

**This book contains the account
of King Solomon observing what
people do and of realizing that
only reverencing God and
obeying him is worthwhile. We
call this book
Ecclesiastes**

Everything is mysterious

¹ *I am Solomon, the son of King David. I rule in Jerusalem and people call me 'The ◀Preacher/Religious Teacher▶'.*

² *I say that everything is mysterious;
everything is hard for me to understand;
it is difficult to understand why everything
happens.*

³ *◀What do people gain from all the work that they do here on the earth?/It seems that people gain no lasting benefit from all the work that they do here on the earth.▶
[RHQ]*

⁴ *Each year old people die and babies are born,
but the earth never changes.*

⁵ *Each morning the sun rises, and each evening it sets,
and then it hurries around to where it started from.*

⁶ *The wind blows south,*

and then it *turns around to start blowing towards* the north.

It goes around and around in circles.

⁷ All the streams flow into the sea,
but the sea is never full.

The water returns *to the sky*, and *when it rains*,
the water returns to the rivers,
and it flows again to the sea.

⁸ Everything is boring,
with the result that we do not even want to
talk about it.

We [SYN] see things,
but we always want to see more.

We [SYN] hear things,
but we always want to hear more.

⁹ *Everything continues to be the same as it has
always been;*
things that happen have happened previ-
ously, and they will happen again.
What has been done before will be done
again.

There is nothing *really* new in this world [MTY].

¹⁰ Sometimes people say, "Look at this! This is
something new [RHQ]!"

But it has existed previously;
it existed before we were born.

¹¹ *People* do not remember the things *that hap-
pened* long ago,
and in the future, people will not remember
what we are doing now.

*What the religious teacher found out about
wisdom*

¹² I, the Religious Teacher, have been the king of Israel *for many years, ruling* in Jerusalem.
¹³ By being wise, I concentrated on understanding everything that was being done on the earth [MTY]. *But I found out that* God causes *all of* us to experience things that cause us to be unhappy/miserable. ¹⁴ It seems that nothing that happens on the earth really enables us to do anything useful. It is *like* [MET] chasing the wind.

¹⁵ *Many* things that are crooked cannot be caused to become straight;
 we cannot count things that do not exist.

¹⁶ I said to myself, “*Hey*, I am wiser than any of the kings that ruled in Jerusalem before *I became the king*. I am wiser and I know more than any of them!” ¹⁷ *So* I determined to learn *more* about being wise and to learn about knowing about many things, and *also* to learn about *doing things that are* very foolish [DOU]. *But* I found out that trying to understand those things was also *useless, like* chasing the wind.

¹⁸ The wiser I became, the more disappointed I became.
 The more things I knew about, the sadder I became.

2

Pleasure does not bring happiness

¹ *Then* I said to myself, “Okay, I will try to do everything that I enjoy. I will find out whether doing what I enjoy can truly enable me to be happy.” *But* I found out that doing that was

also useless/senseless. ² So I said *to myself*, “It is foolish to laugh *all the time*, and continually doing what I enjoy does not seem to bring any lasting benefit.” ³ So, after thinking a lot about it, I decided to ◀cheer myself/cause myself to be happy▶ by drinking *a lot of wine*. So while I was still trying to be wise, I decided to do things that *many* people do to be happy during the short time that they are alive on the earth. ⁴ I did great things: I *caused* houses to be built for myself and vineyards to be planted. ⁵ I *told my workers* to make gardens and parks. *Then I told them to fill the gardens with many kinds of fruit trees.* ⁶ I *told them to build reservoirs to store water to irrigate the fruit trees.* ⁷ I bought male and female slaves, and babies *who later became my slaves* were born in my palace. I also owned more livestock than any of the previous kings in Jerusalem had owned. ⁸ I also accumulated large amounts of silver and gold *that were paid to me* from the treasures of kings and rulers of provinces. *I hired* men and women to sing for me, and I had many ◀concubines/slave wives▶ who gave me *much* pleasure [EUP]. ⁹ So, I became greater than anyone else who had ever lived in Jerusalem, and I was *very* wise.

¹⁰ I got everything [LIT] that I [SYN] saw and wanted.

I did everything [LIT] that I thought would enable me to be happy.

All those things that I [SYN] enjoyed were *like* a reward for all my hard work.

11 *But* then I thought about all the hard work that I [SYN] had done *to get all those things*, and none of it seems to bring any lasting benefit [DOU].

It was all *like* chasing the wind.

Being wise also seemed useless

12 Then I started to think about being wise, and *also about* being foolish [DOU].

I said to myself, "I certainly do not think that [RHQ] the next king will be able to do anything better than I can."

13 And I thought, "Surely it is better to be wise than to be foolish, like light is better than darkness,

14 *because* wise people *walk in the daylight and* [IDM] can see where they are going, but foolish people walk in the darkness *and cannot see where they are going."*

But I *also* realized that both wise people and foolish people eventually die.

15 So I said to myself,

"I am very wise, but I will *die at the end of my life*, like foolish people do.

So ◀how has it benefited me to be very wise?/it certainly has not benefited me to be very wise [RHQ]▶.

I do not understand why *people consider that* it is valuable to be wise.

16 Wise people and foolish people all die.

And after we die, we will all eventually be forgotten [DOU]."

¹⁷ So I hated being alive, because everything that we do here on the earth [MTY] distresses me. It all seems to be useless *like* chasing the wind.

Working hard seemed useless

¹⁸ I *also began to* hate all the hard work that I had done, because *when I die*, everything *that I have acquired* will belong to the next king.

¹⁹ And ◀who/no one▶ knows [RHQ] whether he will be wise or whether he will be foolish. But even if he is foolish, he will acquire all the things that I worked very hard and wisely to get.

²⁰ I thought about all the hard work that I had done. *It seemed useless*, and I became depressed/discouraged.

²¹ Some people work wisely and skillfully, using the things that they have learned. But *when they die*, they leave everything, and someone who has not worked hard acquires those things. And that also *seemed to* be senseless and caused me to be discouraged.

²² So, it seems that people do not [RHQ] get much for all the hard work that they do and for worrying.

²³ Every day the work that they do causes them to experience pain and to be worried. And during the night, their minds are not able to rest. That also is very frustrating.

²⁴ *So I decided that* the best thing that we can do is to enjoy what we eat and drink, and *also* enjoy our work. And I realized that those things are what God intends for us.

²⁵ There is absolutely no one [RHQ] who is able to enjoy those things if God does not give those things to him. ²⁶ God enables those who please him to be wise, to know

many things, and to enjoy *many things*. But if sinful people work hard and become rich, God *can* take their money away from them and give it to those who please him. But that also is something that is difficult for me to understand. *Their working hard seems* useless, like chasing the wind.

3

There is a right time for everything

- ¹ There is a right/correct time for everything, a time for everything that we do in this world.
- ² There is a time to be born, and there is a time to die.
There is a time to plant *seeds*, and there is a time to harvest crops.
- ³ There is a time to kill *people*, and there is a time to heal *people*.
There is a time to tear things down, and there is a time to build things.
- ⁴ There is a time to cry, and there is a time to laugh.
There is a time to mourn, and there is a time to dance *joyfully*.
- ⁵ There is a time to throw away stones *from a field*, and there is a time to gather stones *to build walls/houses*.
There is a time to embrace *people*, and there is a time to not embrace *people*.
- ⁶ There is a time to search for things, and there is a time to stop searching for things.

There is a time to keep/save things, and there is a time to throw things away.

⁷ There is a time to tear *our old clothes*, and there is a time to mend *clothes*.

There is a time to say nothing, and there is a time when we should speak.

⁸ There is a time when we should love *things that people do*, and there is a time when we should hate *things that people do*.

There is a time for war, and there is a time for peace.

⁹ ◀What do people gain from all the work that they do?/It seems that people gain very little from all the work that they do [RHQ]▶. ¹⁰ I have seen the work that God has given people to do. ¹¹ God has appointed a time that is right/correct for everything to happen. He has *also* caused people to realize that there are things that will endure forever. But in spite of that, no one can completely understand everything that God has done, from the time that he starts doing things until he finishes them. ¹² I know that the best [LIT] thing for us people to do is to rejoice and to do good things *all* during the time that we are alive. ¹³ And I also know that everyone should eat and drink, and enjoy the work that they do. Those are things that God gives to us. ¹⁴ I *also* know that what God does endures forever. No one can add to what God does, and no one can take away from the things that God does. God does those things in order that people would revere him.

15 Things that exist now have already existed previously,
and things that will happen in the future
have already happened previously;
God causes the same things to happen many
times.

Injustices in the world

16 Furthermore, I saw that on this earth [MTY],
even in the courts where we expect judges to
make right decisions about what people
had done,
they did many wicked [DOU] things.

17 So I said to myself [SYN], “God will judge
both righteous *people* and wicked *people*;
there is a time *for him to do that*,
because there is a time for him to do everything.”

18 And regarding humans, I *also* said to myself,
“God is testing us, to show us that *in one way*
people are no different than animals, 19 because
what happens to people happens to animals.
Animals die, and people die. We all must breathe
to remain alive. *With regard to that*, people have
no advantage over animals, so I have a difficult
time understanding that. 20 *People and animals*
all die and are buried. We are all made of soil,
and *when we die*, our corpses become soil again.

21 No one knows [RHQ] for sure that when we
die, our souls/spirits go up to heaven and the
souls/spirits of animals go down to the place
where the dead are.”

22 So I concluded that the best thing for us
people to do is to be happy about the work that
we do, because that is what God has given to us. I

say that because no one of us [RHQ] knows what happens to us after we die.

4

Other things that he found hard to understand/accept

¹ I thought some more about all the suffering that people are caused to experience on the earth [MTY].

I saw the tears of people who were ◀oppressed/
treated cruelly▶

and who had no one to comfort/encourage them.

Those who oppressed them had power,

and there was absolutely no one who was able to comfort those who were being oppressed.

² So I thought that those who are already dead are more fortunate than those who are still alive.

³ And those who have not been born yet are more fortunate than those who are still alive and those who have died,

because those who have not been born have not seen all the evil things that are done on the earth.

⁴ I also thought about all the hard work that people do and the skills that they have. And I thought about how they compete with each other because they are envious of others, *and I concluded that* this also is something that is not accomplishing anything useful, *like* chasing the wind.

⁵ Foolish people *refuse to work*;
they sit idly, with their hands folded, *and do not work*.

So they ruin themselves.

⁶ So I say, "It is better to be content with not having much money, than to work very hard and try to get a lot of money, which is *as useless as* chasing the wind."

⁷ I thought about something else that happens on the earth [MTY] that seems senseless.

⁸ There are men who live alone;
they do not have a wife or children or any brothers living with them;
every day they work *very hard*, without stopping, to get a lot of money,
but they are never satisfied with the things that they have.

They never ask *themselves*,
"Why am I working very hard to earn more money?"

Why am I not doing things that would cause me to be happy?"

What they do also seems senseless.

⁹ Having someone *work* with you is better than being by yourself *all the time*.

If you have a friend, he can help you to do your work.

¹⁰ If you fall down, he can help you get up again. But if you fall down when you are alone, it will be difficult for you,

because there will be no one to help you stand up.

¹¹ Similarly, if two people sleep together, they can keep each other warm.

But someone who sleeps alone will certainly not [RHQ] be warm.

¹² Someone who is alone can easily be attacked and defeated by another person, but two people can help each other and ◀resist/defend themselves against▶ someone who attacks them.

Three people can defend themselves even more easily,

like a rope that is made from three cords is harder to break than a rope made from two cords.

When a poor young man becomes king

¹³ A young man who is poor but wise is a better person than a foolish old king who refuses to pay attention when people try to give him good advice. ¹⁴ It is possible for a young man like that to succeed and some day become king, even if his parents were poor or even if he was in prison some of the time. ¹⁵ But then some other young man becomes king, and everyone ◀starts to support/is pleased with▶ him. ¹⁶ Large crowds of people crowd around him. But after a few years, they will reject him, *too*. So it is all senseless, *like* chasing after the wind.

5

Be careful about making promises

¹ When you enter God's temple, you should be sure to listen carefully. Doing that is better than offering sacrifices to God *and then not obeying him*, which is foolish.

² Think carefully before you speak [MTY] or before you promise God that you will do something [IDM].
Do not forget that God is in heaven and he is all-powerful
and you are here on the earth,
so think carefully before you *make any promises to God*.

³ If you are continually thinking *and worrying* about things,
you will have bad dreams about them and not rest *well*.

And the more you talk,
the more likely it will be that you will say things that are foolish.

⁴ When you solemnly promise God that you will do something, do not be foolish by delaying in doing it, because God is not pleased with foolish people. Do *all* the things that you promise God that you will do. ⁵ It is better to not promise *anything* than to promise to do something, and *then* not doing it. ⁶ Do not sin by promising to do something and then not doing it. And *when you promise God to do something and do not do it*, do not say to God's priest that it was a mistake for you to promise to do that. If you do that, God will certainly [RHQ] become very angry with you, and he will take from you everything that

you [SYN] have worked to acquire. ⁷ Promising to do something and not doing it is like [SIM] a dream that has no value; instead, revere God *by doing what you promised him that you would do.*

Officials cheat each other

⁸ Do not be surprised if you see poor *people* being ◀oppressed/treated cruelly▶ *by powerful/influential people*, or if you see judges making unjust decisions throughout the land. *That happens* because the people who do that are supervised *and cheated by* more important officials [DOU], ⁹ and even the king forces the people to give him some of the crops that they harvest.

The futility of wealth

¹⁰ Everyone who tries to *get as much* money as they can will never think that they have enough. They will never be satisfied with the money that they have. That also is senseless.

¹¹ The more money that we have, the more people want us to spend our money to buy things for them. So people who have a lot of money do not [RHQ] benefit from it; they see [MTY] it when they get it, but it soon ◀disappears/is completely spent▶.

¹² Those who work hard sleep peacefully *at night*, even if they do not have much food to eat. But rich *people* do not sleep well,

because *they worry* about their money.

13 I have seen *another* terrible thing that happens here on the earth [MTY]:

People save *up all* their money and become rich,
but they are not helped by saving a lot of money,

14 *because* something happens that causes their money to be gone,
and when they die,
there is no money for their children to get/
inherit.

15 When we are born,
we do not bring anything with us,
and when we die,
we take nothing with us
from all that we have earned by our working hard.

16 That also seems senseless.
People bring nothing *into the world when they are born*,
and they leave *this world* taking nothing with them.

They have worked hard,
but they receive no lasting benefit [MET].

17 *Furthermore, rich people* are always miserable [MET] and sad,
and depressed/discouraged and often sick
and ◀resentful/thinking that what has happened to them is unfair▶.

18 So, the best thing for people to do here on the earth during the few years that God allows them to be alive is to eat and drink and to enjoy their work, because those are the things that God

has given to them. ¹⁹ If people are rich and have a lot of possessions, and are able to ◀enjoy/be happy with▶ the things that they have and to enjoy their work, those things are *also* gifts from God. ²⁰ Those people do not worry much about *everything that has happened* during the time that they have been alive, because God enables them to be happy doing everything that they do.

6

¹ I have seen something *else here* on this earth that troubles people. ² God enables some people to get a lot of money and possessions and to be honored; they have everything [LIT] that they want. But God *sometimes* does not allow them to continue to enjoy those things. Someone else gets them and enjoys them. That seems senseless and unfair.

³ Someone might have 100 children and live for many years. But if he is not able to enjoy the things that he has acquired, and if he is not buried *properly after he dies*, I say that a child that is dead when it is born is more fortunate. ⁴ That dead baby's birth is meaningless; it does not even have a name. It goes directly to the place where there is only darkness. ⁵ It does not *live* to see the sun or know anything. But it finds more rest than rich people do *who are alive*. ⁶ Even if people could live for 2,000 years, if they do not enjoy the things that God gives to them, *it would have been better for them never to have been born*.

All people who live a long time certainly [RHQ] all go to the same place— *to the grave*.

⁷ People work hard to *earn enough money to buy* food to eat [MTY],
but *often* they never get enough to eat.

⁸ So it seems that [RHQ] wise people do not receive more lasting benefits than foolish people do.

And it seems that [RHQ] poor people do not benefit from knowing how to conduct their lives.

⁹ It is better to enjoy the things that we already have [MTY]
than to constantly want more things;
continually wanting more things is *senseless*,
like chasing the wind.

¹⁰ All the things that exist *on the earth* have been given names.

And everyone knows what people are like, so it is useless to argue with someone (OR, with God) who is stronger than we are.

¹¹ The more *that we* talk,
the more *often we say things that are* senseless,
so it certainly does not [RHQ] benefit us to talk a lot.

¹² We live for only a short time; we disappear like [SIM] a shadow disappears *in the sunlight*. No one [RHQ] knows what is best for us while we are alive, and no one [RHQ] knows what will happen to us after we die [EUP].

7

The best things in life

- 1 *Having* a good reputation [MTY] is better than fine perfume,
and the day that we die is better than the day that we are born.
- 2 It is better to go to a house where people are mourning *about someone who has died* than to go to a house where people are feasting,
because everyone will die some day,
and people who are alive should think seriously [IDM] about that.
- 3 It is better to be sad than to be *always* laughing,
because being sad can cause us to think more about how we should conduct our lives [IDM].
- 4 Wise *people* who go to where others are mourning think about *the fact that some day they also will die*,
but foolish people [PRS] *do not think about that*; they are always [MTY] laughing.
- 5 It is better to pay attention to *someone who is wise* rebuking you
than to listen to the songs of a foolish person.
- 6 By *listening to* foolish people laughing
we will not *learn any more than by listening to* the crackling of thorns *being burned* under a pot.
Listening to fools is senseless.
- 7 When wise people say to others, “You must pay me a lot of money for me to protect you,”

that causes those wise people to become foolish,
and *accepting* bribes causes people to become unable to do what is fair/just.

8 Finishing something is better than starting something,
and being patient is better than being proud.

9 Do not quickly ◀lose your temper/react to things angrily▶,
because it is foolish people [SYN] who become very angry.

10 Do not say, “Things were a lot better [RHQ] previously,”
because it is people who are not wise who say that.

11 Being wise is better than inheriting *valuable things*;
being wise provides lasting benefits for every person on the earth [MTY].

12 We are *sometimes* protected by being wise
like we are *sometimes* protected by having a lot of money,
but being wise is better *than having a lot of money*,
because being wise prevents us from *doing foolish things that would* cause us to die.

13 Think *carefully about* what God has done.
Certainly no one can [RHQ] cause to become straight

- the things that God has caused to be crooked.
- 14 When things are going well for you, be happy, and when things are not going well for you, remember that God is the one who causes good things to happen and who also causes disasters.
- 15 During all the time that I have been alive I have seen a lot of [HYP] things that seem senseless.
I have seen righteous people die *while they are still young*,
and I have seen wicked people remain alive for a very long time
in *spite of* their continuing to be wicked.
- 16 So do not think that you are very righteous and do not think that you are very wise, *because if you think those things*, you will destroy yourself.
- 17 If you do what is evil or do what is foolish, you might die while you are still young.
- 18 Continue to avoid doing what is evil and doing what is foolish;
avoid doing both of those things by continually revering God.
- 19 If you are wise, you will be more powerful/influential
than the ten most powerful/influential men in your city.
- 20 There is no one in this world who *always* does what is right

and who never sins.

21 Do not pay attention [IDM] to everything that people say,
because if you do that, you might hear your servant cursing you.

22 You know that you have also cursed other people.

23 I said *to myself* that I would use my wisdom to study all the things *that I have written about*, but I was not able to do it successfully.

24 Wisdom seems to be far from me;
there is no one [RHQ] who can truly understand everything.

25 But I decided to investigate things and by my wisdom try to understand the reason for everything.

I also wanted to understand why people act wickedly
and why they act very foolishly.

26 *One thing I learned was that* ◀allowing a woman to seduce you/having sex with a woman to whom you are not married▶ is worse than dying.

A woman who tries to seduce men is *as dangerous as a trap* [MET].

If you allow her to put her arms around you, it will be as though she will be fastening you with chains.

Women like that will capture sinful men,

but men who please God will escape from such women.

²⁷ This is what I have learned:
 I tried to learn more and more about things
 to try to find out the reason for everything,
²⁸ and I continued to try to learn more,
 but I could not find *all that I was searching for*.
But one thing that I found out was that
 among 1,000 *people* I found one righteous
 man,
 but I did not find even one righteous woman.
²⁹ *But* I did learn one thing:
 When God created people, they were righ-
 teous,
 but they have found many ways to do many
 evil things.

8

¹ *I will tell you about* those who are truly wise
 [RHQ]
 with the result that they can explain why
 everything happens.
 Being wise enables people to be happy [MTY]
 and enables them to smile.

Obey the king

² You solemnly promised God that you would
 obey what the king commands, so do that. ³ Do
 not quickly disobey the king. And do not join
 those who want to rebel against him, because the
 king will do what he wants to do. ⁴ We need to
 obey what the king says more than we need to
 obey what anyone else says; no one can say to

the king, “◀Why are you doing that?/You should not be doing that.▶ [RHQ]”

⁵ If you obey what the king commands,
he will not harm you.

So be wise, and know the correct/right time to do things and the right way to do them.

⁶ Although people experience many troubles/
difficulties,
there is a right/correct time to do things, and
there is a right/correct way *to do them*.

⁷ No one knows what will happen in the future,
so there is no one [RHQ] who can tell us what
is going to happen.

⁸ We cannot control the wind,
and we cannot control when we will die.
Soldiers are not permitted to go home during a
battle,
and evil people will not be saved by *doing
what is evil*.

⁹ I thought about all those things, and I thought
about all [HYP] the other things that happen on
this earth. I saw that *sometimes* people cause
those whom they control to suffer. ¹⁰ I also saw
that *sometimes* after evil *people* die, they are
highly honored at their funerals by the people
in the cities where they had done *evil* deeds. It
seemed to be difficult to understand why that
happens.

¹¹ If evil people are not immediately punished,
it causes *other* people [SYN] to *also* want to do
evil things. ¹² But even if sinful people commit
100 crimes, and *even if they* live for a long time,

I know that things will go better for those who greatly respect and revere God. ¹³ *I also know* that things will not go well for those who are evil, because they do not revere God. Shadows *do not last a long time*. Similarly [SIM], evil people will not live a long time.

¹⁴ Another thing that *sometimes* happens on this earth is that bad things happen to righteous people, and good things happen to evil people. It is difficult to understand why that happens. ¹⁵ So I decided that I would recommend that people be happy while they are alive, because the best thing that people can do here on this earth is to eat and drink and be happy. Enjoying doing those things will help people while they do their work, all the time that God has given to them to remain alive here on the earth.

¹⁶ I thought about being wise and about people who work very hard, working day and night and not taking time to sleep. ¹⁷ Then I thought about everything [HYP] that God has done, and I realized that no one can understand everything that happens here on this earth. Truly, people are not able to fully understand everything *that God understands*, even if they try hard to do that. Even if wise people claim that they understand it all, they cannot.

9

Everyone dies

¹ I thought about all those things, and I concluded that God controls *what happens to*

everyone, even those who are wise and those who are righteous. No one knows whether *others* will love them or whether they will hate them.

² *But we know that some time in the future we will all die;*

it does not matter whether we act righteously or wickedly,

whether we are good or whether we are bad,
whether we are acceptable for *worshiping God*
or whether *we have done things to cause us to be unacceptable;*

it does not matter if we offer sacrifices *to God* or if we do not;

it does not matter if we do what we have promised God that we will do or if we do not;
we all die.

The same thing will happen to good people and to sinful people,
to those who solemnly promise *to do things for God* and to those who are afraid to make such promises.

³ It seems wrong that the same thing happens to everyone on this earth: Everyone dies [EUP]. Furthermore, people's inner beings are full of evil. People do foolish things while they are alive, and then they die and join those who are already dead. ⁴ While we are alive, we confidently expect *that good things will happen to us*. *We despise dogs*, but it is better to be a dog that is alive than to be a *majestic lion* that is dead.

⁵ We who are alive know that *some day* we will die,
but dead people do not know anything.
Dead people do not receive any more rewards,
and people soon forget them.

⁶ *While they were alive*, they loved *some people*,
they hated *some people*, they envied *some people*,
but that all ends when they die.
They will never again be a part of anything that
happens here on the earth.

⁷ *So I say*, be joyful [DOU] while you eat your food and drink your wine, because that is what God wants you to do. ⁸ Wear nice [MTY] clothes and make your face look nice. ⁹ Enjoy living with your wife whom you love, all during the time that God has given to you to be alive here on this earth. And even though it is difficult to understand why many things happen, enjoy doing the work that you do here on this earth.

¹⁰ Whatever you are able to do, do it with all your energy, because *some time you will die*, and in the place of the dead where you are going, no one works or plans to do anything or knows anything or is wise.

¹¹ I have seen something else here on the earth:
The person who runs fastest does not *always* win the race,
the strongest soldiers do not *always* win the battle,
the wisest people do not *always* have food,
the smartest people do not *always* become rich,

and people who have studied a lot are not
always ◀honored/treated very specially▶
 by others;

we cannot *always* control what things will hap-
 pen to us and where they will happen.

¹² No one knows when he will die [EUP];
 fish are cruelly caught in a net,
 and birds are caught in snares/traps;
 similarly [SIM], people experience disasters
 at times when they do not expect them to
 happen.

Being wise is better than being foolish

¹³ Once I saw something that a wise man did
 that impressed me. ¹⁴ There was a small town,
 where only a few people lived. The army of a
 great king came to that town and surrounded
 it. They built dirt ramps up against the walls in
 order to climb up and attack the town. ¹⁵ In that
 town there was a man who was poor but very
 wise. Because of doing what that man *suggested*,
 the town was saved; but people *soon* forgot about
 him. ¹⁶ So I realized that although being wise
 is better than being strong, if you are poor, no
 one will appreciate what you do, and people will
 soon forget what you said.

¹⁷ Speaking quietly what is *very* wise is *much*
 more sensible
 than a king shouting to foolish people.

¹⁸ Being wise is more useful
 than *a lot of* weapons;
 but if you do one foolish thing,

it is possible that because of doing that, you will ruin all the good things that you have done.

10

- ¹ *A few* dead flies in *a bottle of* perfume cause *all* the perfume to stink.
Similarly [SIM], a small amount of acting foolishly can have a greater effect than acting wisely.
- ² If people think sensibly, it will lead them to do what is right;
if they think foolishly, it causes them to do what is wrong.
- ³ Even while foolish people walk along the road, they show that they do not have good sense; they show everyone that they are not wise.
- ⁴ Do not quit working for a ruler when he is angry with you;
if you remain calm, he will *probably* stop being angry.
- ⁵ There is something *else* that I have seen here on this earth,
something that rulers sometimes do that is wrong/inappropriate:
- ⁶ They appoint foolish people to have important positions,
while they appoint rich *people* to have unimportant positions.
- ⁷ They allow slaves *to ride* on horses *like rich people usually do*,

but they force officials to walk like slaves usually do.

⁸ *It is possible that those who dig pits will fall into one of those pits.*

It is possible that someone who tears down a wall will be bitten by a snake that is in that wall.

⁹ *If you work in a quarry, it is possible that a stone will fall on you and injure you.*

It is possible that men who split logs will be injured by one of those logs.

¹⁰ *If your axe is not sharp [DOU], you will need to work harder to cut down a tree, but by being wise, you will succeed.*

¹¹ *If a snake bites a man before he charms/tames it, his ability to charm snakes will not benefit him.*

¹² *Wise people say [MTY] what is sensible, and because of that, people honor them; but foolish people are destroyed by what they say [MTY].*

¹³ *When foolish people start to talk, they say things that are foolish, and they end by saying things that are both wicked and foolish.*

¹⁴ *They talk ◀too much/without ceasing▶.*

None of us knows what will happen in the future,

or what will happen after we die.

- 15 Foolish people become *so* exhausted by the work that they do that they are unable to find the road to their town/homes.
- 16 Terrible things will happen to the people of a nation whose ruler is a foolish young man, and whose *other* leaders continually eat, all day long, every day.
- 17 *But* a nation will prosper if its ruler is from a ◀noble/well-educated▶ family, and if its *other* leaders feast *only* at the proper times, and *if they eat and drink only* to be strong, not to become drunk.
- 18 Some men are very lazy *and do not repair the rafters*, with the result that the rafters sag *and collapse*; and if they do not repair the roof, water will leak into the house *when it rains*.
- 19 Eating food and drinking wine causes us to laugh and be happy, *but* we are able to enjoy those things only if we have money *to buy them*.
- 20 Do not even think about cursing the king, or cursing rich *people*, *even* when you are *alone* in your bedroom,

because *it is possible that* a little bird will hear
what you are saying,
 and tell those people what you said *about*
them.

11

Advice from nature

- ¹ Give generously to others *some of* the money
 [MET] that you have;
 if you do that, later you will get back an
 equal amount.
- ² Share some of what you have with ◀seven or
 eight/several▶ *others,*
 because you do not know when you will
 experience a disaster,
and if you give some of what you have to others,
when you experience that disaster, they will
kindly help you.
- ³ *It is always true that* when clouds are full of
 water,
 they pour rain on the earth.
Similarly, wherever a tree falls on the ground,
 that is where it will remain.
- ⁴ If farmers see in what direction the wind is
 blowing,
 they will know whether it is wise at that time
 to plant things or not.
It is also true that if farmers look at the clouds
and see that they are blowing from the west,
which means that it will probably rain,
 they will not *try to* harvest their crops on
 that day.

⁵ We do not know where the wind comes from
or where it goes,
and we do not know how bodies are formed
in women's wombs.
Similarly [SIM], God is the one who made every-
thing,
and we cannot *fully* understand what God
does.

⁶ *Start* planting your seeds in the morning,
and do not stop planting them until the
evening,
because you do not know which ones will grow
better,
the ones you plant in the morning or the
ones you plant later in the day,
or whether both will grow well.

Youth and old age

⁷ It is very delightful to be alive
and see [MTY] the sun *rise every morning*.

⁸ *Even* if people live for many years,
they should enjoy all of them.
But they should not forget that *some day they will
die*
and then they will never be able to see any
light again,
and we do not know what will happen to us
after we die.

⁹ You young people, be happy while you are still
young.
Enjoy [IDM] doing the things that you want
to do.

But do not forget that *some day* God will judge you
concerning all the things that you do.
10 *So when you are young* [MTY], do not worry
about anything,
and do not pay attention to the pains that
you have in your body,
because we will not remain young and strong
forever.

12

- 1 While you are still young, keep thinking about
God, who created you.
Do that before *you are old* and you experi-
ence many troubles,
during the years when you say
“I no longer enjoy being alive.”
- 2 *When you become old*, the light from the sun
and moon and stars will *seem dim to you*,
and *it will seem that the rain clouds always*
return quickly after it rains.
- 3 Then your *arms that you use to protect* [MET]
your bodies will shake/tremble,
and your *legs that support* [MET] your bodies
will become weak.
Many of your *teeth that you use to grind/chew*
your food will fall out,
and your *eyes that you use to look out of*
windows will not see clearly.
- 4 Your *ears* [MET] will not hear the noise in the
streets,
and you will not be able to hear clearly
the sound of people grinding grain with
millstones.

You will be awakened in the morning by hearing
the birds singing/chirping,
but you will not be able to hear well the
songs that ◀the birds/people▶ sing.

⁵ You will be afraid to be in high places
and afraid of dangers on the roads that you
walk on.

Your *hair* will become *white like* [MET] the
flowers of almond trees.
When you try to walk, you will drag yourself
along like [MET] grasshoppers,
and you will no longer desire *to have sex*.

Then you will *die and* go to your eternal home,
and people who will mourn for you will be
in the streets.

⁶ *Think much about God now, because* soon our
lives will end,
like [MET] silver chains or golden bowls that
break easily,

or like pitchers/jugs that are broken at the water
fountain,
or like broken pulleys at a well.

⁷ Then our corpses will *decay and* become dirt
again,
and our spirits will return to God, the one
who gave us our spirits.

⁸ So I say *again* that it is difficult to understand
why everything happens;
everything is mysterious.

The conclusion

⁹ I was considered to be a very wise man, and
I taught the people many things. I assembled/

collected and wrote down many proverbs, and I carefully thought about and studied them. ¹⁰ I searched for the right words, and what I have written is reliable and true.

¹¹ The things that *I and other* wise people say *teach people what they should do*; they are like [SIM] ◀goads/sharp sticks that people use to strike animals to direct where they should go▶. They are like [SIM] nails that stick out of pieces of wood. They are given to us by *God, who is like* [MET] our shepherd. ¹² So, my son, pay careful attention to what I have written, and choose carefully what you read that others have written, *because* writing proverbs/books is endless, and *trying to* study them all will cause you to become exhausted.

¹³ *Now* you have heard all *that I have told you*, and here is the conclusion:
Revere God, and obey his commandments,
because those commandments summarize everything that people should do.

¹⁴ And do not forget that God will judge everything that we do,
good things and bad things,
even things that we do secretly.

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