

LIFE UNDER THE SUN



STUDIES IN ECCLESIASTES

13 November 2018

הביל

“For Bed and Board are the fundamental geographical divisions of the family; they are the chief places, and it is in them, at them and around them that we dance the parts we are given. Moreover, they are boundaries that mark our freedom in marriage.”

— Robert Farrar Capon *Bed & Board*

Ecclesiastes Part 13 - “*Joy in the Midst of Uncertainty*”

Introduction: How do you deal with uncertainty?

The Structure of the Passage

- (A) The Righteous Characterized (9:1a)
- (B) The Uncertainties of Life and the Certainty of Death (9:1b-6)
- (X) Enjoying the Good Things of Life in the Midst of Uncertainty (9:7-10)
- (B⁹) The Uncertainties of Life and the Certainty of Death (9:11-12)
- (A⁹) The Righteous Characterized (9:13-18)

Observations:

1. What should _____ the life of a righteous person is the subject of the chapter.
2. This is important because all people face the reality of _____ as well as _____ in life.
3. For the righteous, the _____ of God and His good gifts is central to a life of worship.

The Characteristics of a Righteous Life—Ecclesiastes 9:1a & 9:13-18

1. The Righteous _____ their lives to God (9:1a)

Eccl. 9:1a—But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God.

⇒ Those considered righteous by the Teacher are to recognize God’s *sovereignty* over their lives.

2. The Righteous recognize the value of _____ (9:13-18)

⇒ Wisdom has tremendous practical *value*.

⇒ Wisdom, in and of itself, does not guarantee lasting *gain*.

Eccl. 9:17-18—¹⁷The words of the wise heard in quiet are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools. ¹⁸Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.

⇒ Wisdom *builds up* and *protects* while sin and folly *ruin* that which is good.

Key Point: The _____ thing a person can do is to trust in the sovereignty of God. A fruitful life of wisdom should result from continuing to trust God throughout our days under the sun.

The Primary Frustrations of Life—Ecclesiastes 9:1b-6 & 9:11-12

1. All people come to the same _____ (9:1b-6)

⇒ Death does not discriminate and that seems very *unfair*.

Eccl. 9:3b—Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

⇒ The reality is that we are all ultimately deserving of this end (Gen. 2:17; 3:19)

2. All people, regardless of their _____ or _____, are subject to time and chance (9:11-12)

Eccl. 9:11-12b—¹¹Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all. ¹²For man does not know his time.

⇒ This is the Teacher’s way of reminding us that no one is truly in *control* of their own life.

Key Point: Both the righteous and the wicked must deal with the harsh _____ of life. How they live their lives in the midst of these difficulties is what differentiates them from one another.

The Exhortation to the Righteous to Enjoy Life—Ecclesiastes 9:7-10

I. What has previously been offered as advice is now spoken as a call to _____.

Eccl. 9:7—Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.

“Go...” — הָלַךְ (*hálak*)— To go, walk, depart, or proceed. The use here has the force of a strong exhortation or command.

⇒ The *manner* in which we are to eat and drink is of particular emphasis:

“...with joy...” →

“...with a merry heart...” →

⇒ The idea of *contentment* is in view here and is related to God’s blessing or approval which enables the righteous to enjoy His good gifts to them.

Eccl. 9:8—Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head.

⇒ The imagery here is related to the *countenance* of the righteous or how they present themselves.

Eccl. 9:9—Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.

⇒ The emphasis here is on the *comfort* that is provided in life through marriage.

Eccl. 9:10—Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

⇒ Our *vocations* to which we are called in life are in view here as well as the way in which we are to undertake them.

Key Point: These exhortations/commands are presented to us as means by which we cope with life’s primary frustrations and are guarded from our own _____ tendencies.

“[This] is our dilemma: desire is endless, we are not....this the marriage rite knows. Marriage was instituted in the time of Man’s innocency, but it has operated ever since under the shadow of the Fall. Therefore it’s materialities, along with all other materialities, become the means of our cure. He who perished by a tree is saved by a tree. He who died by an apple is restored by eating the flesh of his Savior. Our lust is to be healed by being brought down to one bed, our savagery tamed by exchanges around a lifelong table. Bed, board, roofree and doorway become the choice places of our healing, the delimitations of our freedom. By setting us boundaries they hold us in; but they trammel the void as well. By confining, they keep track of us—they leave us free to be found, and to find ourselves. The vow of lifelong fidelity to one bed, one woman, becomes the wall at the edge of the cliff that leaves the children free to play a little, rather than be lost at large. Marriage gives us somewhere to be.” —Robert Farrar Capon, *Bed & Board*

At the Table of Our Shepherd-King

I. Jesus affirmed the literal enjoyment of these good things of life through His miracle performed at the _____ in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-12)

2. Ultimately, however, this imagery is used throughout Scripture to describe the enjoyment of _____ with God through Jesus Christ both now and for all eternity.

Psa. 23:5—You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Isa. 25:6—On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

Luke 22:19-20—¹⁹ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” ²⁰ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

Eph. 5:31-32—³¹ “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Rev. 3:5—The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.