



THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

CHASING THE WIND

Week 5

WEEK 4 REVIEW

- Chapter 6 discusses the importance of finding enjoyment and living a balanced life. The Teacher also cautions against frivolity and heaping up useless words.
- Chapter 7 changes tone to a more pithy delivery. Important topics include having a good reputation, learning from grief, accepting rebuke, avoiding foolishness, bribery and anger, not living in the past, finding a balance between righteousness and foolishness, and avoiding the company of wicked women (or men).

SUBMITTING TO AUTHORITY

- Read Ecclesiastes 8:1-9. What is our responsibility to rulers according to verse 2? What reason is given?
- Jewish leaders took an oath of fidelity to their king (to David in 2 Samuel 5:1-3, to Joash in 2 Kings 11:17, and to Solomon in 1 Chronicles 29:24).

SUBMITTING TO AUTHORITY

- According to verse 4, who can question a ruler's authority? Is this right?
- What has been your experience navigating the challenges of being under human authorities? Do you agree with Qoheleth's advice on obeying authority? Is that how you tend to operate?

SUBMITTING TO AUTHORITY

- What does the New Testament say about living under human authority? How did Jesus do it?
- In a New Covenant context, we obey authorities as part of our obedience to God. (Romans 13:1-7) BUT we recognize that God's authority is highest (Acts 4:19).

FUNCTIONS OF GOVERNMENT

- The function of human government is three-fold: protection, punishment and promotion.
- Protection: Civilizations need some sort of restraint and rule of law to protect its citizens. (Ex. Acts 21:27-37)

FUNCTIONS OF GOVERNMENT

- Punishment: Duly appointed officials are God's servants to "bear the sword" (Romans 13:3-4, 1 Peter 2:13-14).
- Promotion: Human government should promote the general welfare of its people (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

OUR RESPONSE TO AUTHORITY

- Submit: Romans 13:1, 1 Peter 2:13
- Pay your taxes: Matthew 17:24-27,
Matthew 22:15-22
- Pray for leaders: 1 Timothy 2:1-3

OUR RESPONSE TO AUTHORITY

- Is it always wrong to question those in authority? What limits should there be on questioning the conduct of rulers?
- "That government is best which governs the least, because its people discipline themselves." - Thomas Jefferson

OUR RESPONSE TO AUTHORITY

- "We are to take responsibility for the right ordering of civil society without falling prey to the idea that it is within our power to build the Kingdom of God on earth." - Charles Cole, *Christian Mission in the Third Millennium*

INJUSTICE REDUX

- Read Ecclesiastes 8:10-17. What does Qoheleth say about the injustice of sinners who prolong their life? How does delayed justice encourage people to do evil?
- Do you struggle with the same tension of watching wickedness flourish and justice delayed? How do you resolve that tension?

INJUSTICE REDUX

- If sinners persist in their sin because justice is not immediately served, why do you think God allows such a thing to continue? (see 2 Peter 3:9-10)
- "Why goodness is shown to the undeserving is a question that looks to the remarkable mercy of God."

OUR BUSYNESS & GOD'S BUSINESS

- "The very busyness of life worries us into asking where it is taking us, and what it means, if it does mean anything. We hardly need Qoheleth to point out that this is the very question that defeats us." - Derek Kidner, *A Time to Mourn and A Time to Dance*.

- Have you ever felt defeated by busyness? Do you think God wants us to be busy? Explain.

EXPECT PERPLEXITY

- One cannot always understand why things happen the way they do. What we see does not always define what actually is. What does our limited knowledge of God's work teach us about our lives and about the theme of Ecclesiastes?

SHARED FATE?

- Read Ecclesiastes 9:1-6. What is the "same fate" that the Teacher describes for all people? Why does this same event happen to all?
- What is meant by "a living dog is better than a dead lion"? What advantage does life give? List some things that living people have which the dead do not.

LIFE AFTER DEATH?

- Jehovah's witnesses and other materialists use Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 and Psalm 6:5 to say that death is the end of existence, so people are not conscious after death. How would you respond?
- What insights do the following passages give us into this matter?: Luke 16:19-31, Luke 20:37-38, Revelation 6:9-11

CONSULTING SPIRITS

- Other people believe they can communicate with the dead or pray to dead saints. What application does Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 have in this case?
- What insights do the following passages give us into this matter?: Leviticus 20:27, Deuteronomy 18:10-12, 1 Samuel 28:7-20

LOVE AND ENJOYMENT

- Read Ecclesiastes 9:7-18. What is the conclusion that Qoheleth reaches in verses 7-10? Where else has he said this?
- What is the significance of white garments and oil on the head? (v. 8)
- To whom might be the "one whom you love" be referring?

THE FINITUDE OF LIFE

- What attitude should we have toward work (v.10)? What reason is given?
- What principle should we learn from verses 11-12? (See 1 Thess. 5:2, Revelation 16:15)
- Some people believe that they will be given a chance after they die to repent and be saved. What does the Bible teach? (Hebrews 9:27, Matthew 25:31-46)

WISDOM AND CHANCE

- What does it mean that "time and chance happen to them all"? How does chance fit into God's perfect, pre-ordained plans?
- Does Qoheleth's illustration in verses 13-18 teach us that wisdom is useless? What does it teach us about the character of people?