

Ecclesiastes

*Verse by Verse
From Logos, 1971-1973*

For Meditative Study

The Vanity of Human Life that Leaves out God

A Verse by Verse Study of Ecclesiastes

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INTRODUCTION

The *Book of Ecclesiastes* is a most edifying and enlightening study, full of wisdom and instruction, providing an infallible guide to all who would live Godly in Christ Jesus our Lord. Noah, Jesus, Paul and others, combine their testimonies to warn us that the last days would become infamous by a rank materialism, providing vast scope for pleasure, and limitless opportunity to gain riches and wealth.

They warn that it would be an age outstanding for its elevation of flesh and abasement of God; that worldliness would constitute the peril of the age, and that its insidious influence would seek to infiltrate into ecclesial life, undermining its unity and destroying its essential holiness or separateness, without which no one shall see the Lord.

It is as a counter to that influence that *Ecclesiastes* reveals its immense power and inestimable value for all who are "in the world, but not of it". It is included in the Canon of Scripture for the express purpose of strengthening us to meet and overcome the challenge of this age. A study of the book reveals it to be a divine exposure, an enlightening revelation, of the abysmal emptiness and utter futility of a human life that leaves out God.

Solomon, a man possessed of exceptional wisdom, opportunity and wealth, was chosen by Yahweh, as the most suitable to wring the most out of life. In his search to find the *summum bonum*, or greatest good that man can attain, he subjected all phases of human activity and endeavour to the searching test and analysis of wisdom. His final judgment forms the theme of the book: all human striving is vanity, a chasing after wind.

Because of his exceptional wisdom, Solomon's verdict on the value of human life, falls with greater force from his lips, than from those of any other man. He warns us that even if we had unlimited means at our disposal, our search for joy and contentment in this life, apart from God, would be doomed to failure.

Solomon's research proved beyond all doubt, that man cannot live without God. It showed that life without God is meaningless and vain, and that only in God, in harmony with the Creator, can he find the completion he seeks; ultimate happiness, lasting joy and true rest. We have no need, like Solomon, to engage in such experiments to

discern the supreme good, for he, with wisdom and means beyond our scope, has directed us to it, and we have found it: the truth that is in Christ Jesus, the hope of glory.

In Christ we have one wiser than Solomon (Matthew 12:42), one who was the Word made flesh (John 1:14), whom God "has made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30).

Let us, then, be guided by Solomon's final admonition: a gem of practical wisdom, offered to mankind.

Solomon's final words are: "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecc. 12:12-13; cp 1 John 2:15-17; Col. 3:1).

Author: Date of Writing

Most of the higher critics deny the Solomonic authorship of the book. They claim:

1. That the author is Koheleth, a pseudonym for an unknown king, a Sadducean physician, or an high priest, who used Solomon purely as a literary vehicle to set down his own thoughts and convictions concerning life.

2. That linguistically it has an affinity with the writings of the post-exilic period, i.e. the time of Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah.

3. That the state of oppression, violence and misery depicted in the book cannot be reconciled with the well-ordered, prosperous, reign of Solomon.

In answer to these claims, we believe:

1. Solomon, the son of David, and King in Jerusalem, is no doubt the inspired author of the book. He was a Collector of Acceptable Words, (cp. Ecc. 12:9-10) the author of many proverbs (Prov. 1:1), the composer of The Song of Solomon (Song 1:1).

2. The argument of style is not decisive. The critics forget that a writer is not bound by the styles or idioms of the day. A present-day writer, whose mind is steeped in Shakespeare, will undoubtedly reflect his style in his words, which, therefore, though written in 1971, could be erroneously dated 1590!

3. In considering the circumstances of Solomon's reign, critics forget that no matter how well-ordered, or wisely

governed, a nation is, the flesh, with all its wickedness, violence and lawlessness, is ever in evidence.

The *Book of Ecclesiastes* was penned by a man of great wisdom; and Solomon's wisdom was acknowledged by the Lord Jesus (Matt. 12:42).

The actual date of writing cannot be determined with exactness; some authorities place it about 977 B.C.

Religious Thought In The Book

Solomon reveals a deep and abiding reverence for Yahweh. Far from worshipping, as one critic put it, "an absentee God," Solomon wrote of Yahweh as:

He with Whom communion is possible — Ecc. 5:1; 5:6.

He Who is the Creator — Ecc. 11:5; 7:13.

He Who gives good gifts to man — Ecc. 8:15

He Who is to be feared and obeyed — Ecc. 12:13.

He Who is man's final Judge — Ecc. 12:14; 3:17.

Solomon's firm conviction of man's inherent mortality and the absence of any belief in the immortal soul theory is apparent in his writings (Ecc. 9:4-6; 3:18-20).

Name Of The Book

Ecclesiastes is the transliteration of the Hebrew *Koheleth*, which is the feminine form of the participle from the root *kahal*, meaning "to assemble together." It carries with it the idea of collecting; the book forming the collection of the many wise sayings

and proverbs of Solomon (Ecc. 12: 9-10).

The book forms one of the five scrolls read by the Jews in their celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths); the other four being Ruth, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, and Esther.

Analysis

The following provides a breakdown of the whole book:

The futility and aimlessness of all human endeavour — 1:1-11.

The test of practical experience — 1:12; 2:26.

Man's opportunity limited by time — 3:1-22.

Human Vanity greatly increased by oppression — 4:1-16.

Vanity in worship — 5:1-9.

Vanity of riches — 5:10-6:2.

Vanity of human desires — 6:3-11:6.

Advice and warning to youth — 11:7-12:8.

The Search Begins

In the first chapter, Solomon illustrates the futility of human occupation

by examples of natural phenomena which incorporate in their working the fixed principle of repetition or endless cycle. He thus outlines:

The futility of all things — vv. 1-2.

The futility of human labour — vv. 3-7.

The futility of invention — vv. 8-11.

The futility of human wisdom — vv. 12-18.

The use of such phrases as "under heaven" and "under the sun" illustrate that Solomon's examination is directed primarily to the earth and human activities, rather than to high spiritual matters.

In declaring, "I gave my heart" (Heb. *lebh*), he states that he gave his mind, the word signifying mental capacity.

To "search out" (another phrase frequently used) is to investigate the roots of the matter: to examine the subject from all sides. Koheleth entered the inquiry with zeal and dedication; he applied his great intellect fully in his research, with a determination to complete it, leaving no stone unturned, no area untouched, in his search for wisdom.

SECTION 1: THE FUTILITY AND AIMLESSNESS OF ALL HUMAN ENDEAVOUR

(Chapter 1:1-11)

The Futility Of All Things — vv. 1-2.

VERSE 1

The preacher — Heb. *Qoheleth* — "one who assembles." It is the feminine form of the participle from the root *kahal*, to convoke, or call together. Wisdom likewise is shown in this attitude, and is likewise personified as a woman (Prov. 8:1-3; 2:1-5; 3:15-18). Solomon is wisdom personified.

Some critics question the Solomonic authorship, but the overwhelming weight of evidence is to the contrary, and substantiates his claim.

In Eccles. 12:9-10, we learn that *Qoheleth* spent long hours in research study, prayer and meditation as he laboured to *assemble together* and set in order many proverbs, many upright words of truth. The fruits of his

wise endeavours have been gathered together to form what is known as the Wisdom Books of the Bible: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song Of Solomon.

The *Book of Ecclesiastes* is in all truth the inspired words of the Preacher.

"Son of David, King of Jerusalem" — Solomon having identified himself as the inspired author of the book, now mentions the fact that he is king, to remind us that he possessed the qualifications necessary to make his analysis of human activity a complete success. He had power, authority, wealth, opportunity and wisdom more than any man (Ecc. 1:16).

Solomon's exceptional wisdom was Yahweh's gracious gift for selflessly seeking Israel's well-being above his

own (1 Kings 3:5-14). Nevertheless, this did not prevent him from enquiring further from Yahweh for more understanding when the need arose (Ecc. 1:13). To "search out by wisdom" is a term used for consulting a priest, or inquiring of Yahweh, as is implied from the root *darash*.

No other man, with the exception of Jesus the Christ, would be capable of embarking on a research of this nature. To lack even one of Koheleth's qualifications would spell failure to the venture.

VERSE 2

"*Vanity of vanities*" — Emptiness of emptiness, often associated with "vexation of spirit" (Ch. 1:14), a feeding on wind. The term used is as of a shepherd feeding his starving flock on nothing more substantial than wind. Koheleth is telling us that all human occupation, pleasure, wisdom, hopes and aspirations in this life, provide no lasting satisfaction, but merely create an unsatisfied desire.

The word "vanity" (Heb. *hebel*) occurs no less than 40 times in the book, and therefore sets its theme: All is vanity. The book begins and ends with vanity, and nothing is ex-

empt from Koheleth's astute judgment. The whole totality of human existence, human pride, human wisdom, and human achievement is nothing more than vanity. Vanity (the word signifies a mist or vapour seen when the breath is condensed on a frosty morning) illustrates the fleeting, transitory nature of mortal man.

Eve's first son's name was Cain, meaning possession. Eve thought that Cain was Ish Yahweh, the promised seed of the woman who would bruise the serpent's head, thus repossessing the life that was lost (Gen. 3:15). Cain's murderous character proved her wrong: her hopes of redemption through Cain were all in vain. Her next son was called Abel (Heb. *Hebel*) or Vanity. Disillusioned, Eve could see stretched out before her thousands of years of human futility and frustration, before deliverance from sin and death would finally come (Rom. 8:19-23).

Man himself is nothing but a vanity. Note the extremely important references in James 4:13-15; Ps. 144:4; 90:9; Job 8:9; Isa. 40:6-8; Ecc. 9:5.

— R. Krygger (Woodville)
To be continued

Away With Grumbling and Melancholia

We need to remember that evil, no matter what form it assumes (sickness, persecution, bereavement, financial loss, remorse) is of divine arrangement (Isa. 45:7; Rom. 8:20); and that God utilizes the evil for the eternal good of all who humbly, patiently and faithfully submit to it (Heb. 12:11; Rom. 5:3; 2 Cor. 4:17-18; Rom. 8:18). Unhappy is the man in whom the Father ceases to take a corrective interest. "Before I was afflicted," said David, "I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness has afflicted me" (Psa. 119:67, 71, 75). Let us cultivate the mind of the Psalmist, which was that of all God's faithful ones. Let us be grateful and not ungrateful for trouble. Let us "rejoice" and rejoice always, although at times our rejoicing may be accompanied with tears (1 Pet. 1:6-7; 2 Cor. 6:10). Let us in this matter shun the bad example of Job's wife, who, in a time of trouble, resented the experience (Job 2:9), and copy the good example of Christ, who, in his most depressing moments, studiously faced the sunny side (Heb. 12:2). "Happy," said Job, "is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not the chastening of the Almighty." (A.T.J.)

Time No Longer

Woe to the man who, professing divine allegiance . . . is engrossed with the concerns of this Gentile order of things, and indifferent to the outspread writing on the wall — "Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin . . ." Let the wise bestir themselves. The Bridegroom is at the door. (R.R.)

The Vanity of Human Life that Leaves out God

A Verse by Verse Study of Ecclesiastes

(Continued from p. 316)

The Futility Of Human Labour — vv.3-7

This futility is illustrated by the endless cycles and repetitions of nature.

VERSE 3

"What profit" — Heb. *yithron* literally "that which is left over." The word is closely allied to the meaning of business transactions, particularly to the activity of commerce and trading. It involves the significance of profit and loss.

Koheleth is saying that human life is very much like a business transaction. If a person busies himself only with the affairs of this life, if his heart is set on possession or acquiring all the best this life offers, then, when it is ended, it will be found that he has no surplus, no gain, that there is nothing left over, that he has made no profit from the deal.

Jesus illustrated this point when he spoke the parable of the materialistic man (Luke 12:15-21). It warned against the error of covetousness (Greek — *pleonexia* from *pleion*, more, and *echein*, to have). The man of the parable was never satisfied; as soon as one object was obtained, he immediately set out after another. Though his barns were filled, he was not satisfied. He had to have more and more. He was completely obsessed with his personal property to the exclusion of God. But finally, his life was required of him, and then his utter poverty was revealed. When the business transaction of life was completed, this man had nothing over; he had made no gain, and could claim no surplus. Not being rich towards God, he would perish everlastingly, answering Koheleth's question: "What profit (*yithron*) hath a man in all his labour?"

The answer, therefore, is that out-

side of God's purpose and covenant, he was nothing at all. What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul (life)? See Matt. 16:25-34; Phil. 3:5-8; 2 Cor. 8:8-9.

VERSE 4

"One generation passeth away, another cometh" — Generations are always in the process of coming or going. While one generation is being born the other is dying. This is an endless cycle, never completed.

"But the earth abideth forever" — It is sad that man, capable of a high degree of spiritual and moral excellence, being made in the image of Yahweh, should pass swiftly away, while the earth of dust (the crude material from which mankind is made) continues forever.

Koheleth contrasts the ephemeral evanescent nature of man with the earth which is everlasting (2 Cor. 4:18).

VERSE 5

"The sun hasteth" — Heb. *sha-aph*, "to pant", as the panting of a horse. Day after day the sun makes its endless journey through the heavens, "returning each night" to the place where it arose. Koheleth sees the sun as a golden chariot drawn by panting steeds, racing swiftly across the sky and hasting back to its starting point (Ps. 19:6; 2 Kings 23:11). The mechanical, dreary repetition of ceaseless striving finds its counterpart in all human activity and labour. But the sun, though continuing its way across the heavens day by day, has this distinct advantage over mortal man: it rises in the east and sinks in the west and *comes again*. But man does not do this; he is born, pursues his weary way through the cycle of

life, and dies (Ps.49).

The cycles of the sun are mechanical repetitions of ceaseless striving of wearying activity; they get it nowhere, and as such illustrate the futility of the wearying frustration of mortal finite life *outside of God*.

VERSE 6

"It whirlleth about continually" — Circling, circling goes the wind. It blows round and round. It commences in the morning from one point of the compass and finishes the day from another. It blows in all directions seemingly without purpose. This constant, aimless circling of the wind, this idle purposeless round of movement, finds its counterpart in human life and activity. Outside of God, mankind is always circling round seeking new experiences, new pleasures, new goals. As nothing in this life imparts lasting joy, this aimless circling continues until death. Only in God can we have lasting purpose and direction in life. That purpose is to manifest the glory of Yahweh (Num. 14:21); and the direction is unto life eternal guided by the commandments of Christ (Matt. 12:48-50; John 17:2).

VERSE 7

"Rivers" — Literally "streams", a reference to the wadis of the Holy Land. Streams evaporate, form clouds, condense and fall as rain, replenishing the streams which run down to the sea. This is another continual cycle that never ceases, and yet is never completed, for "the sea is not full."

Elsewhere, water is used as a symbol to describe God's refreshing, life-giving Word; it falls on the good seed sown in the heart of men, bringing forth much fruit to the glory of God (Deut. 32:1-2; Isa. 55:1-3, 10-13; John 4:13-14; 7:38; 15:1-10).

The Futility Of Invention — vv. 8-11.

Koheleth, having seen that the endless cycles and repetitions of nature have their counterpart in the aimless round of human activity and endeavour, now considers the subject of invention, the discovery of new and exciting things. Perhaps, in this particular field, he will find the lasting joy and satisfaction he seeks. But no,

once again, he experiences bitter disappointment and frustration. This is of particular interest to us today, for we live in an age of increasing knowledge. It is an age outstanding for its invention and discovery of new things, particularly in the fields of science and medicine. Many put their trust in these things, the product of human reasoning, believing that science will finally provide a panacea for all human problems and lead mankind to an utopia where peace and lasting joy will prevail. But Koheleth reveals that such expectations are doomed to bitter disappointment and frustration.

VERSE 8

"All things are full of labour" — Literally, "all things are wearied." The whole universe groans under the heavy, hopeless burden of life's vanities and frustrations and the wearying, monotonous round of labour (Rom. 8:20-23). Paul, no doubt, bases his remarks on his knowledge of Ecclesiastes. Though Koheleth restricts his observations to the life of natural man, Paul does not. He could see clearly that the nations were subject to this life of vanity for a purpose. Out of man's ceaseless strivings, suffering and travail, there would come forth a seed: the immortal sons of God. These, headed by Christ, will be instrumental in freeing the human race from the vanity and bondage of corruption unto the glorious liberty of the children of God (Rom. 8:21; Rev. 21:1-4).

"Cannot utter it" — Man fails to find the right words to adequately describe the utter futility of his monotonous cycle of labour, which yields no lasting joy or satisfaction.

"The eye and ear" — These organs feed continually on courses of seeing and hearing. Yet their appetites are never assuaged, are never really satisfied. Man attempts, with eye and ear, to comprehend the full extent of all life's wearisome burden, but thereby is unable to assess it truly.

VERSE 9

"The thing that has been is that which shall be" — Koheleth perceives that all things tend to move in endless cycles; as in nature, no less in man's

own experience. He discovers that what man has accomplished in the past, will be repeated in the future. A generation experiences all the emotions of love, hate, envy, joy, war and peace; but because experience cannot be passed on except in the form of advice, the next generation imagines that its experiences of these matters are something entirely new and unique.

"There is no new thing under the sun" — Koheleth is appalled at the monotonous similarity of human activity and experience manifested by succeeding generations.

VERSE 10

"Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new?" — The answer is, No. Even such scientific attainments as telescope, wireless, flight, jet propulsion, radar, atomic explosion, and so forth, have all existed in nature from the beginning of creation. Man is therefore tormented and frustrated by his inability to accomplish anything new.

VERSE 11

"There is no remembrance of former things" — Here Koheleth focusses on the transitory nature of fame. Momentous deeds of great men and their wise sayings are quickly forgotten (Ps. 49; Ecc. 9:5). The things of the past, the outstanding acts and personalities of men of note remain for the present only, even if they are recalled by the generation that is living. The fact that great men's words and deeds are soon forgotten, adds to man's brooding sense of frustration and futility. The importance of remembering, of recalling past events that Yahweh would bring to our attention is seen in the following references (Exod. 13:3; Deut. 5:15; Isa. 51:13; 1 Cor. 11:25; 15:1-3).

The Futility of Human Wisdom — vv. 12-18

Novelty and invention having failed to provide the supreme good, Koheleth now closely examines the merits of purely earthly wisdom.

VERSE 12

See notes Ch. 1:1.

VERSE 13

"Gave my heart" — Heb. *lebh*, and to the Hebrews the organ of mental capacity or mind. Koheleth concentrated the full power of his immense intellect in his search for the greatest good.

"To seek and search out" — He will busy himself, testing everything revelant to earthly wisdom. He is determined to explore the subject from every angle and from all sides.

"Seek and search out by wisdom" — The word "seek" is from the Hebrew *darash* which includes the idea of consulting a priest or enquiring of Yahweh. Koheleth will seek Divine aid to help him in his search (1 Kings 3:7-12; 4:29-34). He will gain wisdom also from practical experience (Ecc. 2:1-10).

"This sore travail" — This ill business, grievous irritation. Man is driven by an inward urge to discover the answer to all human problems, but finds his task beyond his capabilities, and therefore most unrewarding. Wherever he turns he meets with futility and frustration. Not so the spiritual man. He knows that wisdom is the principal thing (Prov. chps. 1, 2, 3, 4). He seeks the Divine wisdom that is unto salvation. His efforts are crowned with joy and gladness.

VERSE 14

"Seen all the works" — Koheleth's field of inquiry was not limited; he was determined to test all experiences common to man. Though he thoroughly explored every avenue of human activity, the result was always the same.

"All is vanity" — All is emptiness. All man's activities are empty of any lasting worth, and fail to yield any enduring satisfaction. The word vanity (Heb. *hebel*, vapour) suggests that man's life is but a shadowy dream, an illusion, a bubble utterly lacking in permanence and bearing the hallmark of the transitory (James 4:14).

"Vexation of spirit" — Literally, a "feeding on wind." The Hebrew word translated "vexation" is used of a shepherd feeding his flock. Koheleth finds no more lasting satisfaction in

his examination of human endeavour than would sheep feeding on nothing more sustaining than wind. It leaves the desire unsatisfied.

VERSE 15

"That which is crooked" — The word signifies "to twist or pervert." Man's rebellion against Yahweh has resulted in a crooked nature which manifests itself in acts of perversion (Ps. 125:5; Prov. 2:15; Deut. 32:5; Isa. 59:8). Man is no longer upright as the palm, neither can he 'straighten' himself without Yahweh's help (Rom. 8:3). His efforts to find lasting joy in life are continually frustrated by his inward perversion. He cannot find completion in life, because, without God, he is in himself, incomplete. Paul was intensely grieved by his acute awareness of his inward insufficiency (Rom. 7). David was also vexed for the same reason (Ps. 51). The memorial feast (1 Cor. 11) provides us with sufficient incentive to examine ourselves, to look inward in introspection to see if there be any perversion or crookedness of which we are guilty, that will bring condemnation on ourselves.

Crookedness, this law inherent in the members of all humanity causing them to stoop to sin, was the effect of Adam's transgression (Rom. 5:19). Concerning the opposite quality of uprightness, the Word records:

- Yahweh is Himself upright (Ps. 25:8).
- In the beginning God made man upright (Ecc. 7:29).
- There is peace for the upright (those who do not stoop to sin — Ps. 37:37).
- Truth and joy are for the upright (Ps. 97:11; Prov. 15:8).
- Life everlasting and the privilege of being the vehicle of Yahweh's grace, glory, judgment to all nations in the millenium is reserved for the upright (Ezek. 1:5-9,12; Prov. 28:18).

Yahweh is the great physician who is anxious to heal and straighten afflicted humanity bowed down by sin. Thus Jesus healed and straightened the woman made crooked by satan for 18 years (Luke 13:11-17). This foreshadowed the healing of Israel (Jer.

31:9) and all nations (Isa. 40:4-5; 42:16). See the miracle of healing recorded in Acts 3, and the exhortation of Heb. 12:13.

"That which is wanting cannot be numbered" — The things that are lacking in human life, the absence of which robs man of his sense of completion are beyond computation. Man's greatest need is God and the direction of His Word (Eph. 3:19). The rich young man of Luke 18:23 was lacking in one thing only; he was unwilling to exchange trust in mammon for trust in Yahweh. This failure made him incomplete in the sight of God.

VERSE 16

"I communed with my own heart" — Literally "I spoke I with my heart." Koheleth practises introspection. He looks inward and assesses his qualifications to determine whether he is capable of bringing his analysis of life to a successful conclusion. What he saw convinced him that he was well equipped for the task. He saw that he possessed more wisdom, knowledge and experience than any who had ever dwelt in Jerusalem before. His action of looking inward reminds us of the parable of the unfinished building and unprepared king of Luke 14:28-33.

VERSE 17

"To know madness and folly" — Some render this: "mad revelry and wickedness, error and foolishness, gaiety and insobriety." Koheleth will not restrict his examination to one side of human activity merely, but will subject all sides to the exacting test of wisdom. He will judge good (wisdom) and also its opposite (folly). Thus his verdict on life will be just, unbiased and thoroughly reliable.

VERSE 18

"In much wisdom is much grief" — Wisdom sharpens Koheleth's apprehension, removing the veil, exposing man's true estate with all its frustration and futility. He saw clearly that man's life began and ended in vanity, and that all his days were sorrow and pain (Ch. 2:23). Thus increase in knowledge brought in its wake a corresponding increase in sor-

row. This is the sad experience of all who are wise and understand. Jesus wept when he entered into the fellowship of Mary's and all mankind's suffering (John 11:35; Heb. 4:15; Isa. 53; Rom. 12:15). However, the time

of weeping, pain and sorrow will surely pass at his glorious coming advent (Ps. 30:5; 126:5-6; Luke 6:21-23; Rev. 21:4-5).

— R. Krygger (Woodville).

1971: A Crucial Year?

"Behold I Stand at the Door and Knock"

The Certainty Of The Divine Purpose

The glory of creation presumes a Divine purpose. The Psalmist declared:

"The heavens declare the glory of Yahweh; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge" (Ps. 19:1-2).

Again:

"When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained; what is man that Thou art mindful of him?" (Ps. 8:3-4).

The answer came in the words of the hymn:

*"What though in solemn silence all
Move round this dark terrestrial
ball;*

*What though no real voice nor
sound,*

*Amidst their radiant orbs be found;
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice;
Forever singing as they shine,
The Hand that made us is Divine."*

Again:

*"Time and change are busy ever,
Man decays and ages move;
But His mercy waneth never,
God is wisdom, God is love."*

Thus Isaiah wrote:

"Thus saith Yahweh that created the heavens; God Himself that formed

the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain, He formed it to be inhabited; I am Yahweh, and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me in vain; I Yahweh speak righteousness, I declare things that are right . . . Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God and there is none else" (Isa. 45:18-22).

So with the full assurance that God has a purpose and plan for this sin-stricken world, we examine His word, to determine when "He that speaks in righteousness, mightly to save" will appear.

A Set Time To Favour Zion

Consider the prophecy delivered to Daniel. He was told:

"Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, (1) to finish a transgression, (2) to make or seal up an end of sin offerings, (3) to make reconciliation for, or purge away iniquity, (4) to bring in everlasting righteousness, (5) to seal up vision and prophet, and (6) to anoint a most holy place" (Dan. 9:22-24).

This prophecy affects "thy people" and "thy holy city" with the important "to" operations to be done by an unspecified individual. Furthermore, it is obvious-

The Vanity of Human Life that Leaves Out God

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CHAPTER TWO

Koheleth's intellectual faculties have failed to yield the satisfaction he is seeking, now he turns his attention to what are regarded as "the good things of life."

In his search for the supreme good, he will explore every avenue, try every level of human activity. After putting these things to the test of practical experience, he reaches the decision: that there is no ultimate or final good in life; no enduring satisfaction; no earthly goal worth striving for.

No matter what a man's station is in life, whether he be rich or poor, wise or a fool, great or small, any advantage he may have over another, is cancelled out in death (vv.11-23), for one event happeneth to them all (v.14): "all go into one place (sheol), all are of the dust and all turn to dust again."

Koheleth's experiment recalls to mind the sad experience of the prodigal son of Luke 15. This man left his father's house, led on by the deceitfulness of riches, and the false allure of sensual pleasure; but, after putting these things to the test of practical experience, his eyes were opened, and he saw them revealed in their true light, i.e. emptiness and illusion.

He learned the "hard way" that only in the Father's House could there be found true and lasting substance, abiding love and joy for evermore (Heb. 10:34-35; 1 John 2:15-17; 1 John 3:1-2; Isa 65:14).

Still seeking the highest good, Koheleth will examine by wisdom:

1. *Pleasure and dissipation* vv.1-3
2. *Possessions and power* vv.4-7
3. *Luxury and wealth* .. vv.8-9
4. *Sensual pleasures of life* vv.9-10

The Test of Pleasure And Dissipation — vv. 1-3.

VERSE 1

"I said in mine heart" — I spoke to myself before embarking on a course of action.

"Prove thee with mirth" — I will make a test of joy. "Mirth" is *simchah* in Hebrew, and signifies

"gladness," "rejoicing," indicating harmless amusement. Koheleth will test sensual enjoyment to determine whether it can yield the lasting joy he seeks. The word *simchah* does not indicate that which is grossly sensual in the reprehensible sense of the word, but only that which delights the senses and is not necessarily sinful. Many erroneously seek for joy in the so-

called pleasures of this permissive age: heart yet guiding me." Guiding — drunkenness, drugs, lewdness, etc., as brought Israel to ruin (1 Cor. 10:5-11). But Koheleth was no sensualist; his experiments were all conducted within the bounds of divine law.

"Enjoy pleasure" — Literally to look upon good, to see, experience, participate. Koheleth was determined to experience personally all that delights the senses and to pass judgment. He intends also to be happy in his self-appointed task.

"Behold, this is also vanity" — Consider my judgment: this is emptiness, I found no lasting joy or satisfaction in this experiment.

VERSE 2.

"I said of laughter, it is mad" — Or, "acting like madmen," utterly mad as in 1 Sam. 21:14. To an onlooker, unrestrained merriment, lusty rejoicing, seems like delirium. Koheleth does not condemn ordinary laughter, for there is a time appointed for such (Ecc. 3:4), nor the laughter that is the result of righteous joy (Luke 6:21; Ps. 126:2; 37:13), but the loud inane laughter of fools (Ecc. 7:6), that which is the result of derision and scorn is utterly condemned (Ps. 22:7; Job 12:4).

"Of mirth what doeth it" — What use is it? What does it accomplish? Koheleth could see no advantage or gain in the pursuit of amusement. It served no good purpose; it yielded no lasting joy (Prov. 14:13; 1 Cor. 10:7).

VERSE 3.

"I sought in mine heart" — I conceived in my mind, I decided to do. To the Hebrew the heart is the centre of mental activity. Koheleth decides on his next course of action.

"Give myself unto wine" — Literally "draw my flesh with wine," i.e., to stimulate, refresh, use wine not as a debauchee, not as a drunkard out to bemuse his senses, but purely as a wise connoisseur. A little wine is lawful (1 Tim. 5:23) but its danger and deceitfulness is well illustrated by Koheleth's observations (Prov. 20:1; 21:17; 23:29-35; 31:4-5).

"Acquainting mine heart with wisdom" — The R.V. renders: "mine Christ will create a new Eden. Then

from the root used to describe the herding of sheep or the control of prisoners.

As the shepherd has complete control over his flock, and the guard over his prisoners, so Koheleth's intellect is directing his experiment. In any of the tests of sensuality, the preacher will not be corrupted in judgment, neither will he stray from his purpose. His wisdom will be in command, guiding and directing each test, which will be conducted with thoroughness and care. Koheleth's judgment and conclusion on moral activity is therefore utterly reliable and completely trustworthy.

"Lay hold on folly" — Literally to seize folly. This indicates Koheleth's determination to come to grips with his problem. He is, as one critic remarked, "no armchair doctrinaire dilettante." He will personally participate in all forms of harmless and enjoyable amusement.

The Test of Possessions And Power — vv.4-7.

Having found sensual pleasures barren of lasting joy, Koheleth now experiments with vast building projects, and the exercise of authority over large numbers of slaves.

VERSE 4

"Great works" — Large building projects, stately mansions or palaces such as Solomon erected for himself and for Pharaoh's daughter (1 Kings 7:1; 9:10-24; 10:18; 2 Chron. 8:1-6).

VERSE 5.

"Gardens and parks" — The Hebrew *pardesim* from the Persian *pairi-deaza* is rendered "parks", and is the word from whence "paradise" is derived. Koheleth created a beautiful garden of Eden, yet found no more lasting satisfaction therein than did Adam (Song 8:11). His gardens, beautifully laid out and stocked with all manner of fruit-bearing trees and exotic flowers, is used as a symbol of the Bride of Christ in Song 4:12-16. Koheleth's gardens provided a type of that which will transpire at the Lord's return when

the whole world will become again the Paradise of God (Rev. 21:1-6; 22:1-3; Isa. 35:1-10; 41:18-20).

VERSE 6

"Pools of water" — Reservoirs, dams, cisterns. Vast gardens, vineyards and parks need a constant supply of water to promote growth and fruitfulness, and this was obtained by damming natural springs to create reservoirs such as the King's Pool of Nehemiah 2:14, which was excavated out of rock and is the Pool of Siloam to which the Lord directed the blind man (John 9:7; See also Neh. 3:15; Isa. 8:6; cp. Isa 58:11).

VERSE 7

"Menservants and maidservants" — Koheleth's slaves, used to provide labour for the construction of palaces, gardens, irrigation projects, etc. They were born in his house, and were highly esteemed because of their loyalty and devotion to their master. They carried out their appointed tasks with faithfulness and integrity. They were

similar in character to Abraham's servants, also born in his house (Gen. 17:27; 14:14-15), typical of the servants of Christ (Heb. 3:6).

"Eyes" — Used by metonymy for desire. What is seen by the eyes sometimes excites lust, which, when aroused, leads to sin. This in turn, when it is finished, bringeth forth death (James 1:13-16). The Lord therefore counsels: "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out," or if certain sights arouse the lusts, look the other way (Matt. 5:28-29).

"Mine heart rejoiceth" — In all my labours I was happy. Koheleth found pleasure in his appointed task.

"This was my portion in all my labours" — There was a little gain in his experience with sensuality, a little pleasure in his toil. This was his portion in the transaction. But the gain was shortlived, lasting only as long as he indulged in that pleasure. The novelty soon wore off.

R. Krygger (Woodville).

Human Perversity

There are some intellects so obtuse that they cannot discern when a question is answered, or when a proposition is proved; while there are others who will not see lest their vested interests should suffer, or their popularity be destroyed. There are others who are naturally obstinate and perverse; and would rather hold on to an error, than acknowledge themselves defeated, especially by the most unpopular and "uncharitable" man of their generation. Many other reasons might be cited why, notwithstanding a volume of testimony and argument, they are "of the same opinion still"; but we forbear. It is the policy of such (and certainly not "the best policy," though the policy of expediency) to persist in affirmation without regard to anything that may be urged to the contrary. If they have been crucified and buried by the opponent's testimonies and reasonings, they give them all the go-by, and with the most imperturbable impudence of face over and over again affirm that these positions have been unheeded! If they edit papers, they take care, as much as in them lies, not to let their readers see what has been written that they may judge for themselves, so they will suppress it under divers flimsy pretences.

— Bro. Thomas, "Herald", 1859.

Debating Tactics

We are no lovers of debate. We never submit to it except as a means to an end. There are those who love it for its own sake. They are all alive when there is something to be debated, and all dead when the only attraction is the thing established in debate. This is not the spirit of the truth. Those who are of the truth have David's relish for its positive verities, and David's aversion to the mere strife of tongues, which led him to wish for the wings of a dove that he might "fly away" and be at rest — Psalm 55:6. (R.R.)

ponding Psalms, will be detailed later.

It is sufficient to state here that each of the five books of Moses presents a record of Divine purpose, human failure, and Divine grace whereby the Divine purpose can ultimately prevail. The five books of the Psalms, taking each area of human failure, reveal how that through Messiah, the Divine purpose prevails. This entrancing thought, which becomes more and more established as study in the Psalms progresses, becomes exquisitely beautiful as the Psalms come to an end; for the last five Psalms (Psalms 145 - 150), repeat in a concentrated form, the substances of each book of the Psalms, showing how that Messiah restores that which was lost in the

beginning.

Each of the last five Psalms begins and ends with "Praise ye Yah" — *Halleluyah*. The final Psalm, in every verse, vibrates praise: "Praise Him . . . Praise Him!"

One final word on the title of the book. This is of Greek origin, from *Psalmoi* meaning "Songs." In the Hebrew, the title of the entire five books is *Tehillim* meaning "Praises." We should understand this section of Yahweh's Word as "The Book of Praises." The praise centres around what Yahweh has accomplished through the Lord Jesus Christ, to His own glory, and the blessing of all mankind.

—B. Philp (NSW).

For Meditative Study

The Limitation of Time

A Verse by Verse Study of Ecclesiastes

(Continued from p.428)

CHAPTER THREE

In his vast attainments, and his relentless pursuit of the "highest good," Koheleth was forced to admit that none yielded the lasting joy that he sought. Pleasure, prosperity, possessions, power — when based upon the desires of the flesh could not provide real satisfaction. So he concluded: "It is vanity and vexation of spirit."

His next determination was to ascertain the place that "time" plays in relation to human activity.

He noticed that all things are governed by time. It hedges man about in all the activities in which he engages himself. His whole life is governed by certain time periods, which imprison him from the cradle to the grave. Koheleth considers fourteen antithesis (v.2-8) involving

a whole range of human activity, and which also seem to depict the purpose of the Creator with mankind. His general consideration can be grouped into four sections:

1. *There is a divinely appointed time table for all human activity* vv. 1 - 8
2. *There is a joy for those who cheerfully submit to God's appointed times* vv. 9 -15
3. *To all these inevitably comes the time of judgment* vv. 16-18
4. *There is a common end to all flesh* vv. 19-22

A Season For Every Purpose — vv.1-8

Koheleth examines the differing moods of human activity, and observes that each one is limited by time and season.

VERSE 1

"To everything" — Literally, "to the all." In all the activities of creation, not merely in those mentioned in this section, Yahweh has an over-riding control. As Supreme Ruler, He has established an appointed time, or fixed moment, for all things "under the sun." Major events of great significance, the fall and rise of nations (cp. Psa. 102:13), do not occur through caprice or chance, but are part of a predetermined plan established and controlled by Yahweh, and designed to fill the earth with the "greatest good" — a covering of His glory as the waters cover the sea (Acts 1:6-7; Ecc. 8:5-6).

"Season" — A fixed moment, an appointed hour. Not necessarily of a specific duration, but with determined limits, according to the Almighty Will.

"A time" — Hebrew, *eth*, signifying "occurrence." Some render this: "a short space of time" emphasising the transitoriness of incidents relating to human experience. Because the day of opportunity is short, man must make the best possible use of it while he can. It is interesting to notice the application of Scripture to this principle. Individuals are governed by time: Job 7:1-3, 16; Psa. 89:47; Ecc. 9:11-12; Acts 17:26-31; Rom. 9:28; 1 Cor. 7:29. The nations are likewise: Acts 17:26; Psa. 90:3-10. So is Israel: Num. 14:33-34; Psa. 102:13; Isa. 60:22; Dan. 8:13-17; 9:24-27; Luke 19:41-44. In the days of his flesh, Jesus was subject to times and seasons:

Psa. 31:15; Dan. 9:24-27; Jn. 7:6-8,30; 12:23,27. The saints are also: Psa. 75:2 (cp. margin); Dan. 12:1-9; 1 Cor. 7:29-31; 1 Thess. 5:1-2; Rev. 10:5-7. Because of this, there is a need to make the greatest use of our limited opportunities (Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5), lest we be found placing overmuch emphasis on things in which there is no profit (2 Kings 5:26-27).

VERSE 2

"A time to be born" — Literally, "to bear" (cp. margin). By the law of nature it is possible for women to conceive only within certain times; and the child is born nine months later. The figure of conception, travail and birth is portrayed many times in Scripture. The "man of sin" conceived by the ecclesiastical woman (the apostate ecclesia) from the "god of the world" (Acts 5), was born nine months of years later in AD 313 (see 2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 12:5). Israel was the "first-born" of Yahweh (Mal. 1:6) and are yet to experience the final hours of the dark night of travail, thereafter to be manifested as the "first dominion" amongst the nations (Mic. 4:8; Isa. 66:7-13). Similarly, the Lord Jesus Christ has provided the means for the development of a family of chosen ones (Isa. 53:11; Heb. 2:13), who will be produced through the spirit-birth (John 3:3-7; 1 Pet. 1:23).

"To die" — Death was decreed because of sin (Gen. 3:19), and constitutes the Divine judgment upon that which is associated with the flesh (Ecc. 12:1-7; Rom. 5:2,6,8; Heb. 9:27). The work of the Lord Jesus, however, demonstrates that though Divine righteousness demands that death must result from sin, Yahweh's determination is to provide life after death to those who submit to His conditions of

righteousness (Deut. 32:39; John 5:24-29; 11:25-44; 1 Cor. 15; Dan. 12:1-3).

"To plant" — A foolish farmer who ignores the "appointed season," and sows his seed at a time suitable to himself, will be disappointed in the results. It is beyond his ability to alter the time of planting, and he must conform with that which Nature has established. Only by so doing, will he obtain the greatest good from his labour. It is so also for spiritual planting and reaping. There is a need for careful planting of the Gospel seed in soil prepared to accept it. There follows a season of thoughtful, diligent cultivation. When the time of experience and understanding approaches, such a person is no longer a "novice" (1 Tim. 3:6); but able to provide a satisfying "harvest" of mature words and works. In the larger sense, today is the era of sowing the Spirit-Word (Matt. 13:1-32; 1 Cor. 3:6-8), and the season is still future — yet very imminent! — when the Father's harvest will be reaped (Rev. 14:15-20; 21:70-12).

"To pluck up" — The reference is to an unfruitful, barren plant, rooted out and destroyed. That which was originally planted is thus judged unfit for existence, and is removed: a Divine judgment on useless works. Jeremiah stood in the place of God (Jer. 1:10) and judged Israel unworthy of Divine protection (ch. 12:2-17; Psa. 80:8-16), and this was later confirmed by Jesus (Matt. 15:13). The nation was subsequently rooted up and cast out into exile.

VERSE 3

"Time to kill" — The Hebrew word *harogh* signifies "to smite with deadly intent," and is used to express judicial destruction, murder, etc. It expresses the severest judgment. Thus, when Israel's wickedness and rebellion to the Divine ways reached the limit of Yahweh's patience and endurance, He slew them (Psa. 78:30-31; Jer. 12:3). The "set time" of a generation had been established by God for the repentance of His people following their crucifixion of His Son (Acts 2:40), and when this was not forthcoming, the nation was "killed" 40 years (a generation) later in the holocaust of AD 70. A set time

has been determined (Ecc. 3:17) wherein judgment will begin at the House of God (1 Pet. 4:17-18), and when the wicked will be punished and slain. A Greek word used to describe the killing of the responsible who refused to obey Yahweh's will, is *karad*. It signifies "to slaughter down; to slay as a butcher." As the butcher has no feeling or compassion for the beasts he kills in the line of his duty, so the Master's righteous judgment upon the wicked will be enforced without mercy or pity (Luke 19:22-27).

"Time to heal" — The slaying of the wicked and the cleansing of the earth by the fiery judgments of Yahweh will be followed by a time of restoration and healing. Yahweh is the Great Physician (Exod. 15:3) Who smites and heals the nations from the dread leprosy of sin and death. He saith: "I kill, and I make alive; I wound and I heal" (Deut. 32:39). Israel, corrected by Yahweh's judgments, will be the first to be healed: "He hath torn us, and will heal us; He hath smitten (to correct), and He will bind us up again" (Hos. 6:1-3; Isa. 57:19). This healing is made possible by the sacrificial offering of the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary (Isa. 53:5; Psa. 103). Then follows the healing of all nations by the preaching and spiritual ministrations of Jesus and the Saints in the millennial age (Psa. 72; Isa. 2:1-4; Ezek. 47:8-9).

"Time to break down" — The Hebrew word *parats* has the idea of "breaking out," thus scattering. This occurred literally in the history of God's vineyard, Israel. Because it failed to respond to Yahweh's careful and loving ministrations to bring forth the fruits of righteousness in their season, He "broke down" her walls, and scattered the nation abroad. His divine protection was removed, allowing the wild Gentile beasts of the forests to invade the area, trample down the nation, and drag the prey away (Isa. 5:1-7; Psa. 89:39-41; Psa. 80:8-16). History was repeated in the Divine action against the faithless Ecclesias of Asia (Rev. 2:5, etc.)

"Time to build up" — The Hebrew word *banan* has been sometimes rendered "repair" as well as to "establish." There is a set time for the

restoration of literal Jerusalem and spiritual Israel (Psa. 102:13-14; 51:18; Isa. 58:12; 61:4; Jer. 24:6-7; 33:6-7; Eph. 2:20-22). Yahweh is actively organising the national affairs of our times, to prepare for this grand occasion.

VERSE 4

"Time to weep" — The original word *bakah* has the idea of continuity: "abundantly, continually." Weeping is usually caused through grief of some disappointing, distressing circumstances of life. It demonstrates the intensity of feeling (John 11:35), occasioned through misfortune to oneself or one's friends. It is evidence that the mind of the one who weeps is filled "to overflowing" with thoughts of the cause of the distress. There is a time for spiritual sorrow, occasioned by an appreciation of sin and its effect (James 4:9; Acts 2:37), and of suffering for righteousness sake. Israel shall weep continually and abundantly, in bitterness and grief of remorse when confronted with the Messiah and the evidence of the terrible sin of their fathers (Zech. 12:10-14); Isa. 61:3). For the saints, it is the time of weeping today. We see Zion in ruins (although revealing signs of a new day approaching!), the Name of our God is blasphemed on all sides, His ways are ignored and His word is rejected. It is the age of sorrow (Luke 6:21-26; John 16:20), but such sorrow will soon give way to the season of joy!

"Time to laugh" — Not that pro-

voked by the world's crude and vulgar humour, but that which has its source in spiritual joy. The pleasure of our present association with the things of the Truth will yet give way to real joy in the grandeur of immortality. The time for sowing in tears will have passed, Yahweh will have manifested His goodness in the rain of His Word, the harvest will be assured, and the saints will return to Zion with shouts and jubilation, with everlasting joy upon their heads (Psa. 126:1-6; Luke 6:21-25; Jn. 16:20).

"Time to mourn" — The Hebrew word *shaphad* means "to lament; to beat the breast." It relates to the expression of grief (cp. Gen. 37:34-35; Deut. 34:5-8; Luke 18:13; 23:48).

"Time to dance" — David danced for joy as he brought the Ark of the Covenant from the house of Obad-edom to the city of David, doubtless anticipating the glorious day when the saints (the "beloved" of Yahweh) will conduct Jesus, the King, to his throne of righteousness and glory in the Temple of Yahweh in the kingdom age (1 Chron. 15:25-29). The Hebrew word translated "dance" is *raqad*, which means to "skip, to leap for joy." It expresses the feeling of exhilaration that will be experienced by the saints, being freed from the burden of sin and the limitation of mortality, and who consequently will "skip for joy" in the presence of Christ with praises upon their lips (Psa. 149:3).

— R. KRYGGER (S.A.)

"Men are not as roses that will automatically unfold their blushing beauty, and exhale their fragrant odour if left alone; they are rather as the apple trees that will grow crabs unless grafted with good slips. The dictum of Christ and Paul is found correct: 'In the flesh dwelleth no good thing' (John 6:63; Rom. 7:18)."

— R.R.

The Influence Of Sin

When sin entered into the world, and death by sin, a rebellion commenced against God which has never been put down effectually from that day to this. It has ever gained strength, and is at the present crisis more defiant of His authority than ever. But He has declared that things shall not always continue thus; for He has sworn by His own life, saying: "As truly as I live all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." (J.T.).

concerned with them. The answer is the work we are attempting. Those close to us know of its extent and of its value. We endeavour, as a faithful return for those who have entrusted the material means to us, to serve the Truth to the best of our ability and to the fullest capacity. In the work of the Truth we rejoice at the co-operation of many brethren and sisters who voluntarily give their time and means that it might prosper and we pray Yahweh that it may do that to the glory of His name.

Our answer to this criticism is the writings and work we attempt. Not that we glory in this. We recognise the deficiencies of it and realise that we lack the ability of others. But we try to make up that by an extra ounce of determination. And so the work continues.

As to our supposed "extremes" where is the evidence? We have patiently sought to heal breaches that have been apparent in the Ecclesial relationships, we have ignored person-

alities as they have been flung at us and we have tried to be fair in our dealings with our fellows in the Truth. Our labours in that direction, as in other directions, will be assessed by Christ at the appropriate time and we labour for him and not for flesh.

The state of our health does not reveal itself in an erring judgment or extremes of attitude, but in a lessening of energy, a greater tiredness of mind and body which makes work more difficult and the driving energy more necessary. Even so, we have maintained the output and even whilst writing this brief article, are on a journey that will encircle the world, in order that we might attend and speak at various Ecclesial functions and particularly the South African and American Bible Schools.

Our strength and confidence is not in flesh but in Yahweh, and if we do not work with Him we labour in vain in whatever avenue of labour engaged in.

— EDITOR.

For Meditative Study

A Season for Every Purpose

A VERSE BY VERSE STUDY OF ECCLESIASTES

(Continued from Vol. 37, Page 468)

VERSE 5

"A time to cast away stones" — The Septuagint renders: "a time to throw stones." This action by antagonists not only indicates a desire to wound an enemy, but was also a symbol of detestation. So Stephen was stoned (Acts 7:58) as Paul also was later (ch. 14:19). The time of "throwing stones" indicates the end of tolerance in favour of destruction. It was also the custom of armies to sow the enemy's field with stones, thus rendering it unworkable and unproductive (2 Kings 3:19).

"A time to gather stones together"— Koboeth had done this in his great building projects (ch.2:4), providing the materials required. But the word here translated "gather" is *kanac*, from a primary root meaning "to collect, heap up, enfold." It thus refers to the gathering together of stones in a field, to prepare it for productivity. These stones were often used to "enclose" the field with fences, and were evidence of the fact that activity had been conducted in that particular area. The work of the Lord Jesus Christ in the ecclesial field, previously strewn

with the stones of sin and barrenness, but now prepared for the "choicest vine" is illustrated in Isaiah 5:2. Similarly, it was the task of John Baptist to remove the "stones of unbelief" from Israel's heart that they might receive Messiah when he appeared (Isa. 62:10-11 John 1:22-23).

"A time to embrace" — This has a passionate intimate meaning, expressed in Solomon's exhortation to filial faithfulness (Prov. 5:18-20; Song 2:6), where it also relates to Christ's intense love for his ecclesial-bride. An embrace comes from a mutual love and desire for each other, and this follows the ardent longing occasioned by the absence of one from the other (Song 3:4). Solomon exhorts the wise to embrace wisdom (Prov. 4:7-8), and Israel will yet "embrace" Yahweh, cleaving to Him as a girdle cleaveth to a man (Jer. 13:1-11).

"A time to refrain from embracing" — Solomon warned against involvement with the "strange woman" (Prov. 5:20). John gave this practical expression when he said: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (I Jhn. 2:15). The Truth must have pre-eminence in our affections. Christ must be considered before wife, family or possessions, that a more faithful service can be rendered (1 Cor. 7:29; Luke 14:26; Lev. 15:19-23). This attitude of mind will prevent us from so embracing the things of this life that may cause us to lose the future.

VERSE 6.

"A time to get" — The R.V. has "a time to seek," from the Hebrew *baqash*, "to strive after; to search for." Men search after riches, honour and glory in this age, but the servant of God will seek Him (Isa. 55:6), striving after future glory (Rom. 2:7) and the things that make for peace (1 Pet. 3:11). To such their efforts will be rewarded (Luke 11:9; Heb. 11:16).

"A time to lose" — This naturally follows in the experience of those who "seek" for Truth. They "lose" present advantage for the sake of Christ (Matt. 16:25-26; 19:29; John 12:24-

25; 2 Cor. 8:9).

"A time to keep" — The Hebrew word *shamar* signifies "to hedge about (as with thorns), thus to guard, protect, attend to." It expresses the idea of actively protecting and guarding possessions, as a shepherd would his flock, and a husbandman his field. Christ shelters the Ecclesia from the ravages of sin, having provided the means of overcoming (Heb. 2:17), and expects his followers to similarly manifest a responsibility to preserve the Truth in its purity (cp. Acts 20:28).

"A time to cast away" — That which is cast away is refuse. Sin must be cast away. Because they refused to do this in their lives, Israel was cast away from Yahweh's presence (Jer. 7:15; Matt. 7:8-12); Luke 12:5; 1 Cor. 9:27).

VERSE 7.

"A time to rend" — The Hebrew "*gara*" means "to cut out," and speaks of the rending of garments as a symbol of mourning (Gen. 37:29; 44:13; Judges 11:35; 2 Kings 19:1; 2 Sam. 1:11). Though Israel rent their garments because of the Divine judgment upon them, there was no repenting or mourning heart to accompany that physical action. Therefore God appealed to His people: "Rend your hearts, and not your garments" (Joel 2:13), as the basis of supplication towards Him.

"A time to sew" — The word indicates "to join together," and speaks of the restoring of that which had been rent. When the time of mourning and sadness is past, joy is again experienced. As Israel turns to their God, so He "joins together" with them to ensure their salvation (Joel 2:21-32). Similarly, for the saints this is an age of "weeping" because of the strength of sin manifested on every hand, and yet this period will soon give way to the "joy that cometh in the morning" (Psa. 30:5).

"A time to keep silence" — Expressive of meditation, thought and communion with God. It is also a sign of unspoken opposition and rebuke, for the Lord it is said that "he opened

not his mouth" (Isa. 53:7) against his adversaries. When the golden words of Truth would be used only for jesting by impure flesh, it is a "time to keep silence" (cp. Psa. 137:2-3). Eventually, all flesh will be silenced before the Almighty Majesty of Yahweh (Hab. 2:20; Zech. 2:13).

"A time to speak" — There is a solemn responsibility to "preach the word in season and out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2), to render praises unto God (Psa. 30:12), and to continue in prayer (Psa. 62:6-7; Col. 4:2-4). In the divine economy the time of Yahweh's voice will soon come, and He shall "speak to the nations in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure" (Psa. 2:5; 83:1).

VERSE 8.

"A time to love" — Note the progression of ideas in this verse: love, hate, war, peace! This inversion in the order of the antitheses brings the poem of v.2-8 to a climax with a *shalom* ringing like a benediction. The word *love* (*phileo* in the Septuagint Version) speaks of the expression of affection and feeling.

"A time to hate" — Those who love righteousness, evoke hatred (malicious, unjustified feelings) in those whose way is corrupt (Luke 6:22; John 15:18-25; 1 John 3:12). Similarly, the righteous express hatred towards the works of evil (Rev. 2:6). Therefore, after generating a feeling of

"love" for truth, there inevitably develops "hatred" towards error (Heb. 1:9; Rom. 7:15; Jude 23).

"A time of war" — Warfare is necessary to physically overcome the adversary. The work of Joshua and others in leading Israel to victory (Josh. 6) types the physical and the spiritual preparation to obtain the promised inheritance and eternal rest. The saints are involved in spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:12-18; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:3-4) to overcome the "wiles of the devil"; whilst Israel is yet to experience the purging fires of adversity from which they will finally be freed (Ezek. 38; Joel 3:9; Zech. 12; Hab. 3).

"A time of peace" — The last of the fourteen antithesis of vv.2-8! The word *shalom* does not only relate to the cessation of war, but involves the principle of unity and union. After the storms of Armageddon have subsided and the nations are subdued in righteousness, the Prince of Peace will be manifested to all mankind, and commence his millennial reign. The divine order which will be instituted by Christ when he rules from Jerusalem is "first righteousness, then peace," for the "work of righteousness shall be peace and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever" (cp. Isa. 32:17-18; Isa. 2:1-4; 9:6-7; Psa. 72; Col. 1:20; Heb. 7:2; James 3:17).

R. KRYGGER (S.A.)

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Good and Evil in Human Experience

(Continued from Page 39)

There is Joy for Those who Cheerfully Submit to Yahweh's Appointed Times — vv. 9-15.

VERSE 9.

"What profit hath he that worketh"

— The Hebrew word *yithrown* translated "profit" indicates the surplus or gain accruing from a business transaction. Koheleth once again considers the vexing question of Ch. 113. Though there are set times for man's activities (vv. 2-8), when the cycle of life is complete, he has nothing over. There is no gain, no surplus, as far as lasting joy and happiness are concerned.

VERSE 10.

"I have seen the travail" — Koheleth closely examined the wearisome toil, the endless dreary cycles of labour that Yahweh has given to man, to be exercised thereby. God intends that man might be provoked by the very awareness of his own inherent frailty and human limitations, to seek to improve his lot, and so turn to God.

VERSE 11.

"He hath made everything beautiful" — Though man's labours are ineffectual and profitless, such cannot be said of Yahweh's work. The exquisite beauty the harmony of purpose, the faultless precision, the beneficial supremacy of absolute control manifested in all the works of God; bear eloquent testimony to the fact that "He is" (Psa. 19; Acts 14:15-17; Rom. 1:19-21).

"Set the world in their heart" — The A.V. rendered here is obviously faulty. The word translated "world" by the A.V. is rendered "eternity" in the RSV and LXX. This erroneously suggests that Yahweh has set in every man's mind, a deep-seated sense of eternity, a keen awareness of the knowledge that he was created for a better existence than that which ends in dust,

and, therefore, the knowledge of Yahweh's eternal purpose is the root cause of mankind's present dissatisfaction with the restricting cycles of life to which he has been subjected (vv. 1-8). Again, if Yahweh has put a love of the world in every man's heart, so blinding him to His eternal purpose with mankind, as the A.V. suggests, it would make Yahweh responsible for man's failure to obey (2 Cor. 4:4). And why would Yahweh put a sense of eternity in men's minds to prevent them finding out His eternal purpose! Such is a contradiction of ideas. A more accurate translation of the Hebrew word *elem* (as some read *olahm*, the consonants being the same) is, "ignorance" or "darkness." Accepting this translation, we understand that Yahweh has put ignorance, or darkness, in man's mind so that by searching nature he cannot find out God's work from beginning to end. The natural mind is in a state of complete ignorance concerning the Divine purpose (Psa. 107:10; Prov. 4:19; Jer. 13:15-16; John 1:5; 1 Cor. 2:9-16; John 8:12).

VERSE 12.

"I know" — An expression of definite knowledge and conviction.

"A man" — i.e. every-man. Koheleth has examined by wisdom the activities of humanity in their appropriate time cycles, and noted their futility. He is certain that his convictions regarding the truth of his observations recorded in Ch. 2:23-24 and Ch. 3:9-11, are correct. The wisest course for "every-man" under the present circumstances is to implicitly trust in Yahweh's appointments, and to enjoy life by submitting cheerfully to its limitations. Fretting against the vicissitudes of life only increases his sense of vanity and frustration (Psa. 37; Phil. 4:11).

"To do good" — The Hebrew words *asoth tobh* is better translated: "to get good," i.e. to enjoy life, to get the most out of it. The way this is recommended is outlined in Verse 13.

VERSE 14.

"I know" — Again, Koheleth expresses his complete conviction, a belief beyond any shadow of doubt, that Yahweh's appointment cycles and times for man are as changing as the immutable laws of nature.

"Nothing can be put to it" — Man is trapped securely in time-cycles that regulate his every activity, from birth to the grave. He seeks in vain to change them. The very stability and consistency of the unchanging world order, which is obviously the work of Yahweh, should teach man to turn to Him in reverence and awe (Psa. 90:1-2; Ecc. 1:4; Isa. 40:12-15, 21-31; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8).

VERSE 15.

"Yahweh requireth that which is past" — Literally rendered: "Yahweh seeketh that which is driven away" (cp. margin). Thus, happenings and events in man's cycles of life continually recur. Each seems to pursue the other, as in an endless circle. To make certain they will re-occur, Yahweh (as it were) pursues after them, in order to capture and return them to a relentless cycle of continual pursuit. This unchanging sequence of events is illustrated by man's love, hate, war, labours, activities, etc., which are performed again and again by each succeeding generation (Ecc. 1:9-11).

Human Oppression and Wickedness
Prove that Man, Despite his Vaunted Superiority, is no Better than the Beasts that Perish — Vv. 16-21).

VERSE 16.

"Wickedness was there" — The word

comes from the Hebrew *resha*, signifying "perversion," or "bending of the right." In the previous section, Koheleth demonstrates that Yahweh's supremacy over all creation is absolute. Yet he discovers oppression and wickedness in places of judgment, i.e. in places of administration of justice, and in places of piety, i.e. among Israel's priestly ruling class (Mic. 3:7-12; Ps.82).

"Place of judgment" — In places of the administration of justice. Men did that which was "right in the sight of their own eyes" (Jud. 21:25), and lawlessness was rampant throughout the earth.

"Place of righteousness" — Even the priestly ruling class in Israel were affected by the attitude of wickedness (Mic. 3:1-12; Psa. 82), and this drew the strong condemnation of the Lord Jesus Christ against his generation (Matt. 23).

VERSE 17.

"Yahweh shall judge the righteous and the wicked" — There is a double meaning attached to the word "judge": (a) the vindication of the righteous, and (b) the punishment of the wicked. Yahweh, though omnipotent, allows transgression against His regal laws to occur, so that the activities of the righteous might be manifested (Matt. 13:24-30). Though sin appears to triumph even in places of piety, yet its judgment is sure and its destruction certain — for Yahweh has appointed a day, a set time, in which He will judge the world in righteousness, in His glorious Son. Then the righteous shall enter into life eternal, whilst the wicked shall perish everlastingly (Psa. 8:8-11; 26:1; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:9-12; John 5:22-30; 2 Cor. 5:9-11; 1 Pet. 4:17-18).

— R. KRYGGER.

The Benefit Of Trial:

A patient, well-balanced character is a beauty not to be attained without an amount of affliction, in some shape or form, that we would all avoid if we could. God takes care that His beloved will not miss out, which makes them precious to Him and all His children. Wait till you see immortal men who have come out of great tribulation!

course of the Truth, the Thais could well be outstanding adherents of Christ.

But such must await the return of the Lord, and the changed conditions that he will bring about upon the earth. The judgments of God will humble flesh, and cause survivors to turn to Him Whom men have ignored for so long. The fading glories of dying man which are presently preserved at so great a cost, will be wiped out of existence. The worship of idols will cease, and the truth will make men free.

Meanwhile, what a privilege is ours, that Yahweh has seen fit to call us to His truth. Let us preserve our

heritage, and never cease to thank God that He has seen fit to call us out of darkness to the wonderful light of the Gospel. He has a purpose with us, and the first lesson we must learn is that of humility revealed in obedience. Let us remember, that all the apostasy that floods the earth at this time in its diversified forms, has its roots in the Truth which men perverted. Thus they came to worship the created rather than the Creator as we see it to this day (Rom. 1:21-32). Our duty is plain: we must preserve this precious truth that we hold from the inroads of error.

— G.O.

For Meditative Study :

The Book of Ecclesiastes

(Continued from p.111)

CHAPTER THREE (CONTINUED)

VERSES 18-20

"That Yahweh might manifest them" — These words may be understood in three ways: (a) — to judge; (b) — to test; (c) — to winnow or sift.

Koheleth saw that Yahweh permitted wickedness and corruption to go unchecked in order to sift or winnow the righteous from the wicked. This is a proving process, during which time the righteous suffer, and the wicked appear to prosper. These iniquitous activities (wickedness and corruption in places of administration and worship) serve to bring home to man the realisation that, despite his vaunted superiority of intellect and learning, he has no moral superiority over the beasts "for all go unto one place" (Gen. 3:19; Ps. 104:29; 146-4).

VERSE 21

"The spirit of man that goeth upward" — Spirit is *ruach* in Hebrew. Young renders the word as "wind,

wisdom, disposition, seat of emotion" etc. Here it refers to man's spirit of pride, which is unique to him, and is the motive behind much of his wickedness and oppression in places of justice and righteousness. Man's soaring ego, his lofty ambitions, his desire to be "as God," will be suitably punished by Jesus in the time when Yahweh's Name (His honour and glory) will alone be exalted in the earth (see Gen. 3:5; Isa. 2:1-21; 14:13-14; Phil. 2:1-11).

VERSE 22

"To see what shall be after him" — Man should exact all the pleasure he can out of his daily labour and not fret or trouble himself over events that may or may not occur after his death. After all, these things are hidden from his perception, and quite beyond his power to alter (Ps. 30:9; 88:10-12; Isa. 38:18).

— R. Krygger (SA).

The Book of Ecclesiastes

(Continued from p.149)

CHAPTER FOUR

HUMAN VANITY INCREASED BY OPPRESSION — vv. 1-16

Koheleth, still pursuing his quest, discovers vanity in human relations. He is appalled by man's ruthless oppression of man, and regards the dead who escape these things, as better off than the living who endure them. He applauds co-operation, and shows the superiority of wisdom over folly. The chapter ends with the description of the fleeting nature of public favour.

Vv. 1-3: Man's Inhumanity To Man Condemned

VERSE 1

"Considered all the oppressions" — The Hebrew *ha-ashukim* means "the oppressed." Koheleth turns to consider the question of human suffering; the lack of pity and compassion manifested one for another. He is greatly distressed as he contemplates the tragic results of extortion and tyranny, the sorrows and tears of the suffering, the pitiful cries for justice of the helpless and downtrodden poor who are denied their right by the covetous, powerful rich.

"No comforter" — These words are twice repeated, and therefore exemplify the utter helpless state of the downtrodden oppressed. Though they cry loud and long for justice, there is none who will consider their sad plight (Neh. 5:1-5; Prov. 14:31; Amos 3:9-10; Job 35:9-12). The Lord Jesus will rectify all this injustice and abuse of power by the godless rich, at his return (Ps. 72).

VERSE 2

"Praise the dead" — Koheleth narrowly considered the suffering, oppression and bitter injustice perpetrated by the tyrannical rich on the poor and helpless, and came to the conclusion that the dead, who escape these things, are better off than the living, who must endure them.

VERSE 3

"Which hath not yet been" — Considering the tragic situation of the oppressed, Koheleth declares that they are better dead (v.2). Now he suggests that those who have never been born are more blessed, or happier, than the oppressed, for they have never experienced the awful tyranny of oppression (Job 3:13-22; Ecc. 6:3-5).

Vv. 4-6: Envy and Rivalry Condemned

Having considered the inhumanity and tyranny of man, Koheleth now turns to examine the evil of competition, jealousy and rivalry.

VERSE 4

"A man is envied" — He declares that he took note of the travail and toil of every right or competent work. A man may labour to execute a skilful and beautiful work, but is robbed of any joy or satisfaction he may derive from it by the envy or jealousy of his neighbour, who immediately sets out "to go one better." The good work of the first man should have brought forth nothing but commendation and praise; instead it evoked only the spirit of jealous rivalry, which, Koheleth saw, was the motive behind many good works. The desire to be competent and to do well is therefore dampened by the envy and ambitious rivalry of others (cp. Gen. 3:11; Prov. 14:30; Matt. 27:18; 1 Cor. 13:4).

VERSE 5

"The fool foldeth his hands together" — "Fool" is *kesil* in Hebrew and means "stupid fellow, dullard, sluggard." The sluggard folds his hands, or starves to death for very idleness. The verse is explained in Prov. 6:9-11. The prevailing thought is the harvest (vv. 6-8). Early rising is essential when labouring on a farm, yet the man of the proverb lays comfortably in bed. He has folded his hands composing himself for sleep. As there was no sowing so there could be no reaping, and so, to live, he "eateth his own flesh," i.e. lives on his substance, and when that is gone, poverty, symbolised by a ferocious brigand, takes hold of and destroys

him. See the enlargement of this thought in Prov. 24:27-34; Amos 4:6; 2 Thess. 3:12-13.

VERSE 6

"A handful with quietness" — "Handful" literally means "palm of the hand, the slight hollow of the upturned hand." A man is far happier, and knows more contentment and peace of mind, if he gains sufficient for his needs through quiet, steady toil, than if he accumulates much more as a result of fierce, competitive striving. Thus is emphasised the virtue of contentment (Prov. 15:16-17; Matt. 6:31-34; 1 Tim. 6:8; Heb. 13:5; Phil. 4:11).

—R. Krygger (Woodville, S.A.)

Bear With Each Other

We are all moving on a great march — a vaster assembly than ever moved through the wilderness of old — and when we stand revealed to Him, and He to us, and we to each other, we shall look back with unspeakable sorrow at the jars, and the discords, and the uncharities of this mortal life; and for every sweet kindness, for every loving helpfulness, for every patience, and for every self-denial or self-sacrifice, we shall lift up thanks to Almighty God.

— R.R.

The Power Of Prayer

Pray always. If a mortal friend who is faithful is a strong defence, what shall we say of God who has the thread of everything in His hand; Who can not forget; for Whom nothing can be hid; to Whom nothing is impossible? Pray and wait. Do not murmur. Do not weary. Remember we have no claim to His goodness and that if He were to leave us to perish, no wrong would be done. At the same time, be comforted that He is not indifferent to those who love, trust and obey Him, and that however long He may seem to tarry, He will come at last to your rescue.

**LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD**

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For Meditative Study :

The Book of Ecclesiastes

(Cont. from p. 189)

CHAPTER FOUR

HUMAN VANITY INCREASED BY OPPRESSION — vv. 1—16

Koheleth now turns from the subject of rivalry (see last issue) to consider the evil consequences of avarice in human affairs. While rivalry deprives a man of satisfaction in a good work, avarice will separate him from the advantages of association with others.

VERSE 7:

"Then I returned" — Again I saw. The wording indicates the introduction of a new experiment. Having considered the emptiness and frustration of jealous rivalry, Koheleth now turns to consider the futility of avarice. By the words, "under the sun," we are again reminded that Koheleth's study is restricted and confined to the life of natural man.

VERSE 8:

"There is one alone" — He is a lonely miser. His inordinate lust for riches compels him to separate himself from family and friends, lest he be forced to share his wealth. For this reason, he remains celibate and desires no offspring. Having isolated himself from the rest of humanity, he dedicates himself unremittently to what is now the obsession and goal of his life: the greedy acquisition of wealth.

"Yet is there no end of all his labour" — The miser's hunger for wealth is insatiable, and has become, in effect, "a deadly disease" eating him away. He rises early and labours far into the night, thus depriving himself of rest and comfort, and the simple joys of life.

"Neither is his eye satisfied with riches" — The eye is often used in Scripture as the organ of desire and appetite. Like the rich fool of Jesus' parable (Luke 12:16-21), the miser's

hunger for money is never assauged; yet satisfaction in wealth continually eludes him. The more he has, the more he wants; and having attained one goal, he immediately sets out after another.

"Neither saith he, for whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good?" — The lone miser's self-denial and efforts to acquire riches have brought him much pain and discomfort. He has deprived his soul of much that it desires, yet he never pauses to consider "for whom do I toil?" or "who actually benefits from all my efforts?" The answer to his question is, Nobody — not even himself; for even he does not derive any real advantage from all his toil. By isolating himself that he might have undivided enjoyment of his wealth, the miser has deprived himself of the best joys and comforts this life can offer: those that spring from associations with others. The whole transaction thus proves itself to be nothing but vanity (emptiness). A sore and irritating experience.

Contrast:

After considering the cheerless life of the lone miser, Koheleth now illustrates the great advantages and benefits accruing from companionship and fellowship with others (vv. 9-12). He draws his lesson from the figure of men on a journey, who find much mutual gain in their co-operation together, particularly:

(1)—when walking in narrow and

precipitous paths;

- (2)—in mutual comfort at the end of the day;
 (3)—by aiding one another when threatened by an enemy.

VERSE 9:

"Two are better than one" — United we stand, divided we fall. Two men working and co-operating together as a team, can accomplish much more than two men working alone (cf. Paul and Silas).

"They have a good reward for their labour" — They are able to render assistance to each other in time of need, as illustrated by v.10.

VERSE 10:

"If they fall, the one will lift up his fellow" — Two men are journeying to a distant land along a way that is rough and fraught with peril. One man slips and falls into a deep pit. If he, like the miser of v.8, had been alone, he may well have perished; but having a companion to render aid, his life is saved. Thus Koheleth shows how much men are dependent on others, and illustrates the rewards of united toil. The principle also holds good in ecclesial life, for we, too, are pilgrims on a journey, walking through the wilderness of life, to the Kingdom of God. The way is straight and narrow, fraught with pitfalls. If a brother separates himself from the Ecclesia, choosing to live in isolation, he robs himself of the many joys and advantages that accompany associating with others of like precious faith. If he falls, doctrinally or morally, woe unto him; for who will lift him up? Who will correct him? (Gal. 6:1-2). The righteous, it is recorded, walk with Yahweh; they journey through the wilderness of life to the kingdom in companionship with Him (Gen. 6:9; 5:22-24). With Yahweh at their side, they have nothing to fear. When they fall, or are about to fall, He will sustain them. When they are bowed down by grief or troubled by adversity, He will lift them up. Though they fall "seven times," Yahweh will raise them up, out of the pit of sin, and finally

raise them up out of death to life eternal (1 Sam. 2:7-8; Ps. 9:13; 145:14; Prov. 24:16; John 5:28-29).

VERSE 11:

"If two lie together, they have heat" — The path leads up into the mountains. The air is cold, and snow lies on the ground. If one man is alone he will freeze; but two lie together and pass the night in comfort; again Koheleth illustrates the undeniable advantage of fellowship.

VERSE 12:

"If one prevail against him, two shall withstand him" — In the morning, the journey is continued, and as the travellers pass through a narrow defile, a brigand sets upon them. One man might beat off the attack; but if he has a companion, together they will withstand him. If there be three the robber would easily be subdued. By this figure, Koheleth praises the great benefits that association and united toil with others, brings. John in Ch. 10:15 records that though we were overcome, beset by sin (strong man), intent on robbing us of life, yet Jesus comes to our aid, and through his loving obedience even unto death, has bound the strong man, setting us free (cp. Matt. 12:28-30). Therefore we are able in fellowship with others, in a united walk toward the kingdom, to endure the vicissitudes of life, to resist its snares and temptations, rendering mutual aid, both spiritual and temporal as the need arises.

"A three-fold cord is not quickly broken" — Our fellowship is with the Father and the Son. By continuing in the life, having no union or fellowship with the darkness of heresy, or the foolishness of immorality, sin can never waylay and overcome us. The strength that flows from such a union, the joys that emanate from such companionship, will strengthen us to overcome the world. Our fellowship is a three-fold union which is rarely broken (1 John 1:5-9). See also 2 Sam. 23:8-22; Acts 2:44-47; Rom. 15:1-2; Gal. 6:2).

For Meditative Study :

The Book of Ecclesiastes

(Cont. from p.230)

CHAPTER FOUR

HUMAN VANITY INCREASED BY OPPRESSION — vv. 1-16

Vv. 13-16: The Delusion Of Popularity

Koheleth, having listed the outstanding advantages of fellowship, now studies the transient nature of popularity. He shows that those who make this their chief aim in life, will find no lasting satisfaction. He advances the example of the rise of a young man to public favour. Using wisdom as his guide, he is able to unseat the old king, who is too stubborn to accept advice, and so usurps his place on the throne. However, his popularity soon wanes, and both King and subjects are extinguished in Sheol, so the cycle is complete.

VERSE 13

“Better is a poor and wise child, than an old and foolish king” — The old king represents all who attain to positions of power and authority over others, and having retained it so long, imagine they are infallible. Actually they are self-deluded, obstinate and set in their ways (1 Kings 12:6-8). Thus hardened in their opinions, they no longer accept advice; therefore their usefulness is ended: they have become expendable and public opinion turns against them.

VERSE 14

“Out of prison he comes to reign”— The young, poor but wise child is open to advice, guided by wisdom, and in time usurps the position of the old, stubborn and foolish king. Here we have the picture of one king ascending, the other descending: a continuous cycle. We are reminded of the experience of Joseph, a poor, wise man, who came out of prison and

ascended the throne of Egypt (Gen. 41:39-44); and of our Lord Jesus Christ, born in circumstances of poverty, shut up in the prison-house of death, yet, through wisdom rightly applied, coming forth to reign in power and glory over the nations (Ps. 2; Dan. 7:13-14). We, too, must be poor of spirit, yet wise unto salvation. Yahweh has chosen such (1 Cor. 1:26-31) who, like Jesus, though despised and rejected by men (the foolish and ignorant of the world who will no longer take advance concerning the glad tidings of God's glorious kingdom) will, at his return, unseat the kings of the earth, and ascend the thrones in their stead (Ps. 149:6-9; Rev. 5:10).

VERSE 15

“The second child that shall stand up in his stead” — The young man is now old and knows by experience the futility of public acclaim. He knows that popularity is uncertain, and at the best unpredictable. The people's fancy is fickle and their cheers can quickly turn to jeers (Acts 14:18-19; Mark 11:9-10; 15:12-13, 24-25), as he, too, falls from favour.

VERSE 16

“They also that come after him” — Koheleth presents a picture of the new king, standing up before a multitude of his subjects, a vast innumerable company; there is no end to them, all applauding and praising him. This is the day of his popularity, he is the outstanding man of the hour. But the moment soon passes as public favour

wanes. They that come after (i.e. the sons and daughters who know not the old king) refuse to do him reverence.

He is ignored and another is applauded in his stead; thus the cycle is again complete.

CHAPTER FIVE

VANITY IN WORSHIP — Vv. 1-7

Koheleth's research into human activity takes him to the house of God. He finds that even in the midst of worship, there is vanity. For the first time in the study, we find Koheleth offering words of admonition and warning, directed mainly to those whose worship was nothing more than a mechanical act, a religious sham, to hide an evil heart of disbelief. He pleads for sincerity and integrity in religious worship, and insists that the sacrificial offering must be matched by the moral quality of the worshipper's life. The portion dealing with worship falls into three parts: (1) — Guard thy foot — v. 1; (2) — Guard thy mouth vv. 2-3; (3) — Guard thy vows — vv. 4-7.

Guard thy foot — v. 1.

VVERSE 1

“Keep thy foot” — Watch your step when you approach Yahweh in worship (Ps. 119:101; Prov. 1:15). Many in Israel went to the Temple, to the place of prayer, simply through habit. Their worship had degenerated into a mere mechanical performance; an outward show of piety only, while inwardly the heart was unaffected and unrepentant (James 4:8-10).

“Be more ready to hear” — “To hear” in Hebrew carries with it the sense of obeying rather than mere listening. Koheleth exhorts his readers to approach God in obedience, that is, with hearts eager to obey the spoken word. After all, obedience is the only acceptable sacrifice. Saul was reminded of that when his religious hypocrisy was exposed by Samuel (1 Sam. 15:27). The sacrificial offering must find its spiritual and moral counterpart in the life of the offerer (Ps. 40:6-8; Amos 5:21-25; Mic. 6:6-8).

“Sacrifice of fools” — This was the offering made without any understand-

ing of its spiritual and moral significance. The offerers went through the motions of religious observance to maintain a reputation of piety whilst rejecting all Yahweh's demands upon them. “Fool” in Hebrew is *kesilim*, stupid fellows, and also implies a moral condition. Their actions were the fruits of their stupidity. The foolish woman of Prov. 9:13-18 represents ignorance; those who are subject to her remain in the congregation of the dead.

“For they consider not that they do evil” — Koheleth considered that it was a great punishable evil to offer sacrifices that spoke of repentance unto righteousness, and then go forth from the Temple, from the very presence of Yahweh, with easy conscience to indulge in all manner of sin again (James 4:8-10; Mal. 1:13-14).

Guard thy mouth — vv. 2-3

VVERSE 2

“Be not rash with thy mouth” — In Hebrew, “rash” is *bahel*, and signifies “to trouble hasten.” Koheleth now emphasises the grave danger of multiplying words thoughtlessly in prayer.

“To utter anything” — Notice the marginal reference. Give careful consideration to even one word (*dabhar*) before uttering it. The foolish rush thoughtlessly into prayer, babbling on and on, perhaps moved by their own loquacity. They promise Yahweh all manner of things, quite beyond their power to perform, and so bring divine wrath upon their heads. Yahweh abhors long prayers filled with meaningless repetition, and prefers communications to be brief and sincere. Jesus warned his disciples to avoid the error of repetitive prayer, pointing out that “much speaking” avails nothing at all, for Yahweh knows our needs and what we will say, before we begin

speaking (Matt. 6:7-8). In request for directions on the *modus operandi* of prayer, Jesus gave his disciples a model of brevity and conciseness (Luke 11:1-4). Notice the contrast between the prayer of Elijah and the prophets of Baal, and, in the N.T., between the Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18:9-14). See also Prov. 28:9; Ps. 109:5-7; John 9:31.

"For Yahweh is in Heaven and you upon earth" — The knowledge of Yahweh's infinite greatness, and of the vast gulf that separates the worshipper from the Object of his worship, should act as a brake on volubility in prayer. God is immortal, invisible, holy, high above men, enthroned in the heaven of heavens; whilst man, on the other hand, is but a worm, earth-bound, finite, frail, sinful creature of dust and ashes. This knowledge should engender the spirit of deep humility and reverential awe in the heart of the worshipper. Therefore let thy words be brief.

VERSE 3

"For a dream cometh through the multitude of business" — Koheleth now quotes a proverb. As dreams are the result of a restless mind, burdened with the cares and anxieties of the day's toil, so volubility in prayer is the result of folly in him who utters them. Many words uttered in prayer must sound to Yahweh like the ceaseless incoherent babbling of a restless sleeper.

Guard thy vows — vv. 4-7

VERSES 4-5

"When thou vowest a vow unto Yahweh" — A vow is a solemn, sacred promise, both binding and irrevocable on him who utters it. When coupled with an oath (*ala*) it evokes a curse on the vower if he fail to perform it (Ps. 50:14; Mal. 1:13-14; Matt. 12:36-37). Yahweh Himself has vowed and added an oath for confirmation to perform His promise of life eternal to Abraham and his seed; and this vow is both binding and irrevocable (Heb. 6:13-18).

"Defer not to pay it" — Do not delay to perform it. The Mosaic Law did not compel the making of vows; they fell into the category of a free-

will offering. But, once the vow was made, it became imperative to fulfil it speedily (Deut. 23:21-23; 29:12-19; Acts 5:1-10; Mark 7:10-13). In Mark 10:13, the Lord exposed the Pharisees' method of perverting the meaning of the vow (*corban*), in that they taught that an Israelite could vow money as a gift unto Yahweh, and at the same time say to his parents, I have given unto God whatever duty I owed you. Thus the man avoided rendering aid to his parents.

"For He (Yahweh) has no pleasure in fools" — The word "pleasure" is sometimes rendered purpose. God has no purpose, no interest, in fools (*kesilim*), in stupid people, who vow and do not pay.

VERSE 6

"Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin" — Flesh is a metonym for the whole person. Koheleth is saying: Let not your hasty, rash, irresponsible, foolish promises to Yahweh, which you cannot possibly perform, bring you into condemnation as a sinner before God.

"Neither say thou before the angel it was an error or mistake" — The angel here is a priest (Num. 15:29-36; Mal. 2:7; 3:1), Yahweh's messenger. The foolish person has realised that he cannot perform his hasty, impetuously made vows. In an effort to avoid responsibility, he confesses to the officiating priest that he has made a mistake, and tries to influence him to accept a sacrifice as an offering for his sin. He forgets that vows once made are irrevocable. God's anger mounts against the stupidity of such a man, who so flippantly seeks to dispose of his religious obligations; and the priest as Yahweh's mouthpiece, pronounces His displeasure.

"Destroy the work of thine hands" — As the vower's unfulfilled promise brought no result, so Yahweh will bring to nothing whatever work the man puts his hand to.

VERSE 7

"For in a multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities" — Koheleth again proves his point by the use of a proverb. It

could be rendered: "Too much anxiety over business affairs produces troubled dreams, so volubility in prayer results in reckless empty promises and punishment follows."

"But fear thou Yahweh" — Those

who really know Yahweh, who hold Him in reverential awe, will be known by the brevity and sincerity of their prayers.

— R. Krygger (Woodville).

UNPROFITABLE QUESTIONS

Ecclesial controversy, in one form or another, seems inevitable in the imperfect days in which we live. As Jude reminds us, it is needful to "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints." Nevertheless, it is essential to carefully discriminate between saving truth and unessential opinion. We must not capitulate in regard to the former, but need to recognise that we can afford to differ concerning the latter.

Jesus spake of "the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith" (Matt. 23), in contrast with the subject of tithes, which was also scriptural in its place. A similar distinction will be found to exist in other cases. The nature of Paul's thorn, for instance, is an admissible subject of occasional speculation, but is not for a moment to be placed side by side with Paul's "doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience." So the question of what became of the saints who came out of their graves after the resurrection (Matt. 27:52) is not to be mentioned for importance with the fact of Christ's resurrection. Who was the devil that disputed about the body of Moses is of little consequence compared with the question, Who was the devil Christ destroyed in his death (Heb.

2:14). So whether Christ was tall or short, comely or forbidding, auburn or dark, are points which, though involved in the Scripture narrative, are without any value as compared with the fact of Christ's appearance in the flesh, and his invitation by Paul to the Gentiles to become partakers of the covenanted goodness of God.

There are many other such things, which even if true, being without practical value, become "crotchets" when exalted out of their place. They are matters of barren speculation. Why barren? Because unproductive of fruitfulness to God. Some things induce spiritual fruitfulness and some have no effect one way or other. It is testified that "the goodness of God leauleth to repentance." Repentance is, in this case, a fruit springing from the goodness of God perceived and believed. It is

For Meditative Study :

The Book of Ecclesiastes

(Continued from p.230)

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DECEITFULNESS OF RICHES — Ch. 5:8 - 20

Koheleth has seen that the exploitation of the persecuted poor, by those who possess authority and power, has its roots in avarice. The love of money, the setting up of Mammon as an object of worship, is the root of all evil. Though officials grow wealthier on the proceeds of their wicked oppression of the weak, yet their joy is not satisfied, for more demands more; and worse: anxiety, occasioned by great riches, robs a man of his tranquility and peace of mind. Koheleth concludes that the labouring man who is content with his portion, accepting whatever Yahweh sees fit to appoint without complaint, is far happier than the avaricious rich. Koheleth's investigations reveal: that riches can never satisfy (v.10); that they soon depart (v.11); that they generally rob men of the best things in life (v.12); that their possession can be both evil and injurious, and is not permanent (vv.13-16); that lust for riches is a wasting and deadly disease (v.17).

The Abuse Of Power — vv. 8-9

VERSE 8

“Oppression of the poor” — The “poor” are not only those who lack financial security, but also those “poor in spirit.” Koheleth condemns the exploitation of such. He describes how the under-privileged approached the magistrates seeking their rights but found no satisfaction. Those in power wrested justice and perverted judgment. This is legal robbery, the manipulation of the law to serve the interests of the powerful ruling class. Their wicked activities, however, do not escape Yahweh's notice (Prov. 22:16).

“Marvel not” — Do not be amazed. Do not regard this wickedness as being out of the ordinary. This system of graft, bribery and corruption has existed from the beginning, from the time when man first usurped authority and power over his fellow man.

“For he that is higher than the highest, regardeth” — This does not refer to Yahweh, as though God Himself takes special notice of this sin. The highest are the top officials in power, who keep a watchful eye on those be-

neath them, to ensure that they obtain from them their proportion of the proceeds of graft and corruption! All grasp their share of the spoils torn from the poor who is oppressed in his poverty (Prov. 22:22-23; 23:10-11; Ps. 94:1-11).

VERSE 10

“He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver” — Koheleth is referring to the avaricious, rapacious officials of v.8. By exploiting the poor, these men greatly increased their wealth, yet their riches brought no lasting satisfaction. Actually, the avaricious rich are always poor, for no matter how much silver goes into their coffers, they are never content, their insatiable hunger for money is never satisfied.

VERSE 9

“The king is served by the field” — Even a king is subject to the products of the land. A man might cruelly exploit his weaker fellow-men, yet he, like all others, and even the king himself, are dependent on Yahweh for continued existence. Without Yahweh, Who sendeth the sunshine and rain, to

provide harvests in season, all flesh would perish. The fruits of agriculture, therefore, depend not on man's efforts so much as on Yahweh's continued blessings.

The Misery And Folly Of Avarice And Greed — vv. 10-12

VERSE 11

"When goods increased, they are increased that eat them" — Koheleth highlights another source of vanity and frustration associated with lust for wealth. As wealth multiplies, so the avenues for spending keep pace. The nouveau rich must buy bigger mansions, more furniture, engage more servants, constituting a painful, continual drain on their money and increasing their misery. The only satisfaction left to them is to bring out their money in privacy, and gloat over it.

VERSE 12

"The sleep of a labourer man is sweet . . . but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep" — Though he is exceedingly rich, the poor miser knows no real happiness in life; but, at the other end of the social scale, though the labourer possesses little worldly wealth, he does have in abundance, the good things that money cannot buy: a healthy body, the product of outdoor physical exercise; a mind free from anxiety, for he has no wealth nor business ventures to worry over. His sleep is sweet and restful in consequence; and he rises in the morning refreshed in mind and body. He thus enjoys pleasures denied the miserly rich.

The Limitations Of Riches — vv. 13-17

VERSE 13

"Riches kept to their owner's hurt" — Riches of their own have no power to impart real satisfaction or joy. On the other hand, they can rob man of sleep, destroy his tranquility of mind and spirit, and become a source of evil.

Even Hezekiah was led astray by riches (2 Kings 20:12-18). Paul, in powerful and direct language, warns of the deadly peril, the hurt and sorrow, that are associated with the lust for wealth (1 Tim. 6:5-11). It was the love of money, the deceitfulness of riches, that brought final ruin to the Laodicean Ecclesia (Rev. 3:14-17).

VERSE 14

"Riches perish by evil travail" — The rich seek to increase their wealth by investing it. However, if the speculation is unwise and the business fails, their money "takes wings and flies away." Then follows the greater shame and humiliation of having no inheritance to leave to their offspring. Thus men should not put their trust in uncertain riches, but in God Who is able to provide the enduring, unsearchable riches of Christ.

VERSES 15-16

"Naked shall he return" — Koheleth observed that wealth is not a permanent possession. Man enters the world naked, and though he labours all his days, accumulating riches in great abundance, he can take nothing of it past the grave. He dies, and leaves it all behind. Thus, in the ultimate, he has laboured in vain, or "for the wind" as Koheleth expresses it, and there is no lasting value in his wealth. This fact was a source of great pain and anxiety to Koheleth himself (Eccl. 2:17-20). See also Job 1:21; Ps. 10:12; 1 Tim. 6:7.

VERSE 17

"He eateth in darkness" — The miser refused to spend money to have light. He prefers to eat in darkness, which is symbolic of his sick spirit. His avariciousness is a disease, eating him away, separating him from the company, fellowship and joy of associating with others. His end is to spend eternity in the never ending darkness of Sheol. See also Prov. 13:9; Matt. 6:22-23.

(To be continued).

For Meditative Study :

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(Continued from p.303)

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DECEITFULNESS OF RICHES — Ch. 5:8 - 20

Wise Use of God's Gifts -- vv. 18-20

VERSES 18-19

See notes Ecc. 3:13.

VERSE 20

"He shall not much remember the days" — The man who is not obsessed with wealth and acquisition of

riches, enjoys Yahweh's good gifts of health, labour, food, clothing, peace of mind and quietness, and does not fret over life's brevity; knows no extremes, but pursues the even tenor of his ways. His days will slip past uneventfully, with no outstanding calamity to cause him to remember them.

CHAPTER SIX

THE VANITY OF HUMAN DESIRE

Koheleth now considers the things men highly esteem, i.e. riches, wealth, possessions, honour, wisdom and offspring to perpetuate their name, and finally, a proper burial. He states that though men may possess these things in abundance, yet in themselves they are no guarantee of lasting satisfaction. Therefore man's vanity is increased by:—

Vv. 1-7: his failure to enjoy his blessing;

Vv. 8-12: his failure to know what is good.

Man's Failure to Enjoy His Blessing —

Vv 1-7

VERSE 1

"Common among men" — Literally, "great, heavy among men." The fact that men can possess all things, and remain unhappy, is a heavy burden, grievous to be borne.

VERSE 2

"A stranger eateth it" — stranger: Heb. *Nokhri* — alien. The rich man's land is invaded by alien troops, who slay him before he can fully enjoy his wealth. He has known only the travail of acquiring his possessions, his property and wealth; now these riches are all enjoyed by another!

VERSE 3

"An hundred children" — 'One hundred' is a set figure given to indicate a large number of offspring, just as 144,000 in Rev. 14:3 is a known number that stands for a vast innumerable throng. Both long life and a large progeny were considered blessings from Yahweh (Deut. 11:8-9; 28:4, 11; 2 Chron. 11:18-23).

"His soul be not filled with good" — Soul: Heb. *Nephesh*, indicates appetite or desires. In this case, they were never satisfied.

"No burial" — A burial befitting honour and rank, was highly regarded by the ancient Semites, Egyptians and Greeks; all attached great importance

to the accompanying rites and ceremonies of burial. To be denied this was considered a great tragedy (Gen. 23; Jer. 22:18-19; Isa. 14:19-20). In fact, it would have been better, never to have been born.

"Untimely birth is better than he" — If a man has many children and blessed also with an extremely long life, yet, despite this has experienced no real joy, i.e. "his soul not filled with good" and finally, through mischance, has been denied a burial befitting his rank and status in life, is worse off ("knows less happiness"), said Koheleth, than a still-born child (Ecc. 7:1; Job 3:11-19).

VERSE 4

"For he cometh in with vanity" — i.e. the still-born child is born into a lifeless existence, his eyes never open, consequently he never sees light. He, therefore, is born into total darkness and departs (is buried) into eternal darkness.

"His name shall be covered with darkness" — This means the still-born foetus is never given a name. For to have a name is to have existence. We see this illustrated in the resurrection of the sons of light. They are born into a new and eternal existence in the Kingdom Age. Having been accepted by Christ, they will be given a New Name (Rev. 2:17; 3:12). This will signify that Yahweh acknowledges them as His living children. Those who, though born again out of the darkness of Sheol, do not receive a New Name will be, as it were, brought forth into a lifeless existence, and like the unnamed still-born child, will depart into outer darkness with the words: "I never knew you" following them.

VERSE 5

"Moreover, he hath not seen the

sun" — He does not possess the means to experience life, to know sensation. The still-born foetus has never been conscious of existence (Ecc. 7:11; 11:7), or of anything related to the vanities of mortal life. It is not aware of loss or suffering, pain or sorrow, or the iniquitous experiences of the man of verses 2, 3. The lifeless foetus therefore does not experience the sensation of life, whether good or evil, having escaped the burden of toil, worry, pain or sorrow. It has (in a figure) more rest or more satisfaction than the man who lives a long, yet unhappy life.

VERSE 6

"Though he live a thousand years twice told" — i.e. 2,000 years. The expression indicates an extremely long life, twice that of Adam. Koheleth has found that the man who is blessed with extreme longevity, yet lacks the capacity to enjoy life, is no better, in the final analysis, than the still-born child, who experiences nothing at all, who does not live even one short hour. Death is the final resting-place of both. The still-born child is better off than the other, for it reaches the grave, the place of eternal rest, by the shortest, least agonising route. All go into one place; death finally claims all; but some are more fortunate than others in arriving there first!

VERSE 7

"Labour of man is for his mouth" — All man's labours in life are directed to fill his mouth, which is never satisfied. So man's efforts to find lasting joy are fraught with disappointment (Prov. 16:26).

"Appetite" — i.e. desire. Man's efforts are constantly directed to the satisfying of his desires, which are continually frustrated.

— R. KRYGGER (S.A.).

Causing Contention?

One remarked that we seemed fond of strife. Not so. We love peace and retirement from the heartless turmoil of religious partyism and the world. But believing the truth, hating iniquity, and loving righteousness, we cannot witness injustice, and perversion of the faith, and not contend against it. (Bro. Thomas).

For Meditative Study :

The Book of Ecclesiastes

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CHAPTER SIX

THE VANITY OF HUMAN DESIRE.

Man's Failure To Know What Is Good — vv. 8-12

VERSE 8

"What has the wise man more than the fool?" — The question has relation as to what advantage has one over the other in finding lasting joy and satisfaction in the affairs of this life, and the answer is, None at all. Both the wise and the fool are subject to time and chance, and the uncertainties and vagaries associated with this life of vanity. Any advantage that the wise man seems to have is cancelled out by death; for the destiny of both the wise and the fool is only dust.

"What hath the poor, that knoweth to walk before the living?" — What advantage then has the poor man who has become successful in life by knowing how to deal prudently with all life's contingencies? What has he, when life's days are done? The answer again is, Nothing. He has no final advantages over the long-lived wealthy man, or the still-born foetus of v.5, for in the end he also dies and passes into the oblivion of the grave.

VERSE 9

"Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire" — This means, "Better to enjoy what you have than to be continually lusting after unobtainable things." The word for "wandering", is a Hebrew participle which means "going on and on." The man whose desire wanders ceaselessly from one object to another is always miserable and discontented. How true is the adage: "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush!" Paul ex-

horted the Hebrews to be "content with such things as they had" (Heb. 13:5-6), and not to be over-anxious with the desire to secure more, for Yahweh, the faithful God, Who keepeth covenant, hath promised, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Having Yahweh for their helper, they should know that He will provide, leaving them free to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness (cp Phil 4:11-13; Matt. 6:25-33; Ps. 37:6, 25).

VERSE 10

"That which is named already" — This verse deals with the insignificance of mortal man. That which is named already, the verse goes on to say, is Adam (man). Here, there is a play upon words, for the name Adam is related to that for the ground (*Adamah*) from whence he was taken. Thus the name for man reveals both his origin and his destiny: "Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." Man, in his best estate, is but a weak, frail, ephemeral creature. How can such a one as this presume to contend with his Almighty Maker? asks Koheleth. It is futile for man to strive with Yahweh regarding the position appointed him in the universe. Rather should he be willing to accept his lot with humility, and determine to make the best of it. Man can never change Yahweh or influence Him to alter His immutable laws or ways.

"Neither may he contend with him that he is mightier than he" — The word "contend" signifies "dispute" in the Hebrew, and is a legal term relating to the contesting of a case at law, and thus a legal trial. Koheleth

is pointing out that man has no case to plead, whether legally or otherwise, regarding the conditions of this life of vanity into which he is born, and to which he is subjected all the days of his life. If man could take Yahweh to court over the matter, he would certainly lose the case (Isa. 45:9; 46:10; Rom. 9:20).

VERSE 11

“There be many things that increase vanity” — “Things” relate to words, and these increase vanity. Man is continually railing against Yahweh, criticising the conditions of life under which he must live. Yet he achieves nothing; all his wordy arguments get him nowhere. He forgets that man himself is the first cause of all his troubles. He sinned, and the divine judgment is both just and righteous: “Dying thou shalt die.” In view of that, all his complaining and bitterness, his brooding sense of injustice, only serve to increase his irritation.

“Who knoweth what is good for man in this life?” — This is a negative

assertion designed to focus our attention on the answer, which is, Nobody! Nobody knows what is good in this life; not even Koheleth at that stage of his research. He had examined riches, power, possessions, sensual pleasure, subjecting each one to the test of wisdom, and none had yielded the lasting good and enduring satisfaction he sought: all had revealed vanity and vexation of spirit. On that basis, he concluded “that all man’s days are emptiness” — that is, empty of lasting good. His life is transitory, unsubstantial as a dream that passes swiftly away, and any pleasure he may have gained from knowing what is coming to pass on the earth after his decease, was denied him, for he declared: “Who can tell a man what shall be after him, under the sun?” Again the answer is, Nobody! All the seers, spiritualists, clairvoyants, crystal-gazers of this world have no power to foretell the future. That power belongs only to God Who does see the end from the beginning (Jer. 14:13-16; 23:15-40).

CHAPTER SEVEN

In a series of seven proverbs, Koheleth offers advice for happier living for those dwelling in the shadow of Sheol. The wisdom he offers will not lead to life eternal. He makes no pretence that it will, or that there is any permanent advantage in the doing of these things, for Koheleth is convinced that there is no lasting joy to be had in this life of vanity under the sun. Nevertheless, there are certain ways of life that are superior to others. These he now sets before us.

Seven parables as guides for better living :

- 1. Honor is better than luxury 7:1
- 2. Sobriety is better than levity 7:2-7
- 3. Caution is better than rashness 7:8-10
- 4. Wisdom with wealth is better than wisdom alone 7:11-12
- 5. Resignation is better than indignation 7:13-14
- 6. Moderation is better than intemperance 7:15-22
- 7. Men are better than women 7:23-29

This chapter also includes various themes which could be epitomised thus:

- 1. The value of human suffering vv. 1-4
- 2. The value of human instruction vv. 5-9
- 3. The value of human wisdom vv. 10-25
- 4. The value of human faithfulness vv. 26-29

Honor Is Better Than Luxury — v. 1.

VERSE 1

“A good name is better than precious ointment” — This phrase, in the Heb-

rew, contains a play on words. ‘Name’ is *shem*, and “ointment” is *shemen*. Whilst precious ointment is both costly and rare (especially that which was used in the Temple worship — cp. Ps.

45:7-8; Prov. 7:17), Koheleth estimates that a good name, or a good reputation as the result of wise behaviour, is of greater value than this. Substituting wealth for costly ointment, the thought presents itself: A poor man, possessing a good name in the community, or among his brethren, is far better off, than a rich man of evil reputation.

In Prov. 22:1, the word "name" signifies "repute," "standing," "favour," or to be well thought of, or kindly appreciated. Koheleth is saying that it is far better to choose deliberately a way of life that will add to one's personal repute in the community, than one that will provide merely riches at the expense of this. The former will make a poor man rich in the things which really matter.

"The day of death is better than the day of one's birth" — Life is so filled with pain, suffering, frustration, grief and sorrow, that for many, the day of death that brings relief from all life's vanities and oppressions, is more preferable than the day of birth, which is merely the beginning of these sad experiences (Job 3:1-22; 7:1-21).

Sobriety Is Better Than Levity —
vv. 2-7

VERSE 2

"Better to go to the house of mourning than the house of feasting" — It is more profitable to visit the house where death has occurred and relatives mourn, for in the presence of such, we are more inclined to exercise our minds on sober reflections. Death serves to remind us of the brevity of life, and the inevitability of it for every man (James 4:9; Ps. 90:12). Thus death lifts up its "voice" to those who have ears to hear, urgently exhorting them to serve Yahweh while it is called today, and to make preparation for entry into eternal life while we are still able (Heb. 4:1-11). In the house of feasting there is laughter and drunkenness; and many enter therein to escape the grim realities of life; therefore death catches them unawares and unprepared in a day when they look not for it (Ecc. 9:12).

VERSE 3

"Sorrow is better than laughter" — The sorrow Koheleth has in mind, is that occasioned by repentance from sin, such as David experienced as recorded in Psalm 51. This sorrow works repentance, or a change of ways that evokes divine forgiveness and restoration to favour. The memorial feast, in which we remember Jesus' life, death and resurrection, enables us to examine ourselves by his holy standard, to look inward, recognise our faults and grieve for them, turning to Yahweh for help, for there is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared. Blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be comforted (2 Cor. 7:10; Matt. 5:4).

VERSE 4

"The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning" — The wise man's thoughts are towards the sick and the afflicted, whom he visits to comfort. While in their presence, he meditates upon the mortal nature of man and the weakness of the flesh that profits nothing. From this point, he turns to consider Yahweh, Who can both heal and save (Ps. 103). But the minds of fools are not on the sick for they would rather not be reminded of those things but prefer to forget them in the house of mirth, where in ribald laughter and foolish jesting, they seek to erase from their minds, the realities of this present life of sorrow.

VERSE 5

"It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise" — It is better to endure the admonition of the wise who seek to correct a grievous fault, than to receive the praises of fools, which only incite to further foolishness. In Prov. 12:1, Solomon likens those who refuse admonition and wise instruction to a brute beast, which is incapable of receiving it. Note David's estimation of, and reaction to, the correction of another, as recorded in Psalm 141:5: "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness, and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head" (see also Prov. 1:7-8; 4:1-13).

"Song of fools" — Mirthful drink-

ing songs; rendered songs of praise and flattery (Amos 6:5-7; Prov. 23:29-35).

VERSE 6

"As the crackling of thorns . . . so is the laughter of the fool" — In the east, men used charcoal to heat the cooking pots. The heat given out was steady and long lasting. But when thorns, briars and nettles were put under the pot, they burned quickly away to the accompaniment of loud explosive reports. They gave no real heat, and were soon reduced to ashes. By the proverb, Koheleth is explaining that the laughter of fools is good for nothing. Laughter stands for the so-called "good things of life" that are lacking in any real worth, are generally noisy in operation, and soon end in the ashes of disillusionment.

VERSE 7

"Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad" — Some commentators render this, "oppression can add lustre to a man." The word "mad" used here is the Hebrew *yeholel* from the root *halal*, signifying "to glisten, irradiate." Oppression will add lustre to a man's reputation, and will help to refine his character, if he bears up under it. It will reveal a man's self-control or lack of it, and his faith and trust in Yahweh's ultimate deliverance. See Heb. 12:1-11; 1 Pet. 2:19-24.

"A gift destroyeth the heart" — Or a bribe corrupts the understanding. That is why Yahweh expressly forbade the taking of bribes, gifts or payments by the priests appointed to administer justice and judgment in Israel (Exod. 23:8; Deut. 16:19; Psalm 26:9-10).

— R. Krygger (Woodville, SA).

ESSLINGEN (GERMANY) HALL BUILDING PROJECT

Brother Bogner writes:

"We have heard through our beloved Sister L. Mednyanszky of the keen interest, and readiness to assist, of brethren and sisters in Australia regarding our intention of building an Ecclesial hall at Esslingen. We wish to thank readers of *Logos* who have manifested their practical support by their donations whether large or small. We hope to be ready for this task in the spring of 1973 at the latest. As we see the preliminary work progress and prosper, so our joy increases, and we anticipate the time when our desire will become reality. We aim to establish a home for the Ecclesia to the honour and glory of Almighty God and our Saviour. However, our greatest desire is for the early return of our King, Jesus the Christ."

We, too, are delighted by the interest readers have manifested in this appeal. One such has written:

"I am working now, and my blessings from above are so extended to me, that I can't believe it myself! Please put this cheque, which is my wages for two weeks, towards the Esslingen building fund, and I pray that Yahweh may watch over our brethren and sisters, and be with them in this big task they have before them."

We acknowledge the following donations received since our last report:— Bro. L.J.C. (SA), \$10; Cumberland (SA) Ecclesia, \$50; Sis. L.L. (SA), \$34. (Total on hand: \$381).

Vail Upon The Peoples (Isa. 25:7)

"I have been having some talks with J.W.'s, but their own beliefs dominate their minds so much they do not realise the Truth when it is plainly shown to them. They tried to shew me that Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the tree cut down in Daniel 4 referred to Israel being destroyed in AD 70! Yet Daniel plainly stated to Nebuchadnezzar that the tree referred to his own kingdom (v.22)."

(Bro. and Sis. F.R., (NSW).

election held under Israeli law would imply that the population accepts Israel Government control. The dilemma is difficult.

If a satisfactory method can be found for broadening the electoral base without making it appear that Israel law has been accepted, the elections will take place despite the threats from Amman. A degree of West Bank in-

dependence from Jordan will have been established, and a new representative of local leadership will emerge with whom Israel may be able to begin negotiations regarding the future status of the area.

There are high stakes in the political jockeying which will go on during the next few months.

"Israel Today".

For Meditative Study :

The Book of Ecclesiastes

(Cont. from p.376)

CHAPTER SEVEN

SEVEN PARABLES AS GUIDES FOR BETTER LIVING

3: Caution Is Better Than Rashness — vv.8-10.

VERSE 8

"Better is the end of a thing" — A true evaluation of any project, can be made only at its conclusion, not at its beginning. Unwise critics tend to indulge in rash and hasty conjectures. Jesus was born in a manger in humble circumstances, therefore men judged him of no account (Isa. 53); yet, ultimately, he was granted a Name above every name (Phil. 2:9). The Kingdom is as a mustard seed: small and insignificant in its beginning, but eventually filling all the earth (Rev. 5:10). Israel's beginning was small, but her end will be glorious (Psalm 73).

"The patient in spirit is better than the proud" — The patient develop self-control; they are longsuffering in the face of provocation, set-backs, disappointments (Prov. 14:29). James sees men as trees bearing the fruits of righteousness. He holds up Yahweh as a model of patience, awaiting the deve-

lopment of the "former and latter rain" of exhortation, falling upon His ecclesias, and bringing the fruit to perfection that He might reap His precious harvest (James 5:7-8). The prophets, also, are set forth as models of patience, revealed in times of suffering and affliction (James 5:10-11).

The word "patience" in the Greek is *hupomone*, which means "to abide under," i.e. to endure under stress of trials (see 2 Cor. 6:4; 1 Pet. 2:20). Vine comments: "Patience perfects christian character (James 1:4), and fellowship in the patience of Christ is therefore the condition upon which believers are admitted to reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 1:19).

"Be not hasty in spirit" — Of quick temper. Koheleth is warning us not to be quickly offended, for those who do so, proclaim themselves fools. A fool allows "temper" to rest in his bosom, that is, he retains and harbours it encouraging it until it explodes into

violence, which culminates in murder (Gen. 4:5-8). The man who casts anger out of his bosom, shows self-control which, Koheleth proclaims, is the product of great understanding (Prov. 14:29; 15:18; 16:32; 19:11). It is better to avoid the company and conversation of the man who is quick tempered lest we copy his ways and bring judgment upon ourselves (Prov. 22:24-25).

VERSE 10

"Say not that the former days were better" — This sentiment is false, an illusion. Those who have not learned patience and self control will always look back, nostalgically, to the "good old days", remembering events which gave them pleasure, and conveniently forgetting the pain and frustrations of those times. It is not wise to look back; we should rather forget the things that are behind and look forward with patience for the appearing of Jesus Christ, knowing that Yahweh, through him, will ultimately bring good to the earth and man upon it (Rev. 21:1-7; Phil. 3:13-15).

4: Wisdom With Wealth Is Better Than Wisdom Alone — vv.11-12

VERSE 11

"Wisdom is good with an inheritance" — Wisdom is better than an inheritance (margin) for it is more lasting and cannot be bought with money. Koheleth was given divine wisdom from Yahweh, and an earthly inheritance through David, that his research into human activities might be successful. Israel also received an inheritance from the fathers, but lacked

the wisdom to make it profitable, and ended in losing both. We must apply our hearts diligently to acquire divine wisdom, and just as diligently apply it in our daily living, to make our calling and inheritance sure (2 Pet. 1:5-11).

VERSE 12

"Wisdom is a defence" — (margin: shadow).

"Money is a defence" — (margin: shadow) — Wisdom is a powerful defence — a shadow under which men can find certain relief from the calamities and catastrophies of life (2 Sam. 20:13-22). The wise man will hear the rebuke of the Word and avoid the ways of the wicked — thus avoiding trouble. Those who have wisdom, rest secure under the shadow of the Almighty (Psa. 91:1-16). Wisdom giveth life to them that have it (Prov. 1:33; 3:18). Money is a defence against want and trouble. In some countries, even the rich sin with impunity, and 'buy' their way out of trouble (Prov. 13:8).

5: Resignation Is Better Than Indignation — vv.13-14

VERSE 13

"Who can make that straight which He hath made crooked?" — Koheleth is saying that it is pointless to fret against the vicissitudes and trials of life. The "crooked" conditions under which we live are caused originally by man's transgression (Psa. 125:5; Prov. 2:10-15) and man cannot alter them. The best thing to do under the circumstances is to endure them without complaining (Ecc. 6:10-11).

— R. KRYGGER.

(Continued on p. 416).

"Be ye followers of me"

If Paul, knowing the manifold labors of the brethren of his day, and the persecutions which were heaped upon them through being followers of Christ, were suddenly to put in an appearance and ask what we, in these peaceful times, are doing for the Truth, what would he say?

Enjoy Godly Company

The godly man is not given to speaking of the faults of others, because he owes it to God to be silent on such a theme. "The ungodly are not so." You cannot be ten minutes in their company without finding yourself feeding on scandal.

LOGOS PROPHETIC SUPPLEMENT

to Israel as to show that there will be no possibility of succor by human means.

The triumph of Edom (the flesh in political manifestation) will seem beyond all doubt. Jewry will be threatened with annihilation, as two-thirds of the people in the land will be cut off (Zech. 13:8-9). The remaining third, in utter misery, and in realization that there is no hope from man, will raise their despairing cry to heaven (Deut. 4:30; Jer. 29:13-14; Ezek. 37:11).

And He who will "never leave nor forsake" those who put their trust in Him, will "bring down the strength of Edom to the earth" (Isa. 63:6), in fury and vengeance manifested through the multitudinous Christ, that His name and purpose, and His people and nation, may assume that position of prominence and elevation over all others, that He, from the very beginning, has intended and designed.

Thus, at last, "the elder shall serve the younger," and Jacob, transformed into Israel, a Prince with El, shall have the ascendancy of Esau (Edom).

From the conclusions above, therefore, we believe that the reference to Bozrah in Isaiah 63 should be considered figuratively, and that no major battle will be fought there in the future, but that this will await the arrival of the Lord Jesus and the saints at Jerusalem (Zech. 14). This seems to be Brother Thomas' conclusion also, for in *Eureka* vol. 2, pp. 549, 561-562, he refers to the earthquake and mutual slaughter that shall take place at Bozrah, though elsewhere he clearly states that this will be at Jerusalem.

Christ, therefore, will proceed from Egypt to embattled Jerusalem, to destroy the forces of Gog which will then be in possession of the city; but further consideration of this must await our next Prophetic Supplement.

— HPM.

ECCLESIASTES STUDY

(Continued from p. 407)

VERSE 14

"In the days of prosperity be joyful"

— Though we may not have the power to change the conditions under which we are forced to live, this should not create in us a listless, fatalistic acceptance of our lot. Our days are a mixture of good and evil, and we should learn to rejoice when the occasion demands it; and when it is otherwise we should consider Yahweh's unflinching goodness. He causes the sun to shine, He gives rain and harvests in season — thus, even in adversity, man is able to reflect on Yahweh's steadfast love for His creation. Adversity is a necessary experience in the life of a saint, being instrumental in providing the conditions whereby faith and obedi-

ence can be exercised to the purification of character, and fitting him for entry into the Kingdom with life eternal (Heb. 12:1-11; James 1:2-4).

"Yahweh has set the one over against the other, than man should find nothing after him" — Yahweh mixes good and evil day together. The result is most confusing as far as man is concerned. This "consistent inconsistency" frustrates him and effectively prevents him from prognosticating future events with any degree of accuracy. This teaches us that Yahweh alone rules in the heavens, and controls the destiny of nations on earth, that He, only, has the power to foretell what shall eventuate in days to come, and to see clearly the end from the beginning (Isa. 41:21-23; 45:7; 46:9-10).

A Wider Expanse

There is nothing harder to conquer than the individual point of view. Yet conquer it we must, if we are to open our mind to the fulness of the Truth, for sun, moon and stars existed before we were born.

For Meditative Study :

The Book of Ecclesiastes

(Cont. from p.376)

CHAPTER SEVEN

(Cont. from p.416)

SEVEN PARABLES AS GUIDES FOR BETTER LIVING

6: Moderation Is Better Than Intemperance — vv. 15-22

VERSE 15

“There is a just man that perishes in his righteousness.” — Here Koheleth comments on two paradoxes of life that go against man’s sense of justice:

1. *That the righteousness servant of Yahweh can be overtaken by death early in life (Psa. 102:23-24; Heb. 11:36-38).*
2. *That the wicked can flourish like a green bay tree, heaping up treasure and living to a ripe old age (Ps. 73).*

This seeming lack of just retribution in human affairs was a constant source of concern to Koheleth (Ecc. 2:15-20). It should be recognised, however, that the righteous man’s life is overshadowed by Yahweh, Who directs his steps, sometimes permitting him to suffer, even unto death, for the Kingdom’s sake (see note on Verse 14; cp.: Heb. 12:1-11; 1 Pet. 2:21-25). Though the righteous man is sometimes cut off early in life, yet he will, in fact, attain to long life, even years without end (Psa. 91:14-16; 21-4). On the other hand, the seeming prosperity of the wicked, though having the appearance of longevity, is seen, when measured against eternity, to be as unsubstantial and short-lived as a vapour, that passes swiftly away (Psa. 37; 90:1-12; James 4:13-14).

VERSE 16

“Be not righteous overmuch” —

Here Koheleth is warning us to avoid the pitfalls of religious fanaticism. He is counselling us to beware of going to extremes in our worship and service to Yahweh. For example, the law required that the Israelites should fast one day per year, yet in an excess of zeal the lawyer of Luke 18:12-14 fasted twice a week, or 104 times in the year. This evoked no commendation from on High, simply because it created in the lawyer the spirit of self-righteous pride. It laid the foundation for the developing of a misplaced confidence in works as the ground of approval before God. Remember Paul’s admonition: “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12).

“Neither make thyself overwise” — i.e. Do not be proud of mere superficial knowledge. It is possible to have a Bible full of notes, yet to be lacking in true wisdom and understanding. Learning is not an end in itself but a means to an end (Prov. 4:5-8; 1 Cor. 13; 2 Pet. 1:5-11).

VERSE 17

“Be not overmuch wicked” — Koheleth is not condoning a little sin and warning us not to go too far; as though Yahweh will tolerate some transgression, if we do not overdo it. Paul reveals the folly of this iniquitous attitude to Yahweh’s holy commands in Rom. 3:8. The person that deliberately sets out to sin — even a little, — shall die (Prov. 10:27-31; Ezek. 18:20-24; Heb. 10:26-31). Koheleth means, do

not be over-wicked in your own estimation of yourself; do not magnify your failings out of all proportion, imagining your sins to be so black as to place you beyond the scope of the Father's forgiveness (Psa. 103; Isa. 1:18). An attitude that limits the Father's mercy and forgiveness, tends to dry up faith and be non-productive of the good works that glorify God. This is a self-destructive spirit that can be evicted only by meditation and by prayer.

"Why die before thy time?" — "Time" in the Hebrew is *eth*; it means proper or fitting time. Overmuch wickedness resulted in the early demise of men such as the sons of Eli (1 Sam. 2:34) and the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu (Num. 3:34). See Prov. 10:27-29.

VERSE 18

"It is good that thou should take hold of this." — Koheleth is saying "Get a good grip of this Truth, do not let it go." He is warning against the sin of self-righteousness, and the folly of excessive self incrimination (see vv. 16-17). If we avoid these extremes, suggests Koheleth, we will be numbered among those who hold Yahweh in reverential awe, who shall stand forth approved in his sight "above all" — i.e., above all self-righteous bigots, sensual libertines, and hardened faithless deceived sinners (Rev. 22:14-15).

VERSE 19

"Wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city" — Ten rulers in a besieged city can be of some help in the planning of a successful defence against the power of an invading force. The reference to "ten rulers" suggests a city of some size with a large population. The rulers therefore, would be men of repute, possessing great ability on the administration of the city's affairs. Yet, reasoned Koheleth, having ten such prominent and outstanding men at your side, is not as beneficial as the guidance and deliverance the wise man receives from his wisdom when besieged by trouble and tribulation. Wisdom strengthens the wise, i.e., gives

him more help, more guidance, than ten mighty rulers can give a city in its hour of need (Ecc. 9:13-18). Those who are wise enough to use the wisdom of Christ as their guide to life, will find help and deliverance from the besieging power of the great enemy, sin and death (1 Cor. 15:25-26; 2 Tim. 1:10). The wonderful creative power of divine wisdom is commented on by Solomon in Proverbs 8.

VERSE 20

"Not a just man that doeth good and sinneth not" — Koheleth is not referring to the inherent wickedness of the human race, but commenting on the thought provoked by the previous verses (16-17). No matter how hard a righteous man attempts to please Yahweh, he will, because of the law of sin in his members (Rom. 7:15-25), fall short (1 John 1:8-10; Prov. 20:9), thus, illustrating the universal need for wisdom.

VERSES 21-22

"Take no heed to all words that are spoken" — Koheleth cautions against heeding the effects of gossip, for men and women will gossip continually, an additional proof that all sin and fall short of the glory of God. Most gossip is lightly spoken, and of little importance, so there is no need to lose one's serenity of mind because of it. If we need proof of the truth of this then remember (v.22) that your own idle talk of others carried no real animosity. However, malicious gossip that is deliberately aimed at destroying another's good name, is really slander, and has its roots in envy, jealousy and hatred (Matt. 12:34-37).

7. Men Are Better Than Women — vv. 23-29

VERSE 23

All this I have proved by wisdom — Once again Koheleth reminds us that his quest for the ultimate good is still foremost in his mind, and that he is still energetically engaged in testing and analysing all man's activities under the sun. He assures us that he is not interested in mere idle speculation, but

desires the reliable precious product of applied wisdom.

"I said I will be wise, but it was far from me" — One fact emerges from all Koheleth's activities, and impresses itself forcibly upon his mind, namely: that the more he laboured to attain his goal, the more he became aware of his own limitations. Though he was the wisest man on earth, yet the complexities and problems bound up in mortal life seemed to him insoluble.

VERSE 24

"That which is far off and exceedingly deep, who can find it out?" — Though Koheleth was acquiring much wisdom and understanding on many diverse subjects, yet he found ultimate wisdom still eluded him. There were many complexities in human life, too deep to fathom; and if he could not attain unto them, who can? The answer is, Nobody! Paul was forced to declare his limitations in understanding the deep things of God (Rom. 11:33); 1 Cor. 1:19-25).

"I applied mine heart to know and to search" — Koheleth recognised that man is born knowing nothing, and that if he would be wise, he must exert himself tremendously, labouring long and earnestly as he seeks to lay hold of wisdom, and to get understanding; and this he was prepared to do. If the inestimable value of wisdom is apparent to us, we, too, will labour to be wise, and to teach our children diligently that together we may win the crown of glory that fadeth not away (Deut. 6:6-9; Prov. 4:1-13; 2 Tim. 3:14-17).

Though ultimate wisdom was too deep for Koheleth to fathom, he was sure that wickedness was folly, even madness. He grasped this, without adding to his wisdom. It is only fools who make a mock of sin, lightly disregarding the things that Yahweh hates! For the wages of sin is death, from which (outside of the grace which is in Christ Jesus) there is no release (Ps. 49:16-20; Isa. 43:17; Eph. 2:1-3, 12).

VERSE 26

"I find more bitter than death the

woman whose heart is snares" — In the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, this woman is the personification of ignorance, heresy and sin, prefiguring the great whore, the Roman church of Babylon. All are products, not of wisdom, but of ignorance, wickedness and folly. Those who love such will receive bitter recompense for their stupidity (Prov. 5:1-13, 16, 22; 7:1-27; 2 Thess 2:7-12; Rev. 17; 18:1-5).

VERSE 27

"Counting one by one" — Here Koheleth describes the laborious, yet efficient, method he has employed in his search for wisdom. During the course of his investigations, he has learned that wickedness, though often having the appearance of sanity, is actually folly, and foolishness is really madness (v.25). This conclusion is not, as some might think, the result of idle conjecture, but the product of sound reason; a conclusion reached by building one fact upon another, by balancing or weighing one truth against another.

VERSE 28

"Which yet my soul seeketh" — Literally, again and again my soul has sought. Koheleth would have us know that his next conclusion was not the result of casual seeking, but the end of long, thorough, painstaking search. And what has he discovered?

"One man among a thousand, but a woman have I not found" — Koheleth has compared man with woman and has found that man is superior. Both Scripture and experience testify to the truth of this statement. In holiness, wisdom, music, inventions, man has shown a pre-eminence over woman. This male superiority is according to Yahweh's purpose from the foundation of the world, for Adam was first formed, then the woman (1 Cor. 11:7-9; Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Tim. 2:11-15). Male superiority was emphasised by the ordinances of the Mosaic Law — the priesthood was given to Aaron and his sons (Exod. 28:1-3). At the birth of a male, the mother was ritually unclean for seven days plus a further

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thirty-three days; but for a female child this period was doubled. Though Koheleth found man to be superior to woman, yet even among men, the supreme ideal of a truly worthy and upright man was very scarce. The ideal and perfect man is the Lord Jesus Christ, "the chief among ten thousand" (Song 5:10-16). The apostle Paul describes the excellent greatness of this one in his various epistles (Heb. 1:3-9; Phil. 2:9-11; Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 1:15-19).

VERSE 29

"God has made man upright" — Koheleth wonders how it is possible that only one man among a thousand

attains to wisdom; seeing that in the beginning he was made in the image and likeness of the Deity (Gen. 1:26). He acknowledges that Deity cannot be blamed for this tragic and deplorable state of affairs, for, in the beginning, He made man upright (Gen. 1:26). Yet man, in his wilfulness, stooped to sin: a foolish act, the consequences of which, have been perpetuated in all his posterity. Man's inherent crookedness has revealed itself in the many inventions and devices he is continually creating to give him greater scope for the indulgence and practise of sin. See notes Ecc. 1:15. Cp. Gen. 4:6; Ps. 51:5; Jer. 17:9; Matt. 15:18-19.

R. KRYGGER (Woodville).

Divine History

The world teems with histories of the rise and fall of empires and kingdoms, covering a period of about twenty-five hundred years, reaching from the king of Babylon down to the present time. In the book of Daniel there is written out in advance the whole outline of those same histories in a short book of twelve chapters, with all the symbols and explanations! These having been fulfilled in the most literal way down to this time, why may we not expect the literal fulfilment of what remains? Yes: the book of Daniel is a wonderful book. It must be infallibly inspired. — (EJT).

Truth Is Constant

"We are deeply grieved at the news that some members 'down under' think we possess the Holy Spirit now. This has been a vexed question here in the past, but we are glad that the late Brother John Carter and others have presented this matter in its correct perspective. Our consolation in times of difficulty is that others had the same trouble in the past, but the Truth remains constant. Nevertheless, the defection of brethren who have been respected in the past is a warning to each one to give time to the Word in order to understand the Truth in all its beauty. Shalom!"

— J.S. (Wales).

For Meditative Study :

The Book of Ecclesiastes

(Cont. from last volume)

CHAPTER 8

WISDOM IN RELATION TO THE KING'S COMMANDS

Koheleth now considers the value of wisdom when subject to a king and his commands. He shows that a wise man will be well equipped to serve a king, and to conduct himself acceptably in his presence. We notice that from this point on, Koheleth's observations are becoming more and more religious in content. As the hope of finding lasting satisfaction in human activity lessens, so he is turning more and more to God.

The chapter can be divided into three parts:

- (1) — Reverential respect for the king commanded — vv. 1-5.
- (2) — The certain judgment and condemnation of the wicked — vv. 6-14.
- (3) — Divine wisdom too deep to grasp — vv. 15-17.

Reverential Respect For The King Commanded — vv. 1-5.

VERSE 1:

"Who is as the wise man?" — Koheleth asks who is like the wise man? Who can be compared to him? Who can excel him? The wise man is incomparable, for he is able to handle every emergency, as well as the everyday problems of life, with skill and efficiency.

"A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine" — Wisdom illuminates a wise man's countenance, imparting unto it the appearance of grace. While speaking with the angel of Yahweh's presence and discussing with him the wisdom of the divine laws, Moses' face shone with reflected glory (Exod. 34:29, cp. also Acts 6:14-15). Every saint who dwells with Yahweh, and who studies continually the life and wisdom of Christ, will reflect his glory (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:1-2).

"The boldness of his face shall be changed" — Boldness suggests coarseness or hardness. As the truth in Christ Jesus takes hold of the natural man's mind, his hard, impudent, worldly look gradually disappears; his countenance is softened and becomes more Christlike (James 1:22-25). Note

the description of the worldly man's countenance described in Daniel 8:23 compared with that of Christ's (Song 5:15). The pulse and water requested by Daniel and his companions, represent the plain, yet wholesome, Word of God (cp. Dan. 1:10-20).

VERSE 2.

"Keep the King's commandment, and that in regard to the oath of God" — The Kings of Israel took office at the appointment of Yahweh. At their coronation they were expected to take the oath of God, and declare their loyalty and fidelity to the Deity. They were required to study the law daily, and to administer justice and judgment to the people (Deut. 17:12-19; 1 Chron. 11:2-3; 2 Chron. 9:8). The King's office, therefore, carried divine authority to which the people must submit (2 Sam. 5:1-3). Failure to obey the King's command brought swift punishment (Prov. 19:12; 20:2).

VERSE 3-4.

"Be not hasty to go out of his sight" — Do not rashly renounce your oath of service to the King, for this

is an act of rebellion which will be punished by death (Heb. 10:26-30; 1 John 2:18-19).

"Stand not in an evil thing" — Do not persist in sinful opposition to the will and commandments of the King (Ps. 68:21).

"He doeth whatsoever pleaseth him" — The King is all powerful; he has the power of life and death over his subjects, therefore, it is an act of supreme folly to question his commands, or to oppose him in any way (Dan. 4:32-35; Luke 19:27).

VERSE 5.

"Whosoever keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing" — The feeble subject who wisely desists from questioning the King's commands, and concentrates on doing his will, will evoke his royal favour. Consequently, no punishment as befalls the rebellious, will be his experience (Prov. 14:35). "You are my friends," said Israel's King, "if you do whatsoever I command you." See Romans 13:1-8.

"A wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment" — Or both time and way. Koheleth refers to a wise man's ability to know when and how to act. His wisdom enables him to develop a nice sense of timing, to do the right thing at the right time. The foolish virgins of Jesus' parable (Matt. 25) tried to do the right thing (v.10), but at the wrong time, and suffered rejection from the presence of the King. See notes Eccles. 3.

The Certain Judgment And Condemnation Of The Wicked — vv. 6-14.

VERSE 6.

"Therefore the misery of man is great upon him" — If man persists in wilfully ignoring Yahweh's appointed times and ways, preferring to go his own way, then he will suffer for it, and his sins and sorrows will be multiplied (Acts 17:26-34; Ezek. 18).

VERSE 7.

"For he knoweth not that which shall be" — Man's misery is greatly increased by frustration, the result of

his inability to foretell future events. He does not know what is coming on the earth, nor when it is coming. All this uncertainty bewilders and perplexes him, adding greatly to his grief (Eccles. 6:12). Future events, however, are not obscure nor hidden from the eyes of Yahweh's servants, who have no need for any to instruct them in the meaning of the times and the seasons (1 Thess. 5:1-5; Rev. 9:4).

VERSE 8.

"There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit" — Though man lacks the power to foretell the future, at least he can say with absolute certainty, that he will surely die (Gen. 3:19; Ecc. 9:5). Life, though full of frustration and vanity, is still a "sweet" experience, and therefore, man will seek with the help of science, doctors and medicine, to prolong his life, and postpone the dread day of death. Yet, for all this, his efforts are doomed to failure, for he has no power over the life-force to retain it. This belongs only to Yahweh, Who can kill or make alive, according to His supreme will and pleasure (Deut. 32:39-40; 1 Sam. 2:6-10).

"There is no discharge in that war" — The margin renders: "no casting of weapons." It is possible for a soldier, on active service, to obtain a furlough, thus enabling him to lay aside his weapons, and cease from conflict for a period of time (Deut. 20:1-8), but in man's continual warfare against death, there is no release, no hope of discharge, the battle is joined from the moment of birth and bitterly contested to the end (Ecc. 9:5; Ps. 49:7-13). Yet in Christ Jesus, we have one who has gained the victory over death, and is willing to share the fruits of his victory with all who obey him (Heb. 2:14-15; 1 Cor. 15:51-58).

VERSE 9.

"All this I have seen" — Koheleth claims that his field of enquiry is limitless; he has been writing concerning Kings and their subjects, of time and judgment, of life and death. He would have us know that the decisions he has arrived at were not formed or

influenced in any way by hearsay, but are the fruits of personal investigation: "All this I have seen."

VERSE 10.

"I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the Holy" — To be buried indicates that they were interred with honour, for not to be buried was considered a disgrace (Jer. 16:4-6). Koheleth is referring to the wicked Levitical priests, who spent their lives ministering in the Temple service, but who also abused their Holy office, ruling over others to their own hurt (v.19; 1 Sam 2:22-25; Mic. 3:9-12). Koheleth rightly expects that those evil priests should have been quickly exposed, shamed and rejected from the priesthood. He was amazed to observe that such was not the case. On death, they were carried from the Temple with great pomp and ceremony, while loud lamentations of sorrow and grief were made over them. They were finally buried to the accompaniment of eloquent funeral orations praising and extolling them (Zeph. 3:1-4; Ezek. 22:25-30).

"They were forgotten in the city" — Though many Israelites had suffered grievously at the hands of these corrupt priests, Koheleth was astonished to note that their wicked deeds, which should have been remembered, were, in fact, quickly forgotten, even in the very city where they were perpetrated.

VERSE 11.

"Sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily" — It puzzled Koheleth exceedingly that the iniquitous priests should fail to receive immediate punishment in keeping with the character of their sins. He was to learn that Yahweh sometimes delays retribution for reasons of His own (Rom. 2:3-6; 2 Pet. 3:3-10).

"Therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" — Because justice is slow in arriving, the transgressor's heart becomes bolder. He imagines that he has got away with it, and is encouraged to sin again and again. The words "fully set" emphasise the determination of the wicked to continue in their life of sin: nothing

can turn them from their purpose (Isa. 26:10; Ps. 10:1-11; Ps. 73). Though the wrongdoer says "Yahweh does not see," or if He does, He will not require it, Koheleth is sure that retribution will come in Yahweh's own time (Ecc. 3:17; Ps. 10:12-18).

VERSE 12

"It will be well with them that fear Yahweh" — Koheleth was grieved in heart to perceive that transgressors were not immediately punished, neither were they prematurely cut off from the living. Some, he saw, even lived to a ripe old age, thus "appearing" to receive the blessings due to the righteous. Nevertheless, mortal life at best is transitory and vain; death comes quickly, and the wicked are soon swept into eternal oblivion in Sheol. On the other hand, the righteous who hold Yahweh in reverential awe, though oft-times poor and needy, have hope in their death. The sinner perishes everlastingly in Sheol; in contrast, the righteous rise again to an unending life of everlasting joy in the Kingdom of God (Ps. 37:10-11; Prov. 14:32; Isa. 65:17-25).

VERSE 13

"But it shall not be well with the wicked" — Transgression brings in its train all manner of mental wounds, which can result in physical diseases (Prov. 14:30; 13:21; 4:22).

"Neither shall he prolong his days which are a shadow" — The evil, persistent transgressor, who prolongs his days (v.12) is the exception rather than the rule. The wicked man's days are few and unsubstantial as a fleeting shadow, because he yields not due reverence to Yahweh, nor makes His righteous precepts the guide of his life (Ps. 90:1-10; 37:9-10).

VERSE 14

"There be just men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked" — One of the inconsistencies in life that was a source of continual irritation to Koheleth, was the fact that the righteous, who ought to be blessed and receive many advantages above the wicked, receive only suffering, pain

and sorrow, as their portion in life. On the other hand, the sinners who ought to be punished and experience grief and woe, sometimes enjoy long life and blessings, things due to the righteous (Job 21:7-14). The righteous do suffer (Isa. 53), for this is part of the needful discipline that shapes their characters, in preparation for sharing in Yahweh's eternal purpose with the earth (Heb. 12:1-11; 2:9-18; 2 Cor. 12:7-10). If the sinner appears to escape suffering, it is because Yahweh has no purpose with him; his sorrows and joys are not divinely controlled, but are subject to the whims and the vagaries of time and chance.

Divine Wisdom Too Deep To Grasp— vv.15-17

VERSE 15

"Then I commended mirth" — In the face of the seeming cruel inconsistencies and apparent contradictions of life, wherein the rewards of righteousness and the punishment due to sinners appear to be reversed, Koheleth turned once again to the thoughts expressed in Ch. 3:22; 5:18. The only hope of obtaining some measure of happiness in this "topsy-turvy" world, is to seek for it in the enjoyment of the simple things of life.

VERSE 16

"When I applied mine heart to know wisdom" — In this context, "to know" means to experience. Koheleth assures us that in all his examinations of life's activities, his role was not that of a disinterested spectator, but one who actually participated in them. He spoke from the standpoint of actual experience.

"For also there is that neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes" — It was Koheleth's habit to labour long into the night, depriving himself of sleep in his determined efforts to grasp the meaning of the perplexing questions of life that continued to puzzle him. Yet it was all in vain.

VERSE 17

"Man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun" — Though he laboured long, striving mightily to gain a full understanding of all Yahweh's appointments for man, Koheleth admitted defeat. An erudite man of great understanding might think he knows "all the answers." In actual fact, he is far from ultimate wisdom, for Yahweh's ways are far too deep and unfathomable for any finite mortal mind to grasp (Job 5:9-14; 11:6-9; Ps. 139:6; Rom. 11:33-34).

—R. KRYGGER
(Woodville, SA).

DETERMINATION IS REQUIRED

"Our principle is that difficulties which cannot be avoided must be met and overcome". — (J.T.).

THE WATCHMEN WARN!

"The signs of the times tell us that we are rapidly nearing the time of the dead when God shall give reward to His servants the prophets; when all who fear His name, small and great, shall awake together to the joyful celebration of His praise, and the execution of His judgments on the nations — the ear that can hearken hears the voice ringing through the world, "Behold I come as a thief." — (R.R.).

For Meditative Study :

The Book of Ecclesiastes

(Continued from p.34)

CHAPTER 9

THE INSCRUTABILITY OF HUMAN WAYS

Koheleth continued to deeply consider some of the enigmas of life, searching for answers to the problems that puzzled him. The chapter can be divided up as follows:

- (1) — *The similarity of events in the lives of the righteous and the wicked* — vv.1-2.
- (2) — *A comparison between the dead and the living* — vv.3-6.
- (3) — *Successful living in the shadow of death* — vv.7-10.
- (4) — *The uncertainty of life; a warning* — vv.11-12.
- (5) — *A parable of wisdom* — vv.13-18.

The Similarity Of Events In The Lives Of Righteous And Wicked — vv.1-2.

VERSE 1

“The righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of Yahweh” — In these words, Koheleth declared Yahweh's uncontested control over human activity. Though he could not understand the intricacies of Yahweh's dealings with the human race as a whole (Ecc. 8:17), he was certain of this one fact: that the righteous, who know Yahweh's will and do it, are in His power. It is He Who worketh them both to will and to do His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13. Cf. Prov. 3:6).

“No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them” — The apparent lack of discrimination in the experiences of good and evil in the lives of both the righteous and the wicked, prevent men determining, with any degree of certainty, whether or not he is the recipient of Yahweh's love or anger. Koheleth was amazed to observe that suffering, tribulation and misfortune, afflict both the righteous and the wicked (Heb. 2:8-10; 1 Thess. 3:4; 2 Tim. 3:12). He also saw that while the righteous know suffering and pain, the wicked who forget Yahweh, are sometimes blessed with long life

and apparent happiness (Ps. 73). Therefore, the conflicting experiences of life are no indication of whether Yahweh is pleased or angry with men.

VERSE 2.

“All things come alike to all” — Koheleth still pursues the theme of v.1, namely, the seeming lack of discrimination in the lives of the wicked and the righteous. He saw that life is a miniature of good and bad, regardless of moral or religious distinctions. Finally, however, one event was shared by all:

- by the righteous, who obey Yahweh;
- by the wicked, who obey Him not;
- by the clean (ceremonially), and the unclean;
- by him who sacrificed, and him who did not;
- by him who sweareth (observes the oath of Yahweh — Isa. 65:16; Ps. 63:11);
- by him who sweareth not.

In short, whether man observed Yahweh's ethical and religious requirements, or whether he ignored them, the final outcome was the same: one

event happened to them all, "they go to the dead" (Ps. 144:4; 1 Cor. 15:22).

A Comparison Between The Dead And The Living — vv. 3-6.

VERSE 3.

"This is an evil among all things"— Literally, above all things; the greatest evil of all.

"The heart of the sons of men is full of evil" — Or, rather, full of unfulfilled desire, unsatisfied longing. Man's sorrow is greatly increased by the frustration and discontent he experiences, resulting from his intense yearning for unobtainable goals. See notes Ecc. 6:9.

"Madness is in their hearts" — Madness is *holcloth* in Hebrew, from the root *hahal*, implying a state when one is "blind to true issues." Men are blind to the most vital issues of life. While they live, they seek after unobtainable goals, pursuing vain ambitions, but all their efforts end in death (Matt. 23:16-22; Rom. 11:25; 2 Pet. 1:5-9; 2 Cor. 3:15).

"There is one event happeneth to all" — Koheleth saw no discrimination here; death is the inevitable and common end of all flesh, whether good or evil, just or unjust.

On the basis of this, Koheleth sets forth a scale of values, with contrasts to reveal the advantages of life over death (vv. 4-5).

VERSE 4.

"A living dog is better than a dead lion" — The living has this advantage

over the dead: he can hope, enjoy life, know happiness. This the dead cannot do; so that even a dog (a scavenger, a contemptible cur — 1 Sam. 24:12) is better off than a dead regal lion, the symbol of kingly power (Rev. 5:5; Prov. 30:30). Koheleth saw that death robs the regal lion of his power and majesty, and reduces him to a level below that of the living dog — to a state of nothingness.

VERSE 5.

"The living know that they shall die" — The living have that distinct advantage over the dead — they know, they have a conscious recognition of the reality and inevitability of death. This the dead have not, for, declared Koheleth, the "dead know not anything." Their power to think, to reason, to discern, is perished forever (Ps. 49; Ps. 6:5; Isa. 38:18).

"Neither have they any more a reward" — The only reward the dead can possibly have, is to be remembered by the living who come after; but even this is denied them, for the memory of them is forgotten (Ps. 31:12; 41:5; 88:10; 115:17). Koheleth has no place for the erroneous theory of man's inherent immortality.

VERSE 6.

"Their love and their hatred is now perished" — The dead have no conscious existence whatever. All the strong passions of the flesh: love, hatred, envy, that together make up man's personality, are silenced in the stillness of the grave.

(To be continued).

Periodicals, etc. Received: (Cont. from p.68).

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN, THE DAWN, THE REMNANT — Periodicals issued from England, representing three different viewpoints. *The Remnant* is extremely negative, each issue reporting withdrawals or disfellowships; yet it speaks of love, and advocates it among brethren. It has an article: Beware Of Crotchets; and certainly its readers should heed this in regard to its extremes of fellowship.

For Meditative Study :

The Book of Ecclesiastes

(Continued from p. 70)

CHAPTER 9

THE INSCRUTABILITY OF HUMAN WAYS

Successful Living In The Shadow Of Death — vv. 7-10

VERSE 7.

“Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy” — Koheleth has recorded his convictions on the state of the dead who perish and pass into eternal oblivion in the grave. This is a depressing fact, but he quickly provides an antidote. Though death is the destiny of all flesh, yet man should not be despondent, brooding over what he cannot change; rather he should exact what joy he can from life in the blessings received: bread, wine, joy, ointment, garments, wife. God has given these things to man that he might have some measure of happiness amidst life's sorrows and vexations (Ecc. 2:24). Though he is referring to the natural life of man outside of Yahweh's purpose of redemption, Koheleth also seems to have in mind the spiritual significance of these things as symbols, that we might have hope of future, lasting joy, in Yahweh's eternal kingdom. Thus, in the face of certain death, he urges us to seek Yahweh while we can, and to avail ourselves of the way of reconciliation, while we are able.

“For Yahweh now accepteth thy works” — Enjoy life's simple pleasures, for so Yahweh hath ordained it.

VERSE 8.

“Let thy garments be white” — White is the symbol of moral purity. Thus Koheleth advises us to keep the commandments of Yahweh, avoiding

defiling influence of sin (Rev. 3:4-5; 19:8).

“Let thy head lack no ointment” — Ointment is the symbol of joy and of gladness (Ps. 45:8, 133; Isa. 61:3; Prov. 27:9). This will be given to those who obey Koheleth's admonition of v.8.

VERSE 9.

“Live joyfully with thy wife” — Choose a virtuous woman, and rejoice in the good things Yahweh has provided (Prov. 31:10-31). This union of male and female is ordained by Yahweh, and is the symbol of God's eternal purpose with the earth and man upon it. He desires that man should become one with Him (Gen. 2:20-25; Eph. 5:25-35; John 17:21-23; 2 Pet. 1:4).

VERSE 10.

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might” — Koheleth advises that man should choose the right work, and having made the choice, enter into it with zeal and enthusiasm, for life is transitory, and opportunity to accomplish anything worthwhile soon passes (Eph. 5:16; Heb. 4:1-11).

“For there is no work in Sheol” — The Lord was keenly aware of life's brevity, and with this in mind, sought earnestly to fulfil his divinely appointed task of laying the foundation of individual salvation (John 4:24; 5:36; 9:4; 17:4; Rom. 12:11).

The Uncertainty Of Life: A Warning
— vv. 11-12.

VERSE 11.

"The race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong" — "Swift," "strong", and "skill" are words which describe the wise and endowed of the human race. Koheleth declares that there is no exact retribution in life. Fitting recompense and rewards are not always received by those who truly merit them; for both wise and foolish are subject to the vagaries of time and chance.

VERSE 12.

"For man also, knoweth not his time" — Man does not know when calamity, misfortune and death may overtake him. No one can foretell his future. This is illustrated by the sudden unexpected end of fish and birds. Man's lot is no different, for the net of trouble and death is spread over all humanity (James 4:13-14; Ps. 144:4).

A Parable Of Wisdom — vv. 13-18.

VERSE 13.

"This wisdom . . . seemed great unto me" — The wisdom drawn out of the parable of vv. 14-16, probably drawn out of an actual experience in life. Investigating the circumstances of the king who besieged the city, and the "poor, wise man" who delivered it by his wisdom, Koheleth found that he could discover all the facts but one: the name of the poor wise deliverer. Nobody had been interested enough to remember it. Koheleth was amazed that wisdom such as was shown by the poor wise man should go unrewarded and unappreciated though

others had greatly benefited from it. Man will frequently honour and praise the foolish rich whilst frequently despising the poor (James 2:1-8). Yahweh has chosen "the poor, rich in faith" (truly wise), to glorify His great and glorious Name (1 Cor. 1:27-31; James 2:5; Matt. 5:3).

VERSE 17.

"The words of the wise are heard in quiet" — Men pay more attention to words of truth quietly spoken, than to the loud braying of a ruler among fools. The old adage has much to commend it: "An empty drum makes a loud noise." It was Jesus' habit to draw his disciples away from noise and bustle that he might quietly speak to them of Yahweh's glory and kingdom (Matt. 5:1; cp. 1 Kings 19:11-13; Prov. 28:11).

VERSE 18.

"Wisdom is better than weapons of war" — This is amply illustrated by the experiences of the poor wise man (vv. 11-15). Weapons of war are fashioned to destroy life and property; whereas wisdom turns aside anger, brings life and peace (Prov. 3:13-18; 2 Kings 19; James 3:17-18). The defences and weapons of faith achieve more than the carnal weapons of flesh (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:11-17).

"One sinner destroyeth much good" — The word "sinner" signifies one who "misses the mark," who goes astray. The truth of this verse is illustrated by the incident of Achan, whose folly brought distress and suffering upon the whole nation (Joshua 7. See Prov. 29:8).

— R. KRYGGER (Woodville).

For Meditative Study :

The Book of Ecclesiastes

(Continued from p.103)

CHAPTER 10

THE EXCELLENCY OF WISDOM

Koheleth now contrasts wisdom with folly, and in so doing, illustrates the superiority of the former over the latter, particularly by a consideration of the correct relationship between the king and his subjects.

The chapter can be divided into four headings:

- (1) — *The foolish suffer through lack of discretion — vv. 1-11;*
- (2) — *The foolish are known through carelessness of speech — vv. 12-14;*
- (3) — *The foolish fall through slothfulness — vv. 15-18;*
- (4) — *The foolish perish through slander — vv. 19-20*

The Foolish Suffer Through Lack Of Discretion — vv. 1-11.

VERSE 1 :

“Dead flies cause ointment to stink”

— The Hebrew is, “flies of death” (see mg.). Flies are the scourge of eastern countries, for they are carriers of all manner of disease. When they fall into costly ointment and die, their putrefying bodies emit an evil odour that renders the ointment useless. Koheleth likened a little foolishness to the fly in the ointment; a minor act of folly can destroy a good and wise man’s reputation, so that the resultant scandal will render him “useless” for further public work. As the evil-smelling ointment indicates corruption which, like leaven, will work through the mass, so one act of folly or indiscretion, if not checked by application of the spirit word, will ultimately lead to the total corruption and destruction of both the man and the ecclesia. See 1 Cor. 15:33-34; Matt. 16:6; Gal. 5:1-9. Consider the protracted and terrible effect of David’s act of folly (2 Sam. 11, 12).

VERSE 2 :

“A wise man’s heart is at his right hand” — “Heart” indicates intelligence, mind, perception. The words “in his

right hand” indicate that a wise man’s mind, discerning the virtue of morally good things, is inclined towards doing that which is right. This is another victory of wisdom over folly. For the symbolic use of the right hand, see Ps. 48:10; 20:6; 21:8; Gen. 35:18 (mg.); Exod. 15:6.

“A fool’s heart is in his left hand” — As the wise man’s appreciation of good impels him along the right road, so the fool’s mind is to the left, directing him in the opposite direction.

VERSE 3 :

“A fool walketh by the way” — That is, when a fool walks in a public place.”

“His wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool” — His words and behaviour, lacking intelligent direction, proclaim him to be a fool. The fool hates knowledge (Prov. 1:22), and will never accept correction, even when in the wrong (Prov. 18:1-2). In fact, he believes that every-one but himself, is the fool.

VERSE 4 :

“If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee” — If the anger of the king is directed against you.

“Leave not thy place, for yielding

pacifieth great offences" — Do not leave his service, but accept his rebuke in meekness. This has the effect of pacifying him. See Prov. 14:29; 15:1; Heb. 12:5-17; Prov. 19:11. See notes, Ecc. 8:3.

VERSE 5 :

"An evil which proceedeth from the ruler" — Koheleth describes it as being seen "under the sun," so that his words have relationship to an earthly king. The evil refers to misgovernment and abuse of power by those in high places. Such rulers show an appalling lack of judgment of human character, by elevating wrong men to office. See Prov. 28:12.

VERSE 6 :

"Folly set in great dignity" — The folly is manifested by foolish men, lacking moral perception and self-discipline, who, as the margin shows, are elevated to political eminence, and granted power, authority and honour. Such things are due only to the wise (Est. 3:1-2); but Koheleth saw them given unto fools, whilst the rich (the Hebrew suggests a noble man of ancestral wealth and good character), who normally would be the friend and associate of kings and princes, and the antithesis of the fool, is ignored — and worse — reduced in rank. Thus Koheleth saw men of wisdom, born to rule, holding lowly office, whilst those incapable of effectively ruling were elevated (Prov. 19:10). Jesus was born to be king, yet was reduced to the meanest level, whilst the foolish, blind Pharisees exalted themselves to sit in "Moses' seat" (Matt. 23:1-3).

VERSE 7 :

"I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants" — Koheleth was grieved to perceive such reversal of the proper order. See Prov. 30:21-22.

VERSE 8 :

"He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it" — In vv. 8-11, Koheleth deals with the principle of cause and effect. The first example describes a man who sets out to ensnare another, only to end up by trapping himself. In Proverbs

26:24-28, the maxim is put another way. It teaches that once the stone of malice, hatred and slander is set in motion with the object of destroying another, it generally becomes uncontrollable, and often turns to roll back upon the author of it, destroying him instead. See Ps. 7:15-16; 35:7-8; 57:6; Prov. 5:22. Absalom, Balaam, Judas, and others provide examples of this. Christ warned the leaders of his day that the very stone which they rejected would return upon them crushing them to powder (Matt. 21:42-46).

"Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him" — In the Middle East, houses and fields are often fenced with stone, which become favourite hiding places for snakes. A person intending to rob a house, must first break through the fence. This could result in disturbing the serpent, which may bite the man with fatal results (see Amos 5:19). Thus Koheleth warns, that the man who sets out to harm another, often ends up by being injured himself.

VERSE 9 :

"Whosoever removeth stones, or cleaveth wood, shall be hurt" — Both occupations are hazardous, requiring need for wisdom and care (cp. Deut. 19:5-6).

VERSE 10 :

"If the iron is blunt he must put to more strength" — If a man fails to exercise a little wisdom and foresight by first sharpening his axe before setting out to cut wood, he must apply more force and drudgery to accomplish that which otherwise would have taken but little effort. The wise man is aware of this, and prepares adequately before attempting any work. He thinks before he acts, for he knows that wisdom is profitable to direct.

VERSE 11 :

"Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment" — The Hebrew for enchantment is *lachash*, and signifies to whisper or hiss. A vicious, deadly snake will not advertise its presence, neither will it warn its victim by hissing that it is about to strike. When

it bites, the poison is pumped through the hollow fangs situated in its mouth, into the bloodstream of its victim, causing agonising death. Koheleth reasoned that "a babbler" (Master of the tongue — mg.) is no better." The flatterer or slanderer, the master of the tongue, destroys reputations, and in

doing so, is as dangerous as a serpent (Ps. 58:1-5; 140:1-3). The slanderous whispering of the enemies of David and Christ must have sounded like the hissing of a snake (Prov. 18:8; Ps. 41:5-7; Matt. 23:33).

(To be continued).

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A Current Ecclesial Sickness

LOGOMACHY

"Fighting about words" (*Logomachy*) is roundly condemned by Paul in his epistle to Timothy (1 Tim. 6:3-5):

"If any man teacheth a different doctrine and consenteth not to sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is puffed up, knowing nothing, but doting about questionings and disputes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, wranglings of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the Truth, supposing that godliness is a way of gain" (R.V.).

In the abstract, one would be disposed to say that such a state of mind would be impossible among professed followers of Christ. But alas! concrete experience rudely disposes of amiable abstractions. Logomachy is rampant, and the sad fruits thereof above enumerated manifest. Concerning "the blood of Christ" and the divine principle, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission," we draw attention . . . to the pamphlet *The Blood Of Christ* by R. Roberts. Let us all

try to express ourselves according to "sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness." Let us not even attempt to discuss hypothetical questions. This is not our province. We heard the other day of an interpretation of 1 Tim. 3:16, which seemed to illustrate the natural obliquity of the flesh. Controversy was justified because Paul said: "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness," as though he had said, "You must debate on this great mystery or you will never understand it." Whereas his advice in the passage above quoted from the same epistle is the very opposite of this.

As a matter of fact, "controversy" is not ever mentioned in the passage (1 Tim. 3:16), which might be rendered: "Confessedly (or, as is freely admitted) great is the mystery" etc. The understanding of the great divine mystery is not helped by human "wranglings." Far otherwise!

For Meditative Study :

The Book of Ecclesiastes

(Continued from p.14)

CHAPTER 10

THE EXCELLENCY OF WISDOM

The Foolish Are Known Through Careless Of Speech — vv.12-14.

VERSE 12:

“The words of the wise man’s mouth are gracious” — His speech, lacking slander or flattery, and being seasoned with salt, obtains for him favour from both God and man (Prov. 22:11; 10:11; 15:23), but the lips (words) of a fool swallow him up; i.e. the slander of the fool, being obnoxious to Yahweh, brings about his ultimate ruin (Prov. 18:6-7; Matt. 12:36).

VERSE 13:

“The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness; and the end of his talk is mischievous madness” — We note here a progression of folly. The fool’s speech begins as mere foolish talk, but gradually deteriorates, until finally, it ends as mischievous madness.

VERSE 14:

“A fool also is full of words” — The margin renders this as “multiplied words.” Koheleth is saying that a fool advertises himself by his garrulous talk (Prov. 15:2). His speech reveals his utter lack of wisdom, for he talks ignorantly and at length, of things that he believes will occur in the future, and if a man of understanding attempts to set him right, he will abuse him. The garrulous fool cannot tell what shall be after him; and who can tell him? The answer is, Nobody. The fool knows all (Prov. 1:22).

The Foolish Fall Through Slothfulness — vv. 15-18.

VERSE 15:

“The labour of the foolish wearieth everyone; he knoweth not how to go to the city” — The road to Jerusalem in the days of Solomon was clearly defined, and easy to follow. But the fool, lacking commonsense, wore himself out looking for it in every place but the obvious one. Likewise, the straight and narrow way to life is clearly defined by the Gospel of the Kingdom, yet few there be that find it (Matt. 13:14; 22:16). Many wear themselves out following foolishly devised fables, refusing to heed the clear and precise directions given by Him Who declared Himself to be the Way, the Truth and the Life; Who said: “No man can come to the Father, except by Me” (John 14:6; Acts 16:17; Gal. 1:6-7). The multitude prefers to walk in the broad way that seemeth right because it panders to human pride, and makes no demands of self-sacrifice or for seeking the righteousness of God; therefore it inevitably leads to death. In the millennial age, the path to the eternal city of the great king will be known by all nations as the *Way of Holiness*. No fools nor unclean shall pass over it, but the redeemed shall walk therein (Isa. 35:8-10).

VERSE 16:

“Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child” — The Hebrew *nahar* refers not to youthfulness, but to mental and moral immaturity. The people

suffer, and the city faces ruin, when the king, or the leaders, lack wisdom, and manifest the immaturity and instability of a child. Part of the punishment Israel suffered was to be forced to submit to "children" reigning over them (Isa. 3:1-5; 11-12). This will be completely reversed when the Lord Jesus, the everlasting Father, returns to reign upon the throne of Yahweh, over the house of Jacob in righteousness, truth and peace (Jer. 33:6; 32:39-42; Isa. 1:26; 9:6-7; Ezek. 34:26; 37:22-24; Psalm 72).

"And thy princes eat in the morning"—At such a time, the leaders of a nation should be found assembled around the council tables, engaging their minds with the serious matters of national importance. To be gathered around banquet tables instead, indulging in feasting and drunkenness, is a sign of irresponsible decadence (Isa. 5:11-13; Luke 12:45-46; 2 Pet. 2:10-13).

VERSE 17:

"Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season for strength and not for drunkenness" — The whole country benefits and prospers when its rulers are not drunken profligates, but men of noble birth, self-disciplined, wise in the laws of Yahweh, and manifest divine virtues. Men such as these eat and drink at the proper time, for strength, and not for drunkenness (Prov. 31:1-9). This description of wise and disciplined rulers, describes those who will be the earth's future kings (Rev. 5:9-10). At the properly appointed time, they assemble at the Lord's table, to eat the bread and drink the wine of the everlasting covenant, for spiritual strength (Luke 12:42; 1 Cor. 11:20-34). Under their wise guidance the earth shall be filled with the glory of Yahweh, and peace as long as the moon endureth (Ps. 72:17-19).

VERSE 18:

"By much slothfulness the building decayeth" — Through lack of maintenance the house is ruined. This result can be linked with the neglect of

the drunken rules of v.16, whose want of wise government permitted the nation to collapse and waste away (Prov. 18:9). "House" is often used as a symbol for a nation (Ezek. 36:32), a person (2 Cor. 5:1-4), a person's character (Luke 11:24-26), the ecclesia (Heb. 3:1-6). All need energetic, wise maintenance and strengthening by continued application of the spirit-word, to counteract the inevitable decay and collapse that follows slothful indolence (Eccl. 9:10; Luke 6:46-49; 1 Cor. 3:9-17; Eph. 2:19-22).

The Foolish Perish Through Slander— vv. 19-20.

VERSE 19:

"A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry; but money answereth all things" — Feasting, laughter and wine are things which delight the hearts of dissipated rulers (v.16), who do not hesitate to use stolen public funds for that purpose. The man outside God's purpose, the average man "under the sun," finds that money provides for his needs. See notes Ecc. 7:12.

VERSE 20:

"Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber; for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter" — Speak not lightly of an unworthy monarch, or a rich man, for both exercise great power. Best to keep strict control over one's thoughts, lest in an unguarded moment, a chance remark may convey something detrimental to the character of the king, which may be retold to him. We speak of "even the walls having ears," and when we hear a secret, and wish to keep silent about the one who has disclosed it, we sometimes say, "a little bird told me." This is similar to these words of Koheleth. We are reminded that "the mouths of fools callethe for strokes," and therefore are urged to take care (see Exod. 22:28; Matt. 12:34-37).

— R. KRYGGER,
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The Book of Ecclesiastes

(Continued from p.171)

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE VIRTUES OF GENEROSITY, FAITH AND DISCRETION

Koheleth is drawing his essay to a close. In his past observations of human activity, he expressed distress as he contemplated the oppressions endured by the poor, and the fact that they had no helper.

His final advice is:

1. Be generously disposed towards the poor;
2. Be sure that faith in Yahweh is in every act of life;
3. Seek to serve Yahweh from the time of youth.

The chapter can be broken up into three main exhortations:

1. Generosity in things temporal and spiritual should be practised — vv.1-4.
2. Faith in Yahweh should be practised — vv.5-6.
3. Discretion in youthful activities should be observed — vv.7-10.

1. Generosity In Things Temporal And Spiritual Should Be Practised — vv.1-4

VERSE 1 :

“Cast thy bread upon the waters” — Koheleth uses “bread” as a figure for material substance: money, possessions, anything that can be used to relieve the poor and needy, who are symbolised by “waters,” indicating that their number is many.

Generosity, with the things that we acknowledge come from Yahweh, rejoices the Father’s heart, because it is a reflection in His children, of His own loving, compassionate character (2 Cor. 9:7-15; Rom. 5:15-21). Exhortations to generosity feature prominently in the writings of James, John and Paul (James 2:14-16; Rom. 12:13, 20; Gal. 6:9-10; Acts 20:35; Eph. 4:28; 1 John 3:17-18; see also Prov. 31:20).

Bread is also used to symbolise Jesus and his teaching. He is that “bread” which came down from heaven, the antitypical manna, upon which we feed to gain strength and wisdom to help us in our pilgrimage through the wilderness of life, to the

Kingdom of God (John 6:31-35). See also Isaiah 55:1-3, 10-11. Yahweh’s richest blessings rest upon those who sow the good seed, or cast the bread of life towards all people (Isa 32:20).

“Ye shall find it after many days” — The Word is like a cargo ship sent out to trade among people, and returning to port after many days with much increase and profit. The rewards for generosity in material things or in preaching are granted by Yahweh after many days (Prov. 19:17; Ps. 37:26; 41:1-3; Matt. 5:34-46).

VERSE 2 :

“Give a portion to seven, also to eight” — The words “seven and eight” in Hebrew idiom represent an indefinite number. See this method of speaking illustrated in Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13. Thus Koheleth exhorts his readers to cultivate the commendable virtue of boundless generosity (1 Tim. 6:17-19). For the Father Himself giveth generously of His good gifts of sunshine, rain and harvests to all (Matt 5:45). Yahweh withholds no good thing from the children of men, and has given even the priceless gift

of His dear son to save mankind (John 3:16; Rom. 5:15-21). Yahweh's rewards, which return to Him after many days, are His glorified sons and daughters, precious jewels, all holy and without sin, all living only to praise and glorify His Name forevermore (Mal. 3:17).

VERSE 3 :

"If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth" — This is an immutable law of nature, and "as in the natural, so in the spiritual." A man full of God's love, will pour out his blessings of doctrine and generosity continually upon the poor and needy (Deut. 32:2; Ps. 72:6; Heb. 6:7-8).

"If the tree fall towards the south or towards the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be" — A falling tree also obeys the immutable law of gravity. Once down, it is powerless to move. So man dies, he is "cut down" by the advent of death, and in what spiritual and moral condition he was in at that time, so he remains. It is too late to change (Ps. 146:4; Ecc. 3:18-20; 9:4-6).

VERSE 4 :

"He that observeth the wind shall not sow, and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap" — Koheleth studied the actions of two farmers and noticed that the first one intended to sow his seed, but was turned from his purpose when he observed that a high wind was blowing. He reasoned that the wind could scatter the seed and prevent a harvest from maturing. The other one observed that the clouds overhead were dark and threatening, and held promise of rain which may wash away his seed, and likewise did not sow. Having not sown, neither of the men could hope to reap any harvest. We notice that both had two things in common: 1. — They waited for ideal conditions to exist before sowing the seed; 2. — They both lacked a virile faith.

The lesson for us, resulting from Koheleth's observations of the two farmers' activities is: Do not wait for ideal conditions to exist before engag-

ing in any avenue of Yahweh's service; for they rarely appear. Therefore, preach the word, scattering the good seed of the Kingdom of God ceaselessly, untiringly, "in season and out of season," sowing in faith, confident that despite adverse conditions, Yahweh is able to grant the increase and bring harvests to perfection (1 Cor. 3:6-14; John 4:15-38).

2. Faith In Yahweh Should Be Practised — vv.5-6.

VERSE 5 :

"As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child" — No man understands just how the child's skeleton is formed in its mother's womb, or how the flesh is covered upon its bony frame, or the eyes and ears are fashioned, or the heart and veins are made. Yet all find their appointed place, and function so perfectly in the newly-formed foetus. Koheleth thus reminds us that every birth is a marvellous, fantastic, incredible miracle, performed by Yahweh, exhibiting the wonder of His wisdom, seen also in the starry vaults of heaven, and the wonders of the earth beneath. Creation bears eloquent testimony to the fact that there is nothing too hard for Yahweh, nothing beyond His power to accomplish. Men should, therefore, put their complete trust and confidence in Him, and not worry needlessly, when adverse conditions appear to frustrate their work. Let them preach, sow the seed at all times, and leave the increase to God (Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17; Matt. 19:26).

VERSE 6 :

"In the morning sow thy seed, in the evening withhold not thy hand" — Koheleth advises youth to enter into Yahweh's service early, in the morning of their life, and continue in it unto old age. Sow in the morning, sow in the evening; in other words, persevere in Yahweh's works at all times (Phile. 9).

— R. KRYGGER.

For Meditative Study :

The Book of Ecclesiastes

CHAPTER ELEVEN

3. Discretion In Youthful Activities Should Be Observed — vv.7-10.

VERSE 7 :

“Truly the light is sweet” — Thus the preacher recognises the joy of mere living. Even though life is a mixture of good and evil, involving setbacks, trials and disappointments that bring bitterness and pain, it is a most precious and desirable gift. Light is a symbol of life, truth, righteousness. All bring the taste of sweetness to those who possess them (Job 33:30; Ps. 36:8-9; 56:13; John 1:4-9; James 1:17; Ps. 19:7-10).

VERSE 8 :

“Let him remember the days of darkness for they shall be many” — As light is a symbol of life, so darkness is a figure of death (Prov. 20:20; Ps. 88:12; 143:3). Though life is sweet, and man should use every opportunity to enjoy it, he should also reflect upon its brevity. Let him consider the multitudes who, after a brief life, die, and go into eternal extinction in the darkness of sheol, never again to see the light (Isa. 26:14; Jer. 51:39; Ps. 49:19); and pondering this, let him turn to God.

VERSE 9 :

“Rejoice O young man in your youth” — Death is a divine judgment upon mankind: inevitable, inescapable (Ecc. 9:2-6). Therefore youth should

make the most of life, enjoying it while they can, for it soon passes, and is followed by a decline in mental and physical powers, and in the capacity to enjoy life to the full. Nevertheless, though Koheleth advises youth to have a good time, he wisely warns against indulgence in immorality, excesses, wickedness and sin. Yahweh has put a line of demarcation between acceptable pleasure for which youth can offer thanksgiving and praise, and activities that evoke God's wrath. Therefore, O youth, learn to discriminate; bear in mind that, at the end of thy days, Yahweh will be waiting to call you to account. Death and judgment are both inevitable experiences for the accountable. This knowledge should govern youth's conduct at all times (Ecc. 3:17; Rom. 14:10-12; 2:16).

VERSE 10 :

“Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart” — Life is to be lived; joy and gladness are great experiences to be gained, but do not sour youth with unnecessary worries; and do not make a habit of fretting about all life's vicissitudes, trials, setbacks, for they are inconsistent with the exuberant, effervescent joy that should accompany youth. Note that youth, with its healthy body, clear vision, good hearing, virile strength and greatest endurance, is the nearest we can get to the angelic nature at present (Isa. 40:28-31; Ps. 110:3).

The Lord pities the impotencies of his lovers and friends in this age of downtreading, and will judge their performances by the rule expressed in the apostolic words: “It is reckoned to what a man hath and not according to what he hath not.”

— R.R.

a distance of some sixty miles. It is a very hilly terrain, and very beautiful also as a vista of sea and mountain presents itself to view. But as we moved along, we thought of the lonely Apostle, tired, depressed, and isolated.

making his way from Athens to Corinth to await the arrival of Timothy and Silas, and to establish in that wicked city a lightstand of the truth.

— HPM.

For Meditative Study :

The Book of Ecclesiastes

WARNING TO YOUTH, FINAL SUMMARY AND ADVICE

Ever mindful of the brevity and uncertainty of life, and knowing by experience that there is no lasting joy or supreme good to be found apart from God, Koheleth strongly advocates that youth is the time best suited to commence making Yahweh the object of living.

To remember Yahweh, and to bear the yoke of service in youth, is most wise and beneficial counsel. In advancing years, mental and physical powers decline, so that full use of them should be made before that state sets in.

Our final chapter, therefore, begins with youth and ends with death in old age, thus completing the cycle.

By the use of appropriate metaphors, Koheleth illustrates the decrepitude and physical disabilities that accompany old age.

1. By the figure of a decaying house, the various parts can be identified with parts of the human body.

2. The metaphor of a winter's storm, illustrating an aged person's frailty and weakness in the face of approaching death.

3. The coming of night, with its total darkness, portraying the finality of death.

4. The deep sorrow and gloom of a household in which the master has passed away.

These metaphors express vital lessons depicting the decline and final ruin of the spiritual man, who, forsaking the light of truth, the constant feeding upon the life-sustaining word, wastes away, becomes unfruitful, hard of hearing, dim of vision, faulty in walk, unable to lift up his voice in full praise of Yahweh, until, at last, cut off from the life of God, he passes away into eternal darkness of Sheol.

The chapter can be divided into four main headings:

1. Yahweh to be remembered by youth . . . vv. 1-2.

2. Metaphors illustrating man's physical decline, and the inevitability of death . . . vv. 3-4.

3. The inestimable value of divine wisdom and instruction as a guide to life and lasting happiness . . . vv. 8-12.

4. The final summing up and conclusion of the whole matter . . . vv. 13-14.

1. **Yahweh To Be Remembered By Youth** — vv. 1-2

VERSE 1

"Remember now thy Creator" — Koheleth reminds us that Yahweh is a Creator. If we remember Him, allowing His commandments and precepts to mould our characters, then He will fashion us into vessels of honour and glory meet for use in His eternal purpose with creation (1 Cor. 3:9-13; Eph. 2:10).

"The evil days come not" — The carefree days of youth soon pass, and in their place come evil days: days in which the infirmities and weaknesses of both mind and body manifest themselves, bringing misery and discontent.

VERSE 2

"While the sun or the light of the moon or the stars be not darkened" — The sun, shining in its strength, the moon and the stars not darkened, but performing their God-given functions perfectly, are figures used by Koheleth to illustrate the healthy and strong body of youth — with eyes clear, mind alert, full of the activity and joy of living.

"Clouds return after rain" — Koheleth reminds us that the passing of one rain storm does not ensure continued uninterrupted fine weather. Storm clouds, bringing rain, sleet and ice, blotting out the light, will inevitably return with the coming of winter. So, the decay of the body, with its attendant infirmities and disabilities that darken and destroy man's enjoyment of life, will just as surely follow youth.

Metaphors Illustrating Man's Physical Decline, And The Inevitability Of Death — 3-7.

These verses present a figure of a decaying, tottering house, breaking up before the onslaught of a winter storm. The supporting pillars bend and sway; the trembling servants, being few and feeble, cease from their grinding and

hurry in from the mill; the door is shut against the tempest; and the inmates gaze fearfully from the upper windows into the gathering gloom. By this figure, Koheleth illustrates the evil effects wrought by advancing age, on man's mortal house of clay (2 Cor. 5:1-2).

VERSE 3

"When the keepers of the house shall tremble" — The keepers of the house, or body, which tend its needs, are the arms and hands. As a result of palsy, a common affliction of the aged, the hands continually tremble.

"The strong men shall bow themselves" — The strong pillars that support the house sway before the fury of the winter storm — describing the tottering, bow-legged gait of the aged, whose legs are too weak to support them (cf. Song 5:15).

"The grinders cease because they are few" — The teeth that grind the food decay and fall out; and because only few remain, occlusion is impossible, and the food is swallowed without mastication.

"Those that look out of the windows be darkened" — As the years advance, the vision deteriorates, and the image seen, once clear and sharp, is now dark and indistinct.

VERSE 4

"And the doors shall be shut in the street" — Elderly people are inclined to lose interest in everyday affairs. They feel it is too much trouble to go out in the street, to visit, or to entertain. Hence the doors of their abodes remain closed. As doors are opened by those wishing to communicate, and shut by those who do not, they represent the lips and mouth of the aged.

"When the sound of the grinding is low" — This can be understood as referring to the failing desire of elderly people for much food, or of the deafness that prevents them hearing any sound clearly and distinctly.

— R. KRYGGER. (To be Contd.)

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Cont. from p.319)

Chapter 12, v.4 (Continued).

"And he shall rise up at the sound of the bird" — Koheleth's words remind us that those of advanced years are notoriously bad sleepers: the voice of the bird, or the crowing of the cock at dawn finds them awake. Again we perceive a reference to the exceedingly nervous disposition of elderly people; even the sudden twittering of a bird is enough to startle them, causing them to rise up in fear. And again, as with the decline of life, the voice of the aged loses its strength, and sounds more and more like the shrill twittering of a bird.

"All the daughters of music shall be brought low" — Those of advanced years lose the ability and desire to lift up the voice in song; and through deafness, fail to hear others so doing. This was the reason Barzillai gave in refusing David's gracious invitation to reside with him in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 19:31-35).

The metaphor of a decaying house is now set aside, and Koheleth speaks more plainly of the aged's increasing incapacity to cope with life's activities.

VERSE 5

"They shall be afraid of that which is high" — Because of deteriorating reflexes, weakness of limbs, shortness of breath, and poor vision, elderly people are extremely nervous of heights and mortally afraid of falling.

"Fears shall be in the way" — Busy, bustling streets, filled with jostling people such as are found in the narrow lanes of Jerusalem, hold terror for the aged, who know their stiff limbs are no longer capable of carrying them swiftly out of harm's way.

"The almond tree shall flourish" — In late spring, the almond tree is white with blossom, a sign that summer is nigh at hand. It is, therefore, a fit-

ting figure of the hoary, white-headed old man, whose life is almost over, and whose death is near at hand (Jer. 1:11-12).

"The grasshopper shall be a burden" — The grasshopper usually propels itself along with great leaps and bounds, illustrative of the exuberance of youth, but when moving slowly, it assumes a painful, dragging, crawling gait, which is characteristic of declining life.

"Desire shall fail" — Some render this: "The caperberry is made ineffectual." The caperberry is a plant used to awaken sexual desire, and therefore stands for the vital power of life, which fails as the years draw on, and man goes to his long home, Sheol, or the grave: the eternal abode of all who are outside Yahweh's purpose of redemption (Ps. 49).

"The mourners go about the streets" — When professional mourners congregated near a house, the neighbors knew that death was imminent. So the outward, visible signs of physical and psychological deterioration, mentioned in the preceding verses, advertize to all, that death is near (Amos 5:16-20; Jer. 9:16-20).

VERSE 6

Koheleth has recourse to three further metaphors as he illustrates the approach and cause of death:

1. The first figure is that of a swinging, golden lamp, suspended from a beam and held by a long silver cord. The frayed cord suddenly breaks, and the bowl plunges to the floor smashing into a thousand pieces; the oil is irretrievably spilt, and the light extinguished for ever.

2. Next, Koheleth presents us with an earthen vessel, a pitcher, which is taken to the well; but before water can be drawn, it is dropped on the flagstones, and shattered beyond repair.

3. The third is a wheel, over which a rope is passed for the purpose of raising water from the well. This is broken, making the operation impossible.

All these poetic word-pictures illustrate the sudden shattering of man's life, and the utter irretrievable ruin wrought by death.

"The silver cord" — The spinal cord, containing vital nerves; the means of the brain's communication to various parts of the body.

"The golden bowl" — Symbol of the life-giving force; the spirit of life, which at death, escapes and goes back to God Who gave it. By death, the light of life is extinguished, and man descends into the darkness of Sheol (Prov. 13:9). The golden bowl also represents the head.

"The pitcher" — A fragile earthen vessel of clay (the body), which when broken cannot hold water (symbol of life — Ps. 39:9). Some see the pitcher as the vena cava, arteries which bring blood back to the heart.

"The fountain" — The earth.

"The wheel" — The great aorta. The wheel is broken, thus the aged person's sudden death could be attributed to the failure of the heart.

VERSE 7

"Dust shall return" — Man is but animated dust, apart from God's purpose of salvation, destined to return to dust and remain as such for ever (Gen. 2:7; 3:19; Ps. 103:14).

"The spirit shall return" — The power of life is released by death, to return to Yahweh, its giver (Num. 16:22; Job. 34:14-15).

VERSE 8

"Vanities of vanities" — Emptiness of emptiness. Koheleth's study of the life cycle is now complete; his infallible judgment, guided by divine wisdom, is given. All of man's life and activity outside of Yahweh's grace is no better, yields no more satisfaction, than a feeding on wind.

Epilogue And Final Advice — vv. 9-14

VERSE 9

"Because the preacher was wise" — The wiser the preacher became (mg), the more he appreciated the need for wisdom in every man. A man is born into this world void of knowledge and understanding, he desperately needs Koheleth's wise advice and directions on living. To this end, Koheleth laboured that man might gain the priceless benefits of his great wisdom, the fruits of his diligent research, which are preserved for posterity, and can be examined in the many wise sayings, proverbs and books he compiled and set in order (i.e. weighed and arranged) for this purpose. See the Book of Proverbs and Song of Solomon both of which bear the unmistakable hall-mark of tried wisdom.

"He still taught the people knowledge" — He not only wrote down his observations on life, but also explained their meaning. The word "still" suggests that the preacher made the communication of his wisdom to others a constant occupation. We are reminded of the labours of Him who is wiser than Solomon (Matt. 5:1-3), and of the work of the apostles (Matt. 10:1-7; Mark 16:15-16; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Ecc. 11:1-2).

VERSE 10

"Acceptable words" — Or, words of delight (mg), words of uprightness, grace and truth. Koheleth obviously gave much thought and deep consideration to his subject before committing it to paper. He kept the fact that he was Yahweh's penman, and the channel of divine communication to men, always before him. Here is good advice and example for all who preach in Yah's name to men. Hastily compiled, empty exhortations, are an affront to Yahweh, and profitless to man (2 Tim. 2:15).

VERSE 11

"The words of the wise are as goads" — The goad is a longhandled sharp-pointed stick, used by herdsmen

to turn the oxen into straight paths; to urge them to better efforts. The goad, therefore, is a symbol of the stimulus given by words of truth that provoke to righteousness (Acts 9:5; 2 Tim. 4:2-3).

"As nails fastened by the master of assemblies" — That is, permanent lessons. Lessons driven well some by force and good direction. The spiritual house is slowly built up by such means. Every exhortation must be powerful, well directed so as to be fastened securely in the hearers' minds. The foundation and corner-stone of our spiritual house is the Lord Jesus Christ (Isa 28:16; Eph. 2:19-22). He is also the nail that secures it (Zech. 10:4; see also Ezra 9:8 mg.; Isa. 22:23-25).

"Master of assemblies" — Utterances of scholars (Prov. 5:28). Those who aspire to teach others must first become diligent, ardent students of the word themselves (2 Tim. 2:15).

"Given from one shepherd" — The one Shepherd is God (Ps. 80:1). Though many speak and teach the eternal truths set down in the Holy Scriptures, the Source of all their wise deliberations, is Yahweh alone. He is the Shepherd of Israel (Gen. 48:15; Ezek. 33:15), who leads His sheep (John 10:1-16; 5:19-20; 7:16), causing them to feed on the pasture of His life-giving Word (Ps. 23:1-2), the source of true wisdom (Prov. 2:6-7).

VERSE 12

"By these, my son, be admonished" — The expression, "my son", is frequently found in the Book of Proverbs, and expresses the warm, loving relationship which exists between the teacher and his student. Koheleth, as a wise and loving father in Israel, would have his "sons," begotten by his word, exact the greatest good from this life, and be brought finally into an harmonious relationship with the divine Father, in heaven (Prov. 1:8, 10, 15; 2:1; 3:1). The need for study, obedience, separation from the world of vanity, apply also to us, and will establish our relationship with the Father as His sons and daughters (2

Cor. 6:17-18); 1 John 3:1-2; Hos. 1:10; 1 Pet. 1:23).

"Be admonished" — Koheleth would have us instructed in right ways, and warned from pursuing foolish and hurtful ways (Prov. 3:1-18).

"Of making many books there is no end" — Koheleth does not refer to divine books, books written by men inspired by God, but of the books which emanate wholly from the un-inspired minds of men.

"Much study is a weariness of the flesh" — Again, the preacher is not referring to the assiduous examination of divinely inspired writings which both enlighten, edify and rejoice the heart (Ps. 119:97-104; Prov. 1:8-9; 2:1-11; 3:1-18) but to those writings which cause to err (Prov. 19:2).

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter" — Koheleth has reached the end of the road; all has been heard that should be heard on the theme. Nothing more is left to be said; except to offer on final word of advice:

"Fear Yahweh and keep His commandments" — This, then, is the supreme good; the source of enduring satisfaction, that he has sought. Holding Yahweh in a reverential awe that reveals itself in a humble submission to His commandments, and obedience to His righteous rules of life, is the whole duty of man. By doing this, man can co-operate with Yahweh in His eternal purpose with creation, which is to manifest His glory in flesh (Num. 14:21), to develop man to His own moral image and likeness (Exod. 3:14-15; John 17), that he might, in perfect harmony with his Creator, live in Eden restored forevermore (Phil. 3:21; John 2:25; Rev. 21:1-5). Koheleth has proved, beyond all doubt, that man cannot truly live joyfully, or find real fulfillment in life, without God. Without God being the object of one's being, life is meaningless and vain, and all that man sets his hand to, all his hopes and aspirations, are doomed to failure and frustration. Koheleth brings home the lesson with overwhelming force and conviction, that the life that leaves

out God is no more satisfying or substantial than a "feeding on wind." Knowing this to be true, we are able to forsake the word utterly, having no more fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (2 Cor. 6:14-18), and turn with undivided hearts to Yahweh, seeking in His service, His righteousness and His kingdom and glory in the Age to come, the real purpose of life (Prov. 3:1-18; Matt. 6:33). Only when He is in us by faith, manifested in obedience and unfeigned love of the brethren, and we are in Him by the same means, can we become complete men and women. Only then, can we find fulfilment and satisfaction in all we set our hands to do, and come to know that peace that passeth understanding.

VERSE 14

"God shall bring every work into judgment" — This does not support the myth of universal resurrection and judgment, but applies only to those made accountable through knowledge (1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:9-10; Rom. 2:12; 14:10-12; Heb. 4:12-13). Koheleth reminds us that we all live under the

shadow of judgment to come. Therefore his advice to learn to number our days, to reflect on life's brevity, to give our hearts to wisdom, comes home with force and conviction. Thus the words "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do with all thy might," is the only wise and sensible direction to follow, seeing "there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest" (Ecc. 9:10). The Book of Ecclesiastes is a divine expose of the world, and a call to separation from it. The apostle John seems to catch the very spirit and vital lessons of the book when he wrote:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world, and the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 John 2:15-16).

— R. KRYGGER.

ISRAEL'S POPULATION

Israel's population numbered 3,230,000 on the eve of Independence Day, 1973. Since May 15, 1948, the Jewish population of Israel reached 2,750,000, from an initial 650,000.

The non-Jewish population increased by some 250,000 in 25 years (including 80,000 in East Jerusalem) to reach 480,000.

Over 25 years, some 1,480,000 immigrants settled in Israel. Half came from Asia and Africa, and the other half from Europe and America.



SOVIET IMMIGRANTS TO ISRAEL

About 120,000 Russian Jews have asked for papers to go to Israel. Between 40,000 and 50,000 stand a chance of actually arriving in 1973. Last year, 32,000 Jews arrived from the USSR. A "ransom price" is demanded by the Soviet of those who wish to migrate to Israel. Some 600 college graduates paid the head tax requested, but 390 did not. Recently, the Soviet published a new "ransom price list," reducing the sums to be paid, and enabling the authorities to waive payment from persons who do not have the money.