

LIFE UNDER THE SUN



STUDIES IN ECCLESIASTES

4 November 2018

הַבֵּל

“The riddles of God are more satisfying than the solutions of man.”

— G.K. Chesterton, *Introduction to the Book of Job*

Ecclesiastes Part 12 - “*The Practical Outworkings of Wisdom*”

Introduction: A Wisdom Poem

Ecc. 8:1

Who is like the wise? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? →

A man’s wisdom makes his face shine, and the hardness of his face is changed. →

Recognizing and Exercising Authority in Wisdom—Ecclesiastes 8:2-9

1. Lesser authorities should be honored because they have been established by God.

Ecc. 8:2-4—² I say: Keep the king’s command, because of God’s oath to him. ³ Be not hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand in an evil cause, for he does whatever he pleases. ⁴ For the word of the king is supreme, and who may say to him, “What are you doing?”

⇒ This teaching is echoed in the NT (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-16)

2. There is a human tendency to either misuse authority or to rebel against it.

We are guarded from these tendencies by: (1) Living wisely and following God’s _____ (8:5-6)

(2) Recognizing our own _____ (8:7)

(3) Recognizing the emptiness of _____ (8:8)

⇒ The fact that we cannot prevent our eventual _____ shows that we are under some kind of authority.

Key Point: Wisdom leads us to _____ God, changing how we respond to and exercise authority.

Avoiding Wickedness in Wisdom—Ecclesiastes 8:10-13

1. A life of wickedness is ultimately *hebel*.

Ecc. 8:10—Then I saw the wicked buried. They used to go in and out of the holy place and were praised in the city where they had done such things. This also is vanity (*hebel*).

⇒ ‘The wicked’ here are those who do not live life as true worshipers of _____.

Ecc. 8:11—Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil.

⇒ People are abusers of God’s patience, assuming that there is no _____ ahead for us.

2. A life lived apart from God does not provide comfort even if it is prosperous and lengthy.

Ecc. 8:12-13—¹² Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him. ¹³ But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God.

⇒ Those who fear God have it better both in this life and the next, even if it appears things are better for the wicked.

“shadow”— צֶלַע (*tsele*) — Literally a shadow or shade. Used figuratively of protection, cover, or defense.

⇒ The days of the wicked do not provide a sense of comfort or _____ because they are always passing away and there is nothing beyond them in which they can find hope.

Key Point: A life of wisdom seeks to _____ God and places ultimate _____ in Him and not in the things of this life.

Enjoying the Good Things of Life in Wisdom—Ecclesiastes 8:14-17

1. How our lives ultimately unfold is often a _____ to us.

Ecc. 8:14—There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity.

⇒ The fact that things often happen this way does not mean that God is not there, it means that he has a _____ purpose for the difficulties and challenges we may face in life.

2. We should enjoy the good things God gives to us during the days of our lives.

Ecc. 8:15—And I commend joy, for man has nothing better under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun.

⇒ Once again he specifically commends _____ and _____.

3. We must recognize the limitations that God has placed on our ability to make sense of life.

Ecc. 8:16-17¹⁶ When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how neither day nor night do one's eyes see sleep, ¹⁷ then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out.

⇒ Trying to make sense of our lives can often lead to great _____.

⇒ No matter our ability, knowledge, or accomplishments, we cannot make sense of life on our _____.

Key Point: True wisdom leads us to enjoy God and to _____ in Him in the midst of circumstances that we do not understand and cannot change.

The Teacher's Frustrating Instructions and Exhortations

- He has called us to be people who live by _____, and yet he has repeatedly shown us its limitations.
- We have all found it exceedingly difficult to live in accordance with what we say we _____.

Understanding Our Union with Jesus Christ

Colossians 3:1-4

¹ If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

1. Jesus is the focus of our _____.

2. Jesus is our _____.

3. Jesus is the source of our very _____ itself.

“To be *in Christ*—that is redemption; but for Christ to be *in you*—that is sanctification! To be *in Christ*—that makes you fit for heaven; but for Christ to be *in you*—that makes you fit for earth! To be *in Christ*—that changes your destination; but for Christ to be *in you*—that changes your destiny! The one makes heaven your home—the other makes this world His workshop.”

—Major Ian Thomas, *The Saving Life of Christ*