

Ecclesiastes
on
The Purpose,
Priority,
and Vanity
of Man
Under the Sun

Contents [TOC](#)

- [Chapter 1](#) Introduction
- [Chapter 2](#) Problem Statement
- [Chapter 3](#) Travail
- [Chapter 4](#) Oppressions
- [Chapter 5](#) House of God
- Chapter 6 Evil Under the Sun
- Chapter 7 A Good Name
- Chapter 8 A Wise Man
- Chapter 9 All Things
- Chapter 10 Dead Flies
- Chapter 11 Cast Bread
- Chapter 12 Aging
- Chapter 13 The Conclusion of the Whole Matter.

Lesson 1 [TOC](#)

Chapter 1 Introduction to Solomon, the book, the genera and the study

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 1:1-18

The goal here is to teach 13 lessons on the book of Ecclesiastes and extract every ounce of richness inspired by the wisest man to walk on earth, Jesus Christ the righteous, and recorded by the wisest man to walk on earth previous, Solomon. A lofty goal.

This goal is to be pursued with 4 strategies.

- I. To explore my purpose in life. As the book has this purpose and aspiration, it would be frightful to teach the book without it having a life altering effect on the teacher.
- II. To explore the the purpose in study; to learn to more effectively read the Bible as literature, understanding better it's communicative techniques, provisions and power; understanding this better in the overlooked genera of Hebrew poetry.
- III. The pursuit of wisdom. Or, in the words of our author “ *To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding; To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.* “ (Prov 1:2-6)
- IV. The pursuit of teaching. That I could influence others to pursue the previous three strategies for the next 13 weeks would be the equivalent of teaching a poor man to fish, rather than giving a poor man a fish.

Let's begin. The book of Ecclesiastes is unlike any other book in the Bible. It explores and reaches for the whole value of man 'under the sun' and it comes up sorely lacking. To detail this vanity of man from every angle the wisest man of the world, Solomon, organized the greatest wisdom genera of the world, Hebrew poetry, into a dense pack of inspired communication, Ecclesiastes. It is thus the value of man 'under the sun' that is lacking not the book of Ecclesiastes.

One cannot pursue the depths of the little book without a better grasp of it's author. The book walks through the reasoning of a man from his youth, chapter 2, through his grey headed grave, chapter 12. Let's do the same lesson by lesson with Solomon. In our introduction we will consider the whole background of Solomon. As each lesson unfolds we will revisit these milestones of Solomon's

life and note that they parallel the maturing process that the preachers theme seems to mirror. Here then is an outline of maturing, roughly aligned with the chapters of the book and highlighting the life of Solomon.

Chapter 2 Reasoning of a youth age under 21

Consider Solomon's youth and parents. David's great sin with Solomons mother, Bathsheba. (2Sam 11) The dysfunctional home but God's love of Solomon (2Sam12:24-25, 1Chron 3)

Chapter 3 Reasoning of a young man aged to 28

Consider Solomon's dysfunctional home, his brother Amnon's crime and Absalom's murderous retribution (2Sam 13-14)

Chapter 4 Reasoning of a young man aged to 35

Consider the struggle for the kingdom; his brother Absalom's takeover of his fathers throne (2Sam15-19)

Chapter 5 Reasoning of a middle aged man aged to 42

Consider the unsettled aftermath of the revolt, Joab's part and Sheba's revolt (2Sam 20-22)

Chapter 6 Reasoning of a middle aged man aged to 49

Consider the death of Solomon's father, David and the struggle to get Solomon on his throne. (2Sam 23, 1King 1, 1Chron 23:1-6)

Chapter 7 Reasoning of a mature man aged to 56

Consider David's charge to Solomon (1King 2) And Solomon's assuming the throne with prayer for wisdom (1King 3).

Chapter 8 Reasoning of a mature man aged to 63

Consider Solomon as a father, teacher (Proverbs 1, 2:1,3:1,4:1,5:1,6:1,7:1 'My Son!')

Chapter 9 Reasoning of a thinking man aged to 70

Consider Solomon's building of the temple (1King 5-6, cf 1 Chron 17,22, 2Chron 1-4) and building his own house (1Kings 7)

Chapter 10 Reasoning of a thinking man aged to 77

Consider the dedication of Solomon's temple and the appearance of God (1King 8-9:9, 2Chron 5-7)

Chapter 11 Reasoning of a wise man aged to 84

Consider Solomon's wealth and fame. (1King 9:10-11:25, 2Chron 8-9) and his son's failure in the kingdom (1King 11:26-12, 2Chron 10-12)

Chapter 12 Reasoning of a wise man aged to 91

Consider the longevity of wisdom (Prov 8)

Lesson 13 Review and Conclusions

Consider Solomon's 4000 proverbs of which we can study only 1000. (Proverbs 1)

Consider now the book Ecclesiastes. We have covered what our goals are for these lessons and the background information on the author, Solomon. For adults and teens the tact for this study should be formatted like a book club wherein each one reads the whole book first then reads and comes to class ready to intelligently discuss each chapter. Including their participation will greatly expand their comprehension, open thoughts and ideas that you and I had not considered, and teach people to fish for themselves.

Review the purpose and outline given here by C.I. Schofield, paying close

attention to the verbal plenary inspiration of the book of Ecclesiastes.

Schofield's Introduction and Outline¹

The Book of Ecclesiastes or The Preacher

This is the book of man "under the sun," reasoning about life; it is the best man can do, with the knowledge that there is a holy God, and that He will bring every-thing into judgment. The key phrases are "under the sun;" "I perceived"; "I said in my heart." Inspiration sets down accurately what passes, but the conclusions and reasonings are, after all, man's. That those conclusions are just in declaring it "vanity" in view of judgment, to devote life to earthly things, is surely true; but the "conclusion" (#Ec 12.13) is legal, the best that man apart from redemption can do, and does not anticipate the Gospel. Ecclesiastes is in five parts:

- I. Theme, 1.1-3.
- II. Theme proved, 1.4-3.22.
- III. Theme unfolded in the light of human sufferings, hypocrisies, uncertainties, poverty and riches, 4.1-10.20.
- IV. The best thing possible to the natural man apart from God, 11.1-12.12.
- V. The best thing possible to man under the law, 12.13,14.

In this lesson we are taking an introductory overview of where we are going to go in the next 12 weeks. Use the time to generate curiosity and excitement that will get your students reading ahead. Ask them to read the whole book in one sitting, and to at least read the first and second chapters before next week. Then challenge them to come to class with a paragraph in their own words that describes the theme and outline of chapter 2.

Chapter 1 Commentary

¹ ¶ *The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.*

² *Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.*

The words of the Preacher, or Ecclesiastes. Solomon, with no more introduction than being the son of David, and king in Jerusalem, begins an extraordinary philosophical thesis, that considers the purpose of life and captures everything that mere man could consider on this side of the sun.

³ *What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?*

⁴ ¶ *One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.*

⁵ *The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.*

⁶ *The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about*

1 The Scofield Study Bible Special Helps by Dr. C.I. Scofield Copyright 1909,1996

continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits.

7 All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.

8 All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

9 ¶ The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

10 Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.

11 There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.

12 ¶ I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

13 And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.

14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

15 That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.

16 I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.

17 And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.

18 For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching:

Law of the Teacher

A. Law - A teacher must know that which he would teach.

Lesson 2 [TOC](#)
Chapter 2 Reasoning of a youth age under 21

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 2:1-26

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider Solomon's youth and parents. David's great sin with Solomons mother, Bathsheba. (2Sam 11) The dysfunctional home but God's love of Solomon (2Sam12:24-25, 1Chron 3)

Chap 2 Outline

Read through ch 2 with this outline in view. Does it capture it?

vr 1-2. Comedy and pleasure

vr 3-11 What one may DO

I made me, I got me, I gathered me!

Notice the me me me

vr 12-16 Beholding Wisdom and Folly

vr 17-20 Despair of it all

vr 21-23 Perhaps if labor was in wisdom?

... Not so .. it is still vain

vr 24-26 Conclusion

"Eat drink and be merry for tomorrow ye shall die"

Note: vr 24 this I also saw (ERRANTLY?) as from God

Cover this outline in the class time by highlighting several of the verse wordings. (There will not likely be time to cover each argument) This chapter ends on a depressing note that is in error. Don't leave your class there for the week, jump to the conclusion in Eccl 12:13. Emphasize that Solomon is accurately revealing the thought processes that he went through, even though he ends chapter 2 on this low note of error.

Chapter 2 Commentary

1 ¶ I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity.

2 I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it?

3 I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.

4 I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:

5 I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits:

6 I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:

7 I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:

8 I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.

9 *So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.*

10 *And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.*

11 *Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.*

12 ¶ *And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done.*

13 *Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.*

14 *The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all.*

15 *Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity.*

16 *For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool.*

17 ¶ *Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.*

18 *Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.*

19 *And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity.*

20 *Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun.*

21 *For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil.*

22 *For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?*

23 *For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity.*

24 *There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.*

25 *For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto, more than I?*

26 *For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.*

**For yourself quickly review one of Milton's
7 Laws Law of the Teacher**

A. Law - A teacher must know that which he would teach.

B. Rule - Know thoroughly and familiarly the lesson you wish to teach --teach from a full mind and a clear understanding.

Lesson 3 [TOC](#)**Chapter 3 Reasoning of a young man aged to 28**

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 3:1-22

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider Solomon's dysfunctional home, his brother Amnon's crime and Absalom's murderous retribution (2Sam 13-14)

- 1 ¶ *To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:*
 2 *A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted;*
 3 *A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;*
 4 *A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;*
 5 *A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;*
 6 *A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away;*
 7 *A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;*
 8 *A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.*

To every thing there is a season. Solomon has introduced his ponderings about the vanity of life in general and here he turns his attention to it's cycles. Notice the theme, that there are seasons for things; that there is timing to purpose. He has not discarded the presence of purpose under heaven, he is but struggling with its rotation in and out of ones life.

In the illustrations of this tumbling purpose you get a sense of things spinning around in a cloths dryer. Obviously this was not Solomons picture, but I can not imagine what else was. There seems to be no pattern to the things and purposes that he brings up, only a random scattering of rotating glimpses. The only one with any reasonable placement is the first, we start with a time to be born. If the wisest man set out to illustrate things cyclicly but randomly tumbling through our lives how could he have done better than this section of Hebrew poetry by Solomon?

- 9 *What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?*
 10 *I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.*
 11 ¶ *He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.*

In verse 9 Solomon leaves the tumbling randomness of purpose to revisits his theme and quest to of profit vs vanity. As an author, he expertly weaves his quest for purpose into every consideration that he ponders. In these verses (3:10-11) he marvelously introduces that this inner struggle for purpose is not his alone, but

ongoing in man. He calls it 'travail' i.e. arduous work involving painful effort; he authors it from God; and he assigns it as man's exercise. In verse 11 he ties this exercise to the tumbling seasons started previous; brings the rotating world into man's heart and states the challenge of the exercise. It is to “*find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end*”. Many people like to quote Solomon's illustrations of the tumbling randomness of life's cyclic structure. Few take up the travail and inner wrestlings that theme the whole book of Ecclesiastes, for it is indeed arduous work involving painful effort.

12 I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life.

13 And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.

14 I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.

15 That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.

Now, in verse 12-14, with the struggle well defined, Solomon pulls out three things that he knows. First he knows that the only good in man is that he 1) rejoice and 2) do good in his life. Saint Augustine, (354-480 AD) Bishop of Hippo, Numidia, North Africa, took the depravity of man into a blackness so dark that for 19 centuries theologians have been robbing man of all free will and moral merit by speaking of the 'total depravity of man.' Not so, for Solomon. (and not so for Scripture in general.) Two rays of moral light are left in depraved man, one that he may rejoice, the other that he may do good in his life. Rejoicing is to feel joyful or be delighted in something. In Romans 1, Paul details that the first step away from the knowing of God, is the failure to give Him glory and then not being thankful. Here Solomon calls out man's ability to rejoice as one of the moral goods left within man. Jesus taught us that if man were going to do good, the only good he could do is to “believe on the one whom God hath sent.” (John 6:29) Solomon, in verse 3:12, leaves these two 'moral goods' present in a depraved man.

Secondly, Solomon adds in verse 13, that he knows of a gift (i.e. grace) that is given to all of man from God. That gift, or grace is that man should eat, that man should drink, and that man should enjoy the good of all his labor. We can be certain here that Solomon is not condoning gluttony, drunkenness, nor vain glory in one's labor. He lists these three pleasures in life, pleasures that would entice us to rejoice and do good. These pleasures that could still be turned to vice² when man misuses them or adds alcohol to their mix. (Prov 20 and 23)

Thirdly, from verse 14 Solomon knows that “whatsoever God does, it shall be

2 Vice def. An evil, degrading, or immoral practice or habit. OR A serious moral failing. OR Wicked or evil conduct or habits; i.e. corruption.

for ever.” He adds that nothing can be added, nothing can be taken away and that God's purpose is “that men should fear before him.” The subject is “whatsoever God doeth”. This would certainly include the universe, the works of God in the 6 days of creation, but more particularly in view here is the previous subject, “the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it.” (vr 10-11) Now apply Solomon's assertion that to this 'travail' nothing can be added, nor taken away and it's purpose is that men should fear before him. Solomon, in this chapter is bringing to the surface the inner struggle for purpose that is boiling around in every man's soul. It is his subject, it is perpetual, and it is required by God. Verse 15 does not leave Solomon's topic of interest the 'travail' of man, instead it broadens it and eternalizes it.

Consider again this internal struggle for purpose that is the man's arduous work involving painful effort. Solomon contends that it's higher goal is to “find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.” He contends that God has given it “to the sons of men to be exercised in it.” He contends, against Augustinian and Calvinistic theology, that there is some good in man that initiates this travail, this quest for truth, righteousness, and holiness. And lastly he contends that it is perpetual and serves the purpose of that men should fear before God. So, many have glazed over this amazing, even profound description of the travail of man's mind because they liked the introduction “To every thing there is a season”, ... turn, turn, turn, “a time for every purpose under heaven”, ... turn, turn, turn. The blasphemous Beatle song has turned us from the whole theme of Solomon, to find out “every purpose under heaven.”

16 ¶ And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there.

17 I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work.

Solomon now makes some initial observations as he engages in this travail that he so aptly identifies. Verse 16 starts “And moreover I saw under the sun...” This is the tenth use of this perspective giving phrase and there are yet to come 20 more uses of this unique phrase. Keep Solomon's perspective in view as he walks through the next observations and an initial, but errant hypothesis. He did not here see two places, but one place describes in two clarifying views. There cannot properly be a place of judgment without righteousness, nor a place of righteousness without judgment. And now in this holy place, enter man; ... “wickedness was there”; “iniquity was there.” In the travail of working out every purpose under heaven this is exhibit A, that there will be a righteous judgment and vile man will have to appear. What can we say of this striking

exhibit?

Solomon holds up evidence or exhibits with the phrase “I saw.” He debates his innermost reasoning with the phrase “I said in my heart”. (vr 17) In this verse, he marvelously ties the righteous and the wicked into his analogy of cycles and seasons to land them, in due season, in a holy place of righteousness wherein their discovery of every purpose and every work will be judged. This would, it seems, put the more emphasis on the importance of our travail in this area.

18 I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts.

19 For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity.

20 All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.

21 Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?

22 Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?

From Solomon's perspective, “under the sun”, he makes an inner, “I said in my heart,” observation here (vr 18-22) that man “might” perceive that they themselves are beasts. This inner observation is in relation to mans appearing before a place of judgment, and it is couched in very loose language to allow that it is only an initial consideration. It is not one that Solomon puts any value in, but is one that must be considered. It is considered in verses 18-21 and its logical conclusion is uttered in verse 22. Just because Solomon considers this base argument, and his consideration is developed in God's inspired Word, it is not presented as the truth. It is a truth that Solomon considered the idea that man is but an animal without a spirit that must give an answer, but such an idea is clearly, in the context of the whole argument, baseless. There are those who grab onto these verse to misrepresent the Bible message. They will say, “See, the Bible says that man and beast are the same and they all go to one place when they die.” Solomon's arguments in this travail are all inclusive of every hair brain scheme that ever entered the mind of man. He presents them in truth, but not as truth. One who cannot read the Bible as literature, and understand nor follow Solomon's dialog carried out in pursuit of the truth, should just close the Old Testament and read some more from the gospels where “The Way, The Truth, and The Life” is presented straight forward. He can guide you into truth.

But for completeness, lets examine Solomon's consideration that man might be no different than an animal. After all it is a very errant but very popular evolutionary hypothesis of our day. Look at the marvelous insight contained in

the wording of verse 18. It is something that Solomon said in his heart, i.e. Only a consideration, presented here as possible, but not the likely. It is concerning the “estate of the sons of men.” It is

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's
7 Laws of Teaching:

Law of the Learner

A. Law - A learner must attend with interest to the material to be learned.

Lesson 4 [TOC](#)
Chapter 4 Reasoning of a young man aged to 35

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 4:1-16

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider the struggle for the kingdom; his brother Absalom's takeover of his fathers throne (2Sam15-19)

- 1 ¶ So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter.*
2 Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive.
3 Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

Consider the reflection “So I returned.” It is a place keeper; a bookmark in Solomon's mind. Consider, Where did he return to? and Where has he been? He has been on a philosophical journey that he calls the “*travail which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it*” (3:10) Therein he has ebbed to a low point in human reasoning where he views the possibility that all is indeed vanity and perceives that perhaps “*there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works;*”. From this abyss he returns to take fresh look at the thinking that took him there. In this fresh look he considers “*all the oppressions that are done under the sun.*” This vantage will plunge him even deeper into his abyss of vanity.

I knew a man once who refused a belief in a loving God because of all the suffering and cruelty he saw in the world. Such is Solomon's plight in this context. His eyes had doubtless seen more than any 20th century eye when he says “*behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter.*” Early in my ministry as a youth pastor, I watched as a Christian lad, not yet in his teens, died of leukemia. The suffering, the emotion of the family and the heart of the Church involved had a tremendous effect on my outlook of life and death; to the point where I could have settled into Solomons well dug abyss of vanity. Behold the tears, he says, look squarely into their hurt, where is their comforter?

Here Solomon has in view not only the oppressions of disease, but oppressions of man against man. He says now, on the side of the oppressors, that they had power but neither did they have any comforter! In verse 2 he concludes that it would be better to be dead, and in verse 3 it would be better to never have been born, than to just view the evil oppression, let alone experience it.

It is appropriate here to consider the epic Hebrew poem called Job. Job saw the

oppression that Solomon describes and I believe Solomon viewed Job's footprints as he walked through this valley of despair. Job once concluded that it had been better if he had never lived. Solomon, however, in Ecclesiastes, remains strangely and permanently silent concerning Job's redeemer. Job who cried out that God “*is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both.*” (Job 9:32-33) also reports, with astounding faith that such a “daysman” is to come as his redeemer. His faith for a redeemer is resounding as he powerfully reports “*For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.*” (Job 19:25-27) This redeemer is noticeably absent here in Solomon's philosophy book, although he is noticeably, albeit figuratively, present in his other writings. (Proverbs 8, Song of Solomon all) Such is one of the marvelous mysteries of this book called Ecclesiastes. “Selah” ... that's Hebrew for “Go Figure!”

4 ¶ *Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit.*

5 *The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh.*

6 *Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit.*

“Again I considered” marks Solomon's return to the debate at hand. The 'travail' spoken of here is not the oppression he just considered, but the wrestling that each man must engage in to determine ones purpose in this life. He looks back at the work that he reported in 3:22 as the best of life. There he says “*Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion.*” Here he says that although this work makes man envy man, it is all “*vanity and vexation of spirit.*”

This little phrase, 'vexation of spirit' is used 10 times in the Bible³. Vexation is “the act of annoying or irritating, the condition of annoyance, and/or the source of irritation or annoyance.”⁴ The Hebrew word used 'reh-ooth' may capture more of a gross shortcoming of spirit than the irritation of spirit but the sense is captured well in the word vexation. Solomon's use of this phrase marks a complication in his travail where he regards dilemmas that still need to be ironed out of his reasoning. The travail of spirit, is mans need to wrestle with the purpose in life,

3 Eccl 1:14,17,2:11,17,26,4:4,6,16,6:9 and Isa 65:14

4 The American Heritage Dictionary, Third Edition, Version 3.6a @ 1994, SoftKey International Inc.

(Eccl 3:10-11) ; the vexation of spirit is irritation and annoyance caused by an unsettled philosophy or view. Nine times Solomon mentions this type of unsettling philosophical view that brings about 'vexation of spirit' and he backs away from it to go down another vein. Don't miss this insight as you unravel these often godless philosophical ramblings in the book of Ecclesiastes. Vexation of spirit, is the necessary ingredient to drive us back into the travail of spirit “*which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it*” the discovery of the purpose of life. That should make you revisit every vexation of spirit that Solomon has so far mentioned. (Eccl 1:14, 17, 2:11, 17, 26)

In verse 5 Solomon revisits the works of man that gets honorable mention in 3:22, and is called the envy of other men in verse 4. Herein the satisfaction of a fool is simply to quietly eat the fruit of his own labor. This little concept is presented in verse 6 as a fore shadowing for the discussion about the foolish and the wise, and the next chapters consideration of the rich vs the poor. Here he implies that the poor fool may be better off than one with 'both hands full' who is wrestling with Solomon's travail and finding, indeed again, vexation of spirit (for it's 7th mention.) Solomon's literary transitions and insightful fore shadowing, his phrased book marks and marvelous structure of argument make this an unparalleled piece of literature. ... Well perhaps it is paralleled by his marvelous collection of Proverbs.

7 ¶ *Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun.*

8 *There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet is there no end of all his labour; neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, For whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail.*

9 *Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.*

10 *For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.*

11 *Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?*

12 *And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*

You may now have noticed that every time Solomon encounters vexation of spirit he returns. Here (verse 7) he returns from the vexation of spirit to see vanity under the sun. In verses 8-12 Solomon seems to analyze this vanity under the sun with a reasoning that at least you don't have to be alone, and two is better than one. In verse 8, two makes for less labor, and less of an insane pursuit of riches. But he contends that “This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travail.” Notice in this last phrase the comfort of having two present is a sore travail,... or of little help in the travail of finding ones purpose. Indeed the previous phrase seems to indicate the frustration of sharing and bereaving your soul of goods.

Verse 9 thru 12 articulates that two can have the improved reward for labor,

help in case of falling, warmth in bed, and help in a fight. My wife and I, being from NY state, always found verse 11 quite true. This reasoning ends with no conclusions in the travail and an unfit contraction of a three fold cord. There seems to be no insights expanded upon and the leap from the advantage of two to the threefold cord is without explanation as well. I contend that verses 8 through 12 are simply the common but undirected ramblings of a genius mind at work. Solomon comes back from this little excursion to the main point in verse 13. Therein the threefold cord is simply the thought that awakens him to his ramblings, he leaves off there for the pursuit of the main point. This explanation will likely be unacceptable to the more scholarly.

13 ¶ Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished.

14 For out of prison he cometh to reign; whereas also he that is born in his kingdom becometh poor.

15 I considered all the living which walk under the sun, with the second child that shall stand up in his stead.

16 There is no end of all the people, even of all that have been before them: they also that come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and vexation of spirit.

It seems that verses 13-16 contain Solomon's musing about masses of people who have taken up his travail. The poor and wise child is contrasted with the foolish and unadmonishable king. He may have had in mind one of the many kings, past or present of which he was aware. He may have had in mind a glimpse of his childhood and his father. David approached this description in dealing with Solomon's brothers Amnon and Absalom. Verse 14 is inconclusive about the prison which housed this king but it is obviously figurative, and again this king is contrasted with the poor. Solomon may have been addressing his care not to turn into his father in this brief insight.

In verse 15 Solomon considers the wider visage of all of mankind but he becomes more cloudy with a reference to "*the second child that shall stand up in his stead*" Again, though he is referencing the general frustration of passing on ones work to a new generation, he, the second child, and the second in his fathers kingdom, uses this phrase with meticulous care.

Verse 16 closes with a glimpse of the insignificance of one man in a sea of mankind present and past. He adds to the insignificance that we will soon enough be forgotten. Surely this also is vanity and vexation of spirit. Again that phrase about vexation nullifies this pattern of thought for dismissing the travail involved in pursuing the purpose of life. The ineptness of some and the insignificance of all cannot dismiss us from our quest to find purpose in life.

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching:

Law of the Learner

A. Law - *A learner must attend with interest to the material to be learned.*

B. Rule - Gain and keep the attention and interest of the pupils upon the lesson.

Do not try to teach with out attention.

Lesson 5 [TOC](#)

Chapter 5 Reasoning of a middle aged man aged to 42

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 5:1-20

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider the unsettled aftermath of the revolt, Joab's part and Sheba's revolt (2Sam 20-22)

< 5:1 שמר רגליך כאשר תלך אל-בית האלהים
 וקרוב לשמע מלת הכסילים זבח כי-אינם יודעים לעשות רע
 < 2 אל-תבהל על-פיך ולבך אל-ימהר להוציא דבר לפני האלהים
 כי האלהים בשמים ואתה על-הארץ על-כן יהיו דבריך מעטים
 < 3 כי בא החלום ברב ענין וקול כסיל ברב דברים

1 ¶ *Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.*

2 *Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.*

3 *For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.*

In Chapter 5 Solomon takes his first venture into the house of God. All of his rational to this point has been without acknowledging the temple that he had constructed. Keeping your foot is likely connected to keeping your footing, or being careful on slippery areas. Solomon is thus addressing an area where he had seen many fall before. Being more ready to hear, in the house of God, in order to be careful to keep your footing, is contrasted with giving the 'sacrifice of fools'. This 'sacrifice of fools' is foreign to any other scriptures but here it is given the caveat that "They consider not that they do evil." The whole context here seems to be listening rather than talking, and keeping your vows minimal, thus promising the undeliverable is likely this 'sacrifice of fools.'

Noticeably absent here is any consideration of the sacrifice of the serious, or the sacrifice of sinners. No other place considered in Ecclesiastes is either the sacrifice or the house of God. It is insightful that here the preacher, the wisest man to walk on earth, in considering the purpose, profit and meaning of life never mentions or considers mans sin debt, nor mans obligation to worship his creator. Solomon herein only considers mans duty and travail to "*find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.*" Jesus told a parable of what the kingdom of God was compared to, wherein it is likened to a treasure hid in the field. (Matt 13) Solomon, in Ecclesiastes seems to philosophize uncontrollably about the seeking for this treasure, but never addresses the later half of the likeness. Solomon never addresses the giving all that you have in order to obtain the treasure. Neither would the rich young ruler in Matt 10:21.

Solomon's venture into the temple only leaves him with wisdom about keeping your mouth under control. Not letting your mouth be rash, nor your heart be

hasty, and letting your words be few before God, is indeed wise counsel. The reason for it is also insightful. “For God is in heaven, and thou upon earth:” Solomon, here, openly shows himself to be subservient to God in his wisdom. Such was not the case for the upcoming wicked king of Babylon; who in his power mimicked the words of Satan desirous to be likened with the most high. Solomon at least maintained, a humbleness in his greatness.

“*For a dream cometh through a multitude of business...*” in verse 3 there is drawn a contrast between the fools multitude of words and the industrious ones multitude of business. Actions speak louder than words, has never been so eloquently stated. “Your talk talks and your walk talks but your walk talks louder than your talk talks” may have come close. Here Solomon's emphasis in on the fewness of words, less than the diligence of the business.

4 ¶ *When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.*

5 *Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.*

6 *Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?*

7 *For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God.*

In verse 4 through 7 Solomon is illustrating the importance of remaining cautious with your words before God. The vow that is mentioned is likely similar to a tithe or peace offering promise, but remains separate from them. In Deut 12:17-18 says “*Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn, or of thy wine, or of thy oil, or the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flock, **nor any of thy vows which thou vowest**, nor thy freewill offerings, or heave offering of thine hand: 18 But thou must eat them before the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose, ...*” This vowed sacrifice or gift to God seems to be over and above both a tithe and a free will offering. It does not then address any of the 5 major types of offerings outlined in Lev. 1-5. (Lev. 1, burnt offerings; Lev. 2, Meat offerings; Lev. 3, peace offerings; Lev. 4, sin offerings; Lev. 5, trespass offerings) These major types of offerings were fulfilled by Christ who atones for our sin. This vowed offering seems to be something done on the whim of a man, not a response to God's law. i.e. “God if you will keep this or that from happening I will give you half my barely crop”, kind of vow. This seems to fit into Solomon's philosophizing being done in its entirety outside of a Revelation from God, a Revelation that dictates the sacrificial offering of the law.

In verse 6 we find Solomon's first and only mention of Sin. In these verses then (verse 1-6) we find Solomon coming as close as he ever will in this discourse, to words like 'sacrifice', 'vowed offerings', and 'sin'. And in the discourse nothing

touches on mans guilt before God, nor mans need for a sin offering or a redeemer, mediator, or high priest. So too, nothing in Ecclesiastes addresses mans need (and drive) to worship, if worship is considered more than a fear of the Lord.

Summarizing his thoughts in verse 7 Solomon sums up this multitude of dreams, and the multitude of words as a multitude of vanities. Notice here the connection of dreams, making it likely that a vow is something promised to God, if God would do something for you. Such would be connected to a dream. Regardless it is diverse vanity, (with no vexation of spirit included here) and contrasted with the better part, the 'fear thou God', instruction.

This portion of Solomon's dialog, then, is more interesting for where he does not go, as he comes as close to the house of God as he gets in this whole discourse.

8 If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.

Verse 8 is a transition verse where Solomon steps out of the house of God and into a kings palace. He ties back to the oppression theme of chapter 4 wherein the oppressed and the oppressor had no comforter, but here seems to address the dilemma of what are you going to do about it; who are you going to tell. He advises to “*marvel not at the matter*”, and goes on to mention the “*higher than the highest*” holding the responsibility. Notice this phrase 'higher than the highest' is not a reference to God, for in the next clarification “*there be higher than they.*” So the transition is set, let's now consider the position of the higher authorities, the rich and the king.

9 ¶ Moreover the profit of the earth is for all: the king himself is served by the field.

10 He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.

11 When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?

12 The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.

13 There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.

14 But those riches perish by evil travail: and he begetteth a son, and there is nothing in his hand.

15 As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand.

16 And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?

17 All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness.

In verses 9-17 Solomon ...

18 ¶ *Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion.*

19 *Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God.*

20 *For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth him in the joy of his heart.*

In verses 18 – 20 there is brief summary of what Solomon has seen, and his conclusions thus far. These conclusion are not final and indeed seem dangerous to those who know 'the rest of the story' as detailed in Rev 4:11. Again we note that Solomon is arguing life without consideration of God's revelation, mans sin and need of redemption. Still an interesting tact in the book of Ecclesiastes. Here again, he

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching

Law of Language

A. Law - The language used as medium between teacher and learner must be common to both.

Lesson 6 [TOC](#)**Chapter 6 Reasoning of a middle aged man aged to 49**

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 6:1-12

Encourage the class to read the whole book in one sitting again.

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider the death of Solomon's father, David and the struggle to get Solomon on his throne. (2Sam 23, 1King 1, 1Chron 23:1-6)

- Eccl 6:1 ¶ There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men:*
2 A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity, and it is an evil disease.
3 If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he.
4 For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness.
5 Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known any thing: this hath more rest than the other.
6 Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place?

Solomon has thus far introduced all his observations with a positive approaches like “I said in my heart” or “I turned to behold wisdom” or “I returned and considered.” Here “There is an evil which I have seen ...” begins a dissertation that gives consideration to “If I'd never been born.” Again his perspective is “under the sun.” And again his direction is a course toward vanity. The vanity and 'evil disease' here is to have great wealth from God, and no power to 'eat thereof.' This describes the case for physical disease, like ulcers, and this describes the case for overt materialism wherein one has so much he could never consume what he has acquired. The latter seems to be more in emphasis for this chapter.

Verse 3 contrasts the man who does not out gain his need materially. Although he attains a hundred children and long life his soul is not filled with goods and he has no burial. If you take the time to look up the Hebrew word here for 'burial' you find that it means 'burial.' In general we can trust the King James translators, while the modernist translators reference a 'proper burial' here because they are comfortable inserting their opinions into the Words of God. Shame on them. The word of Solomon here is hard and harsh concerning this man's end, and we should not trust modern translators who try to soften or smooth over Solomon's rough edges. This was rough on purpose, and the alternative of 'an untimely birth' is bigger than a miscarriage, that they interpret into this verse. Do not trust a modernist version of the Bible when you study to shew yourself approved unto God, they do not hold to verbal plenary inspiration, and they do not thus give the

words that Solomon put into the inspired Scripture but re-word what they thought he might be trying to say. Stick to a translation, avoid their paraphrase.

In verse four we see the reasoning behind the dire end of this materialist that did not successfully obtain. It is interesting to contrast this verse with Job's declaration:

“Job 1:21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”

Therein concerning arrivals and departures you can see the plight of the unsuccessful materialist contrasted with a righteous man. This is an interesting contrast even for the successful materialist of verse 2.

In verse 5 the ignorant plight of the unsuccessful materialist that did not get his soul filled, nor his body buried is held up to the successful materialist who attained but could not eat all he attained. “This hath more rest than the other” it is said of him. And for him, an untimely verse would have been advantage. Verse 6 then exaggerates the advantage of long life and concludes that both materialists, the successful and the unsuccessful, go to the same place. This is not a declaration that all of mankind goes to the same place. Such a proposition was entertained in chapter 3 and found to be vexation of spirit, i.e. A wrong answer to the struggle and purpose. No this is a declaration for the emptiness of materialism, whether successful or no the end is vanity and a forgotten grave.

7 ¶ All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled.

8 For what hath the wise more than the fool? what hath the poor, that knoweth to walk before the living?

9 Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire: this is also vanity and vexation of spirit.

In verses 7 through 9 Solomon considers what we have learned in this little excursion into the vanity of the materialists. Labor for the mouth but appetites unfulfilled, wise and fool, rich and poor all need vision over desire. Their blindness keeps them all from seeing the sun or knowing anything. (vr 5) Thus materialism is vanity and our consideration here is 'vexation of spirit' i.e. It will not get us to the purpose of life.

10 That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is man: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he.

11 ¶ Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better?

12 For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?

Verse 10 expresses Solomon's frustration at looking for the purpose of life, and

the discovery of “the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end” (Eccl 3:11), within man himself. This struggle, this travail (3:10) goes on within man because man cannot contend with God (“he that is mightier than he.) In Verse 11 this frustration is expanded and hung over all the reasoning that Solomon has done to this point. He is sort of saying “Where are we going with this anyway?” “Are we getting anywhere?” “What is man the better?”

In verse 12 Solomon reaches an end to his search within man himself to reconcile this travail. All his reasoning to this point, reasoning 'under the sun' has been vain and vexation of spirit. In the next chapters Solomon takes a new tact. He begins his role as an advisor. There will be no more vexation of spirit mentioned, because the quest within man for the purpose of life ends here in chapter 6. There will be vanity and things found under the sun, but the vexation, i.e. The annoying irritating fruitless discoveries made within man himself, within this quest is here ended. And where did it now take us? To Solomons concluding question “*For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?*” Twelve chapters from the preacher is hereby divided in half. Six chapters search to discover “*the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end*” within man himself. It comes up with only vexation.

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching

Law of Language

A. Law - The language used as medium between teacher and learner must be common to both.

B. Rule - Use words understood in the same way by the pupils and you -- language clear and vivid to both.

Lesson 7 [TOC](#)
Chapter 7 Reasoning of a mature man aged to 56

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 7:1-29

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider David's charge to Solomon (1King 2) And Solomon's assuming the throne with prayer for wisdom (1King 3).

- 1 ¶ *A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.*
 2 *It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart.*
 3 *Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.*
 4 *The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.*

Solomon is starting a new tact in this chapter. Consider the wisdom of the advice “*A good name is better than precious ointment.*” Align that with the analogy that “*the day of death (is better) than the day of one's birth.*” and this new tact shows Solomon's pursuit of wisdom, in answer to the “*sore travail (that God has given) to the son's of men to be exercised therewith*”

The subtle change in direction is marked by his completion with the things that he found to be a “vexation of spirit”. In his introduction Solomon said that he would travail, in wisdom, but find all works to be a vexation of spirit, (1:14) then all wisdom to be vexation of spirit (1:17) To this point Solomon has shown that all his works (2:11), all other's works (2:17), eat, drink and be merry (2:26), every right work (4:4) and all mens works from beginning to end (4:16) are but vexation of spirit. Then in the last chapter all materialism, whether successful or not, was shown to be vexation of spirit. Now he is approaching his second tact which is stated in 1:17 “*And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.*” So consider that on this new approach to the quest before us, Solomon considers not the good name, nor the day of one's birth, but the day of death as the wise teacher.

In verse 2 he pursues this analogy, to consider it is the destiny of us all, and that the living will lay to heart what he sees there. In verse 3, he considers what makes the heart better, sorrow or laughter. It has been stated in poem as follows:

“I walked a mile with pleasure
 she chatted all the way,
 but I was none the wiser
 for all she had to say.

I walked a mile with sorrow,
and not a word said she,
but oh the things I learned from her
when sorrow walked with me.”

In verse 4 the place to gain wisdom is identified. It is in the house of mourning. Be reminded here, that Solomon has already made his forecast that the pursuit of wisdom in this quest to “*find out the word that God maketh from the beginning to the end*” (3:11) will end in vexation of spirit also. (1:17)

5 *It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.*

6 *For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity.*

In verse 5 and 6 second source for this wisdom answer is considered from the rebuke of the wise. And this source is contrasted with hearing from fools.

7 ¶ *Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad; and a gift destroyeth the heart.*

8 *Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.*

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

10 *Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.*

In verses 7 -10 we consider several hindrances to pursuits of wisdom in this pursuit of mans purpose. Oppression, bribery, grand beginnings, hasty judgment, anger, and nostalgia all counter wise inquiry. Study the list, clean out your habits.

11 ¶ *Wisdom is good with an inheritance: and by it there is profit to them that see the sun.*

12 *For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it.*

Verse 11 and 12 here considers a true advantage being a 'have' vs a 'have-not.' Studying, reading widely, pursuing an education, exploring wisdom and doing research are costly and time consuming activities. In his Proverbs, Solomon encourages his son to pay any price for the gaining of wisdom. There, unlike here however, he speaks thus of the costly pursuit “*If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.*” (Prov 2:4-6)

Besides the inheritance helping, here he calls wisdom, and the money to quest for it, a defence. It is interesting that God hides people like Abraham, Moses, and David away in his higher learning institutes of mountains or deserts before using

them mightily for His purposes. Elijah and other prophets should also come to mind here. Wisdom giveth life to them that have it indeed, to them that would gain it also.

*13 Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked?
14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.*

*15 All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that longeth his life in his wickedness.
16 Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?
17 Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?
18 It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.*

*19 Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city.
20 For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.
21 Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee:
22 For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.*

*23 ¶ All this have I proved by wisdom: I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me.
24 That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?*

*25 I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness:
26 And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her.
27 Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account:
28 Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found.
29 Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.*

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching:

Law of Lesson

A. Law - The lesson to be mastered must be explicable in terms of truth already know by the learner -- the unknown must be explained by means of the known.

Lesson 8 [TOC](#)

Chapter 8 Reasoning of a mature man aged to 63

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 8:1-17

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider Solomon as a father, teacher (Proverbs 1, 2:1,3:1,4:1,5:1,6:1,7:1 'My Son!')

- 1 ¶ *Who is as the wise man? and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? a man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed.*
- 2 *I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God.*
- 3 *Be not hasty to go out of his sight: stand not in an evil thing: for he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him.*
- 4 *Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?*

Who is as the wise man? Chapter 8 of the Preacher's discourse starts with two questions and two relative statements about wisdom. Who is the wise man ... the one with the shine in his face. Who knoweth the interpretation ... the one with boldness of his face. In these next few verses you find Solomon as close as he gets to the truth “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom*” (Prov 9:10, 1:7, 2:5) (cf Psalm 19:9, 34:11, 111:10, Prov 1:29, 8:13, 10:27, 14:26-27, 15:16, 33, 16:6, 19:23, 22:4, 23:17) Surely he thought of Moses as he penned the line about the shining face (Exod 33:11) and surely he pictured his 8 verb introduction to Proverbs when he spoke of knowing the interpretation of *things*. Now Solomon contrasts this one 'as a wise man' as able to get around the vexation of Spirit found in both chapter 3's times and seasons, and chapter 4's eat drink and be merry He promptly sets about this ambition.

In verse 2 we are counseled to keep the commandments of man. It is interesting that Solomon approaches from this direction as opposed to starting with the commandment of God. If man can visualize and comprehend the authority and judgment of a king, he could also do so for his creator and supreme judge. “*And that in regard of the oath of God*” does not fit here, nor do I regard it, but it seems to connect to the intro to chapter 4 previous. That left aside this seems to introduce a judgment that man will answer to 'some day.' He makes reference to the unquestioned authority that a mere king has. This authority is not the supreme but is given here by Solomon as illustration of such. Solomon expended much energy in his Proverbs to develop that a child must learn to fear the authority of his parent physical creator, before he could learn to fear the authority of his eternal creator. So here he holds up the authority of a king as a judge in order for us to draw focus on a supreme eternal judge.

5 *Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment.*

6 ¶ *Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, therefore the misery of man is great upon him.*

7 *For he knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be?*

8 *There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it.*

In these verses we are attracted back to chapter three's consideration of a time and purpose of everything, particularly with a coming judgment. The Bible says “*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:*” (Heb 9:27) and here it is developed that down inside, every man knows that. Some refuse to bring that to conscience mind. Verses 5-8 lay's this knowledge right out in plain view.

9 ¶ *All this have I seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is done under the sun: there is a time wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt.*

10 *And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this is also vanity.*

11 *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.*

12 *Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him:*

13 *But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.*

In verses 9-13 it is developed that the sinner may appear to be getting away with his evil because they do not regard this coming judgment. Seeing them go to the grave without regard to God does not alter the truth held by those who do fear God, that it shall not be well with the wicked. A mirroring of this consideration is done by the Apostle James when he writes “*Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.*” (Jas 4:14) Indeed this theme that evil continues because judgment is not speedily executed is thematic throughout the Bible which warns “*... behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.*” (Nu 32:23) and “*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*” (Gal 6:7)

14 ¶ *There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said that this also is vanity.*

Another related thing called vanity in this area, the first being a delayed

judgment seeming like evil is uncontested, (verses 9-12) is when the righteous get worked over evilly and the evil get what should go to the righteous. In consideration that there is coming an eternal righteous judgment with a supreme and eternal righteous judge, this to is empty, i.e. Vanity.

15 Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun.

16 When I applied mine heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth: (for also there is that neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes:)

17 Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea further; though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.

Here is marked a crescendo in Solomons leading us into the discovery of purpose. In verse 15 he revisits a previous pathway of thought (Eccl 2:24, 3:13, 5:18) that was found to be vexation of spirit. (i.e. It did not get us along down the path of finding purpose in life under the sun). Again he appoints this philosophy of eat drink and be merry, as adequate for our days under the sun, but now we have considered that there is to be a judgment after our days under the sun. Verse 16 and 17 now address the inadequacy of our quest up to this point. This is a paramount discovery.

Recall that our quest is a sore travail “ *to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.* ” (Eccl 1:13) and again “ *I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it. He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.* ” (Eccl 3:10-11) And now here in these verses closing chapter 8, Solomon accepts defeat in that purpose. “ *Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea further; though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it.* ” Where then shall we now turn?

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching:

Law of Lesson

A. Law - The lesson to be mastered must be explicable in terms of truth already know by the learner -- the unknown must be explained by means of the known.

B. Rule - Begin with what is already well known to the pupil upon the subject and with what he has himself experienced -- and proceed to the new material by single, easy, and natural steps, letting the know explain the unknown.

Lesson 9 [TOC](#)
Chapter 9 Reasoning of a thinking man aged to 70

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 9:1-18

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider Solomon's building of the temple (1King 5-6, cf 1 Chron 17,22, 2Chron 1-4) and building his own house (1Kings 7)

1 ¶ *For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them.*

2 *All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.*

3 *This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.*

4 ¶ *For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion.*

5 *For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward: for the memory of them is forgotten.*

6 *Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.*

7 *Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works.*

8 *Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.*

9 *Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun.*

10 *Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.*

11 ¶ *I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.*

12 *For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.*

13 ¶ *This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me:*

14 *There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it:*

15 *Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man.*

16 *Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.*

17 *The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools.*

18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good.

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching:

Law of The Teaching Process

A. Law – Teaching is arousing and using the pupil's mind to grasp the desired thought or to master the desired art. Excite and direct the self-activities of the pupil, and as a rule tell him nothing that he can learn himself.

Lesson 10 [TOC](#)
Chapter 10 Reasoning of a thinking man aged to 77

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 10:1-20

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider the dedication of Solomon's temple and the appearance of God (1King 8-9:9, 2Chron 5-7)

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching:

Law of The Teaching Process

A. Law – Teaching is arousing and using the pupil's mind to grasp the desired thought or to master the desired art. Excite and direct the self-activities of the pupil, and as a rule tell him nothing that he can learn himself.

B. Rule - Stimulate the pupil's own mind to action. Keep his thought as much as possible ahead of your expression, placing him in the attitude of a discoverer, an anticipator.

Lesson 11 [TOC](#)
Chapter 11 Reasoning of a wise man aged to 84

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 11:1-10

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider Solomons wealth and fame. (1King 9:10-11:25, 2Chron 8-9) and his son's failure in the kingdom (1King 11:26-12, 2Chron 10-12)

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching:
Law of the Learning Process

A. Law - The pupil must reproduce in his own mind the truth to be learned.

Lesson 12 [TOC](#)
Chapter 12 Reasoning of a wise man aged to 91

Read aloud in Class Ecclesiastes Chapter 12:1-14

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider the longevity of wisdom (Prov 8)

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching:

Law of the Learning Process

- A. Law - *The pupil must reproduce in his own mind the truth to be learned.*
- B. Rule - Require the pupil to reproduce in thought the lesson he is learning -- thinking it out in its various phases and applications until he can express it in his own language.

Lesson 13 [TOC](#)

Conclusion

Ecclesiastes Reasoning of purpose, priority and vanity

Read aloud in Class Proverbs 1:1-10, 8:1-36

Accompanying Material on Solomon: Consider Solomon's 4000 proverbs of which we can study only 1000. (Prov 1)

For yourself quickly review one of Milton's 7 Laws of Teaching:

Law of the Review Work

A. Law - The test and proof of teaching done must be a reviewing, rethinking, re-knowing, reproducing, and applying of the material that has been taught.

B. Rule - Review, review, review, reproducing the old, deepening its impression with new thought, linking it with added meanings, finding new applications, correcting any false views, and completing the true.

Appendix Palm Memo Outline

Purpose in Eccl study

1. Explore the Purpose in life
2. Explore the Purpose in Study - Reading the Bible as literature - Hebrew poetry
3. The Pursuit of Wisdom - from the wisest
4. The Pursuit of Teaching someone else

Book Outline

Lesson 1 Who was Solomon?

Eccl 1:1-2

Background

Intro chapter 1 The prelude

Lesson 2 Pursuits of Pleasures and labors Eccl 1:3-2:22

Lesson 3 Circles in life 3:1-

Lesson 4 Oppressions in life 4:1-

Lesson 5 Instructions for life 5:1-

Lesson 6 ... Eccl 6:1-

Lesson 7 ... Eccl 7:1-

Lesson 8 ... Eccl 8:1-

Lesson 9 ... Eccl 9:1-

Lesson 10 ... Eccl 10:1-

Lesson 11 ... Eccl 11:1-

Lesson 12 ... Eccl 12:1-l

Lesson 11 Conclusion . Eccl 1:1-18.

chap 2

vr 1-2. Comedy and pleasure

vr 3-11 What one may DO

I made me, I got me, I gathered me! Notice the me me me

vr 12-16 Beholding Wisdom and Folly

vr 17-20 Despare of it all

vr 21-23 Perhaps if labor was in wisdom? ... Not so .. it is stil vain

vr 24-26 Conclusion "Eat drink and be merry for tommorrow ye shall die"

this I also saw (ERRANTLY?) as from God

Appendix
Schofield's Introduction and Outline⁵

The Book of Ecclesiastes or The Preacher

This is the book of man "under the sun," reasoning about life; it is the best man can do, with the knowledge that there is a holy God, and that He will bring everything into judgment. The key phrases are "under the sun;" "I perceived"; "I said in my heart." Inspiration sets down accurately what passes, but the conclusions and reasonings are, after all, man's. That those conclusions are just in declaring it "vanity" in view of judgment, to devote life to earthly things, is surely true; but the "conclusion" (#Ec 12.13) is legal, the best that man apart from redemption can do, and does not anticipate the Gospel. Ecclesiastes is in five parts:

- I. Theme, 1.1-3.
- II. Theme proved, 1.4-3.22.
- III. Theme unfolded in the light of human sufferings, hypocrisies, uncertainties, poverty and riches, 4.1-10.20.
- IV. The best thing possible to the natural man apart from God, 11.1-12.12.
- V. The best thing possible to man under the law, 12.13,14.

5 The Scofield Study Bible Special Helps by Dr. C.I. Scofield Copyright 1909,1996

Appendix Seven Laws of Teaching

Law of the Teacher

- A. Law - A teacher must know that which he would teach.
- B. Rule - Know thoroughly and familiarly the lesson you wish to teach --teach from a full mind and a clear understanding.

Law of the Learner

- A. Law - A learner must attend with interest to the material to be learned.
- B. Rule - Gain and keep the attention and interest of the pupils upon the lesson. Do not try to teach with out attention.

Law of Language

- A. Law - The language used as medium between teacher and learner must be common to both.
- B. Rule - Use words understood in the same way by the pupils and you -- language clear and vivid to both.

Law of Lesson

- A. Law - The lesson to be mastered must be explicable in terms of truth already know by the learner -- the unknown must be explained by means of the known.
- B. Rule - Begin with what is already well known to the pupil upon the subject and with what he has himself experienced -- and proceed to the new material by single, easy, and natural steps, letting the know explain the unknown.

Law of The Teaching Process

- A. Law – Teaching is arousing and using the pupil's mind to grasp the desired thought or to master the desired art. Excite and direct the self-activities of the pupil, and as a rule tell him nothing that he can learn himself.
- B. Rule - Stimulate the pupil's own mind to action. Keep his thought as much as possible ahead of your expression, placing him in the attitude of a discoverer, an anticipator.

Law of the Learning Process

- A. Law - The pupil must reproduce in his own mind the truth to be learned.
- B. Rule - Require the pupil to reproduce in thought the lesson he is learning -- thinking it out in its various phases and applications until he can express it in his own language.

Law of the Review Work

A. Law - The test and proof of teaching done must be a reviewing, rethinking, re-knowing, reproducing, and applying of the material that has been taught.

B. Rule - Review, review, review, reproducing the old, deepening its impression with new thought, linking it with added meanings, finding new applications, correcting any false views, and completing the true.