is compared to the crackling of thorns (verse 6), since both were characterized by noise, volatility and transience. To talk about the former days (verse 10), or the "good old days," is not wise. Both good and bad days are the work of God and are used, apart from our ability to understand them, in God's sovereign plan (verses 13-14).

Ecclesiastes 7:1 "A good name [is] better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth."

Where a man has so lived to earn a good reputation, the day of his death can be a time of honor.

It appears that Solomon is giving some words of wisdom on the value of different things in life. A good name is, probably, the most valuable thing a person can have (in the physical). The only things that are more important are our relationship with God and our families.

It is a blessing to children, when they are left an honorable name by their father and mother. They are one step ahead of creating a good name for themselves. At least, everyone expects them to be of good character, when their parents have a good character. It is very nice to smell good, but more important is a person's character.

The day of death is better than the day of one's birth, because there are a lot of problems and heartaches in this world. When we die (if we are saved), those troubles and heartaches are over.

Revelation 14:13 "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed [are] the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."

The point of the section (of verses 2-6), is to emphasize that more is learned from adversity than from pleasure. True wisdom is developed in the crucible of life's trials, though the preacher wishes that were not the case when he writes "this too is futility" (verse 6).

Ecclesiastes 7:2 "[It is] better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that [is] the end of all men; and the living will lay [it] to his heart."

Actually, we have this reversed. We rejoice when someone is born, and mourn when they die. Birth brings a lifetime of problems that we must deal with. At death (if we are Christians), we are told there will be no more sorrow.

Revelation 21:4 "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Ecclesiastes 7:3 "Sorrow [is] better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better."

I have used the following expression many times: We do not learn anything on the mountain top, we learn in the valley. Problems come to make us strong.

Psalms 119:71 "[It is] good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes."

James 4:8-10 "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse [your] hands, [ye] sinners; and purify [your] hearts, [ye] double minded." "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and [your] joy to heaviness." "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."

None of this is saying that laughter is bad. It is, in fact, good. It is speaking of sorrow for our sins causing us to repent and be renewed in our hearts.

Ecclesiastes 7:4 "The heart of the wise [is] in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools [is] in the house of mirth."

This is just explaining that what we do with our lives here on this earth is a very serious matter. We cannot just drift through life pleasing our flesh, and have a future. Our future lives are very serious things.

We will spend all of eternity in one of two places. If we never get serious about our relationship with God, we will spend eternity in hell. On the other hand, if we get serious with God, repent of our sins, and become a new creature in Christ, we will inherit eternal life in heaven.

Ecclesiastes 7:5 "[It is] better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools."

The "song of fools" is speaking of songs of revelry. This type of song is usually accompanied with drinking or drugs. We find that suggestions in this type of songs encourage one to sin.

The present day rock music has terrible suggestive lyrics. Some of the words spoken are covered with the loud beat. Many young people do not even know what the words are.

The sad thing is that they are recorded in the subconscious mind, even when they do not realize what they are saying. The rebuke of the wise is to cause the person not to sin. We can certainly see that the rebuke is better.

Proverbs 15:32 "He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding."

Ecclesiastes 7:6 "For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so [is] the laughter of the fool: this also [is] vanity."

The thorns, in this instance, are being burned. The laughter of a fool is as temporary as the thorns which burn. The fool's laughter is soon over, and reality sets in. The most foolish thing a person could do is reject the Lord for earthly pleasure.

Ecclesiastes 7:7 "Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad; and a gift destroyeth the heart."

Oppression is an attack on the wise from the outside. It can be an attack from Satan, or from some person under the influence of Satan. It is maddening to be attacked. It is even more terrible to be the oppressor yourself. The truly wise will not be the oppressor.

Isaiah 33:15-16 "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;" "He shall dwell on high: his place of defense [shall be] the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters [shall be] sure."

Exodus 23:8 "And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous." The "gift that destroys the heart" is speaking of bribery.

Ecclesiastes 7:8 "Better [is] the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: [and] the patient in spirit [is] better than the proud in spirit."

He that shall endure to the end shall be saved. In that particular sense, the end is much better than the beginning. At the beginning of a job, we are uncertain of ourselves. We have many obstacles to overcome. At the end, we have done all of this and have overcome.

The proud in spirit do not receive instruction very well. Those who are patient will make fewer mistakes.

Luke 21:19 "In your patience possess ye your souls."

Ecclesiastes 7:9 "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools."

A very common way of describing this person would be to say he was "hot tempered".

Proverbs 14:29 "[He that is] slow to wrath [is] of great understanding: but [he that is] hasty of spirit exalteth folly."

Ephesians 4:26-27 "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:" "Neither give place to the devil."

Ephesians 4:31 "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice."

Anger leads to murder and hate which are both forbidden to believers.

Ecclesiastes 7:10 "Say not thou, What is [the cause] that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this."

Many people look back to the "good old days". They were not "good old days", when they were living them. They are good when you look back, because you have forgotten the problems. It seems (in verse 10 above), he is discontented with things the way they are. He really has no way of knowing that one time is better than another.

God has us in whatever circumstance is best for us at the present. We should be content, whatever is happening. There are times when we look back, that one particular thing was better, but every time has its problems as well.

In the midst of trouble and discontent, it is easy to lose touch with reality.

Ecclesiastes 7:11 "Wisdom [is] good with an inheritance: and [by it there is] profit to them that see the sun."

This is speaking of someone who has inherited money and prestige. His wisdom will be considered quicker than someone of low estate. Men are respecters of persons. Wealth that is used for good purposes is good. Solomon was a good example of that, because his father David was thought so highly of.

Ecclesiastes 7:12 "For wisdom [is] a defense, [and] money [is] a defense: but the excellency of knowledge [is, that] wisdom giveth life to them that have it."

Wisdom and money are a protection for those who have them. Godly wisdom brings eternal life. Knowledge is accumulated learning. The more you study God's Word, the closer you are to receiving Him in His fullness.

John 17:3 "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

Wisdom is better than money because it provides the fulfilled life.

Ecclesiastes Chapter 7 Questions

1. A _____ is better than precious ointment.
2. What are the only things that are better?

3. Why is the day of death better than the day of birth for a person?
6. Why is sorrow better than laughter?
7. Why do we have problems?
9. What is it really saying about sorrow and laughter?
10. If we drift through life pleasing our flesh, we have no _____.
11. When we become new creatures in Christ, what do we inherit?
12. What is the "song of fools" speaking of?
13. What goes along with this type of songs?
15. What is happening to the thorns in verse 6?
16. What is the most foolish thing a person can do?
17. Where does oppression come from?
19. The "gift that destroys the heart" is _____.
21. What kind of person is verse 9 speaking of?
23. Be ye angry, and _____ not.
24. Many people look back to time they call what?
25. Why are they so good?
26. Wisdom is good with an _____.
27. Godly wisdom brings _____.
28. Knowledge is _____.