

Ecclesiastes 8 New International Version (NIV)

¹ Who is like the wise?

Who knows the explanation of things?
A person's wisdom brightens their face
and changes its hard appearance.

² Obey the king's command, I say,
because you took an oath before
God. ³ Do not be in a hurry to leave the
king's presence. Do not stand up for a
bad cause, for he will do whatever he
pleases. ⁴ Since a king's word is
supreme, who can say to him, "What are
you doing?"

⁵ Whoever obeys his command will
come to no harm,
and the wise heart will know the
proper time and procedure.

⁶ For there is a proper time and
procedure for every matter,
though a person may be weighed
down by misery.

⁷ Since no one knows the future,
who can tell someone else what is to
come?

⁸ As no one has power over the wind to
contain it,
so ^a no one has power over the time
of their death.

As no one is discharged in time of war,
so wickedness will not release those
who practice it.

⁹ All this I saw, as I applied my mind to
everything done under the sun. There is
a time when a man lords it over others
to his own ^b hurt. ¹⁰ Then too, I saw the
wicked buried—those who used to come
and go from the holy place and receive
praise ^c in the city where they did this.
This too is meaningless.

¹¹ When the sentence for a crime is not
quickly carried out, people's hearts are
filled with schemes to do
wrong. ¹² Although a wicked person who
commits a hundred crimes may live a
long time, I know that it will go
better with those who fear God, who are
reverent before him. ¹³ Yet because the
wicked do not fear God, it will not go
well with them, and their days will not
lengthen like a shadow.

¹⁴ There is something else meaningless
that occurs on earth: the righteous who
get what the wicked deserve, and the
wicked who get what the righteous
deserve. This too, I say, is
meaningless. ¹⁵ So I commend the
enjoyment of life, because there is
nothing better for a person under the
sun than to eat and drink and be
glad. Then joy will accompany them in
their toil all the days of the life God has
given them under the sun.

¹⁶ When I applied my mind to know
wisdom and to observe the labor that is
done on earth—people getting no sleep
day or night — ¹⁷ then I saw all that God
has done. No one can comprehend
what goes on under the sun. Despite all
their efforts to search it out, no one can
discover its meaning. Even if the wise
claim they know, they cannot really
comprehend it.

a. [Ecclesiastes 8:8](#) Or over the human spirit to retain it, / and so

b. [Ecclesiastes 8:9](#) Or to their

c. [Ecclesiastes 8:10](#) Some Hebrew manuscripts and Septuagint (Aquila); most Hebrew manuscripts *and are forgotten*

Discussion Questions

1. This chapter begins with a surprisingly optimistic view of the benefits of wisdom. Have you witnessed or experienced this?
2. We all have “kings” in our lives, as well as a Heavenly King. Shall we obey all of their edicts?
3. Do the wicked still receive praise today? How are we to respond?
4. In v.13 the author defines the wicked as those who do not fear God, and that they will not enjoy long life. Do this definition and this observation both still seem true to you?
5. The chapter ends with statements about the impossibility of fully comprehending the true meaning of our existence. Do you agree?