Ecclesiastes

1 The words of the Preacher, son of David, king
in Jerusalem.
2 “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher.
“Vanity of vanities!
All is vanity.”
3 What does a man gain from all his toil at which
he toils under the sun?
4 A generation goes and a generation comes, but
the earth remains forever.
5 The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries to
its place where it rises again.
6 The wind goes to the south and turns to the
north;
round and round the wind goes, and on its
circuits the wind returns.
7 All the rivers flow to the sea, yet the sea is not
full.
To the place where the rivers flow, there
they return to flow again.
8 All things are wearisome, more than a man can
express.
The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the
ear filled with hearing.
9 What has been is what will be, and what has
been done is what will be done;
there is nothing new under the sun.
10 Is there anything of which one can say, “Look,
this is new”?
It has already been in the ages before us.
11 Those who came before are not remembered;

nor will those who come later be
remembered by those who come after
them.
12 I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in
Jerusalem.
13 I set my heart to seek and explore by
wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is a
grievous task that God has given mankind to be
occupied with.
14 I have seen all the deeds done under the
sun, and look, all is vanity and a pursuit of wind.
15 What is crooked cannot be made straight, and
what is lacking cannot be counted.
16 I said in my heart, “Look, I have grown and
increased in wisdom beyond all who were over
Jerusalem before me; my heart has seen much
wisdom and knowledge.”
17 I set my heart to know wisdom and to know
madness and folly. I knew that this too is a
pursuit of wind.
18 For in much wisdom is much grief, and
whoever increases knowledge increases
sorrow.

2

1 I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you
with joy; enjoy what is good.” But look, this too
was vanity.
2 Of laughter I said, “It is madness,” and of joy,
“What does it accomplish?”
3 I explored in my heart how to cheer my body
with wine, while my heart guided me in
wisdom, and how to take hold of folly, until I

could see what is good for mankind to do under heaven during the numbered days of their lives.

4 I made my works great. I built houses for myself and planted vineyards for myself.

5 I made gardens and parks for myself and planted in them every kind of fruit tree.

6 I made pools of water for myself, to water from them a woodland of growing trees.

7 I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves born in my house. I also had many herds and flocks, more than all who were in Jerusalem before me.

8 I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasures of kings and provinces. I acquired male and female singers, and the delights of mankind—concubines in abundance.

9 I became great and surpassed all who were in Jerusalem before me, and my wisdom also remained with me.

10 Whatever my eyes desired I did not withhold from them; I denied my heart no joy, for my heart rejoiced in all my toil. This was my portion from all my toil.

11 Then I considered all the works my hands had done and the toil at which I had toiled to do them, and look, all was vanity and a pursuit of wind; there was no gain under the sun.

12 Then I turned to consider wisdom, madness, and folly. For what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done.

13 I saw that wisdom has an advantage over folly, just as light has an advantage over

darkness.
14 The wise man has his eyes in his head, but
the fool walks in darkness. Yet I also knew that
the same fate befalls them all.
15 Then I said in my heart, “What befalls the
fool will befall me too. Why then have I been so
very wise?” And I said in my heart, “This too is
vanity.”
16 For a wise man, like a fool, will not be
remembered forever; in the days to come all
will already have been forgotten. How the wise
man dies just like the fool!
17 So I hated life, because the work done under
the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and
a pursuit of wind.
18 I hated all my toil at which I toiled under
the sun, because I must leave it to the man who
comes after me.
19 Who knows whether he will be wise or
foolish? Yet he will rule over all the toil at which
I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun.
This too is vanity.
20 So I turned to despair in my heart over all
the toil at which I had toiled under the sun.
21 For a man may toil with wisdom,
knowledge, and skill, yet leave his portion to a
man who did not toil for it. This too is vanity
and a great evil.
22 For what does a man have from all his toil
and the striving of his heart at which he toils
under the sun?
23 For all his days are pain, and his occupation
is grief; even at night his heart does not rest.
This too is vanity.

24 There is nothing better for a man than to eat
and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This
too, I saw, is from the hand of God.
25 For who can eat, and who can enjoy more
than I?
26 For to the man who pleases him God gives
wisdom, knowledge, and joy, but to the sinner
he gives the task of gathering and accumulating,
to give to the one who pleases God. This too is
vanity and a pursuit of wind.

3

1 For everything there is a season, and a time for
every matter under heaven:

2 a time to be born and a time to die;
a time to plant and a time to uproot what is
planted;
3 a time to kill and a time to heal;
a time to break down and a time to build;
4 a time to weep and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn and a time to dance;
5 a time to throw stones away and a time to
gather stones;
a time to embrace and a time to refrain
from embracing;
6 a time to seek and a time to lose;
a time to keep and a time to throw away;
7 a time to tear and a time to sew;
a time to keep silent and a time to speak;
8 a time to love and a time to hate;
a time for war and a time for peace.
9 What does the worker gain from his toil?

10 I have seen the task that God has given
mankind to be occupied with.
11 He has made everything beautiful in its
time. He has also put eternity in their hearts, yet
man cannot discover the work God has done
from beginning to end.
12 I know that there is nothing better for them
than to rejoice and do good during their lives,
13 and that everyone should eat and drink and
find enjoyment in all his toil—this is the gift of
God.
14 I know that whatever God does will endure
forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing
taken from it. God has done this so that people
may fear before him.
15 What is has already been, and what will be
has already been; God seeks what has been
driven away.
16 I also saw under the sun: In the place of
justice, there was wickedness, and in the place
of righteousness, there was wickedness.
17 I said in my heart, “God will judge the
righteous and the wicked, for there is a time
there for every matter and every deed.”
18 I said in my heart concerning mankind,
“God tests them so that they may see that they
themselves are animals.”
19 For the fate of mankind and the fate of
animals are the same: As one dies, so dies the
other. They all have the same breath, and man
has no advantage over the animals, for all is
vanity.
20 All go to one place; all came from dust, and

all return to dust.
21 Who knows whether the spirit of man goes
upward and whether the spirit of the animal
goes downward to the earth?
22 So I saw that there is nothing better than for
a man to rejoice in his work, for that is his
portion. For who can bring him to see what will
be after him?

4

1 Again I considered all the oppressions
committed under the sun. Look at the tears of
the oppressed, with no one to comfort them!
Power was in the hands of their oppressors, and
there was no one to comfort them.
2 I considered the dead who have already died
more fortunate than the living who are still
alive.
3 But better than both is the one who has not
yet existed, who has not seen the evil work done
under the sun.
4 I saw that all toil and all skill in work come
from a man's rivalry with his neighbor. This too
is vanity and a pursuit of wind.
5 The fool folds his hands and eats his own
flesh.
6 Better one handful with rest than two
handfuls with toil and a pursuit of wind.
7 Again I saw vanity under the sun:
8 There is one alone, with no one beside him,
neither son nor brother. Yet there is no end to all
his toil, and his eye is never satisfied with
wealth. "For whom am I toiling and depriving
myself of good?" This too is vanity and a
grievous task.

9 Two are better than one, because they have a
good reward for their toil.
10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.
But woe to the one who falls alone, with no
one to lift him up!
11 Again, if two lie together, they keep warm;
but how can one keep warm alone?
12 Though an attacker may overpower one, two
can stand against him, and a threefold
cord is not quickly broken.
13 Better a poor and wise youth than an old
and foolish king who no longer knows how to
heed a warning.
14 For he came out of prison to reign, though
he had been born poor in his kingdom.
15 I saw all the living who walk under the sun
with the second youth who would stand in his
place.
16 There was no end to all the people at whose
head he stood, yet those who come later will not
rejoice in him. Surely this too is vanity and a
pursuit of wind.

5

1 Guard your step when you go to the house of
God. Draw near to listen rather than to offer the
sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they
are doing evil.
2 Do not be rash with your mouth, and do not
let your heart hurry to utter a word before God,
for God is in heaven and you are on earth.
Therefore let your words be few.

3 For a dream comes with much occupation,
and a fool's voice with many words.
4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay
in paying it, for he takes no pleasure in fools.
Pay what you vow.
5 It is better not to vow than to vow and not
pay.
6 Do not let your mouth cause you to sin, and
do not say before the messenger, "It was a
mistake." Why should God be angry at your
voice and destroy the work of your hands?
7 For with many dreams and many words
there is vanity. But fear God.
8 If you see oppression of the poor and the
robbery of justice and righteousness in a
province, do not be astonished at the matter, for
one high official watches over another, and
higher ones are over them.
9 The profit of the land is for all; even a king is
served by the field.
10 Whoever loves money is not satisfied with
money, nor whoever loves abundance with
income. This too is vanity.
11 When goods increase, those who consume
them increase. What advantage does their
owner have, except to look at them with his
eyes?
12 Sweet is the sleep of the laborer, whether he
eats little or much, but the abundance of the
rich does not let him sleep.
13 There is a grievous evil I have seen under
the sun: riches kept by their owner to his own
harm.

14 Those riches are lost through a bad venture,
and he fathers a son but has nothing in his hand.
15 As he came from his mother's womb, naked,
so he will go again as he came. He will take
nothing from his toil that he can carry in his
hand.
16 This too is a grievous evil: Just as he came,
so he will go. What does he gain from toiling for
the wind?
17 All his days he eats in darkness, with much
grief, sickness, and anger.
18 Look, this is what I have seen to be good
and fitting: to eat and drink and find enjoyment
in all the toil at which one toils under the sun
during the numbered days of life God has given
him, for this is his portion.
19 Also, when God gives a man wealth and
possessions and enables him to enjoy them, to
take his portion and rejoice in his toil, this is the
gift of God.
20 For he does not often remember the days of
his life, because God keeps him occupied with
the joy of his heart.

6

1 There is an evil I have seen under the sun,
and it weighs heavily on mankind:
2 a man to whom God gives wealth,
possessions, and honor, so that his soul lacks
nothing of all he desires, yet God does not
enable him to enjoy it, and a stranger enjoys it.
This is vanity and a grievous affliction.

3 Though a man fathers a hundred children
and lives many years, however many the days of
his years may be, if his soul is not satisfied with
good and he does not even have a burial, I say a
stillborn child is better off than he.
4 For it comes in vanity and goes in darkness,
and in darkness its name is covered.
5 Though it has not seen the sun or known
anything, it has more rest than he.
6 Even if he lives twice a thousand years but
sees no good, do not all go to one place?
7 All a man's toil is for his mouth, yet his
appetite is not satisfied.
8 For what advantage has the wise man over
the fool? What advantage has the poor man who
knows how to walk among the living?
9 Better what the eyes see than the wandering
of desire. This too is vanity and a pursuit of
wind.
10 Whatever exists has already been named,
and it is known what man is; he cannot contend
with one stronger than himself.
11 For there are many words that increase
vanity. What does a man gain?
12 For who knows what is good for a man in
life, during the numbered days of his fleeting
life, which he passes like a shadow? Who can
tell a man what will be after him under the sun?

7

1 A good name is better than fine perfume, and
the day of death than the day of birth.

2 It is better to go to a house of mourning than to
a house of feasting, for this is the end of all
mankind, and the living take it to heart.
3 Sorrow is better than laughter, for through a
sad face 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 joy.
5 It is better to hear the rebuke of a wise man
than to hear the song of fools.
6 For like the crackling of thorns under a pot, so
is the laughter of the fool.
This too is vanity.
7 Surely oppression drives a wise man mad, and
a bribe destroys the heart.
8 Better the end of a matter than its beginning;
better a patient spirit than a proud spirit.
9 Do not be quick in your spirit to be angry, for
anger rests in the bosom of fools.
10 Do not say, “Why were the former days better
than these?”
For it is not from wisdom that you ask this.
11 Wisdom is good with an inheritance and an
advantage to those who see the sun.
12 For wisdom gives shelter as money gives
shelter, but the advantage of knowledge is
this: Wisdom preserves the life of its
possessor.
13 Consider the work of God: Who can make
straight what he has made crooked?
14 In the day of prosperity enjoy the good, and in
the day of adversity consider: God has
made the one as well as the other, so that

man cannot discover anything that will
come after him.

15 I have seen everything in the days of my
fleeting life: There is a righteous person who
perishes in his righteousness, and a wicked man
who lives long in his wickedness.
16 Do not be overly righteous, and do not make
yourself too wise. Why should you ruin
yourself?
17 Do not be overly wicked or be a fool. Why
should you die before your time?
18 It is good to take hold of this without letting
your hand go from that, for whoever fears God
will come through them all.
19 Wisdom strengthens a wise man more than
ten rulers in a city.
20 For there is no righteous man on earth who
does good and never sins.
21 Also, do not take to heart all the words
people speak, lest you hear your servant cursing
you,
22 for your heart knows that many times you
too have cursed others.
23 All this I tested by wisdom. I said, “I will be
wise,” but it was far from me.
24 What exists is far off and deep, very deep.
Who can discover it?
25 I turned my heart to know, explore, and
seek wisdom and the reason of things, and to
know that wickedness is folly and foolishness is
madness.
26 I find more bitter than death the woman
whose heart is snares and nets, and whose

hands are chains. The one who pleases God
escapes her, but the sinner is caught by her.
27 “Look, this I found,” says the Preacher,
“adding one thing to another to find the reason,
28 which my soul still seeks but has not found:
One man among a thousand I found, but a
woman among all these I did not find.
29 Look, this alone I found: God made man
upright, but they have sought many schemes.”

8

1 Who is like the wise man? Who knows the
interpretation of a matter? A man’s wisdom
brightens his face, and the hardness of his face
is changed.
2 I say: Keep the king’s command because of
your oath before God.
3 Do not hurry to leave his presence, and do
not persist in an evil matter, for he does
whatever he pleases.
4 For the word of a king has authority, and
who can say to him, “What are you doing?”
5 Whoever keeps the command will
experience no evil, and a wise heart knows the
time and judgment.
6 For every matter has a time and judgment,
though a man’s misery weighs heavily upon him.
7 For he does not know what will be; who can
tell him how it will be?
8 No man has power over the wind to restrain
the wind, nor authority over the day of death.
There is no discharge in war, and wickedness
will not deliver those who practice it.

9 All this I saw as I set my heart to every deed
done under the sun, at a time when one man
rules over another to his harm.
10 Then I saw the wicked buried, who had
come and gone from the holy place, and they
were forgotten in the city where they had acted
so. This too is vanity.
11 Because the sentence against an evil deed is
not carried out quickly, the heart of mankind is
fully set on doing evil.
12 Though a sinner does evil a hundred times
and lives long, yet I know that it will be well
with those who fear God, who fear before him.
13 But it will not be well with the wicked, nor
will he prolong his days, which are like a
shadow, because he does not fear before God.
14 There is a vanity that occurs on earth:
There are righteous people who receive what
the deeds of the wicked deserve, and wicked
people who receive what the deeds of the
righteous deserve. I said that this too is vanity.
15 So I commended joy, for there is nothing
better for a man under the sun than to eat and
drink and rejoice. This will accompany him in
his toil through the days of life God has given
him under the sun.
16 When I set my heart to know wisdom and to
see the task done on earth—for a man's eyes see
no sleep either day or night—
17 then I saw all the work of God: Man cannot
discover the work done under the sun. However
much a man toils in seeking it, he will not
discover it; even if a wise man says he knows, he
cannot discover it.

9

1 For I took all this to heart and examined it
all: The righteous, the wise, and their deeds are
in the hand of God. Man does not know whether
love or hatred awaits; all is before them.
2 Everything comes alike to all: One fate
comes to the righteous and the wicked, to the
good, the clean and the unclean, to the one who
sacrifices and the one who does not. As with the
good, so with the sinner; as with the one who
swears, so with the one who fears an oath.
3 This is an evil in all that is done under the
sun: One fate comes to all. The heart of
mankind is also full of evil, and madness is in
their hearts during their lives, and afterward
they go to the dead.
4 For whoever is joined to the living has hope,
for a living dog is better than a dead lion.
5 For the living know that they will die, but the
dead know nothing; they have no further
reward, for their memory is forgotten.
6 Their love, their hatred, and their jealousy
have already perished; never again will they
have a portion in anything done under the sun.
7 Go, eat your bread with joy and drink your
wine with a cheerful heart, for God has already
accepted your works.
8 Let your garments always be white, and let
oil never be lacking on your head.
9 Enjoy life with the wife you love all the days
of your fleeting life that he has given you under
the sun, all your fleeting days, for this is your
portion in life and in your toil at which you toil
under the sun.

10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with
your might, for there is no work or planning or
knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, where you are
going.
11 Again I saw under the sun that the race is
not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor
bread to the wise, nor wealth to the discerning,
nor favor to the skillful, for time and chance
happen to them all.
12 For man does not know his time. Like fish
caught in a cruel net and birds caught in a
snare, so mankind is ensnared in a time of
calamity when it falls upon them suddenly.
13 This wisdom too I saw under the sun, and it
seemed great to me:
14 There was a small city with few men in it,
and a great king came against it, surrounded it,
and built great siegeworks against it.
15 A poor wise man was found in it, and he
delivered the city by his wisdom, yet no one
remembered that poor man.
16 So I said, “Wisdom is better than strength,”
but the poor man’s wisdom is despised, and his
words are not heard.
17 The words of the wise heard in quiet are
better than the shouting of a ruler among fools.
18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but
one sinner destroys much good.

10

1 Dead flies make a perfumer’s oil stink and
bubble;
a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

2 A wise man's heart inclines to his right, but a
fool's heart to his left.
3 Even when a fool walks on the road, he lacks
sense and shows everyone that he is a
fool.
4 If a ruler's anger rises against you, do not leave
your place, for calmness lays great
offenses to rest.
5 There is an evil I have seen under the sun, like
an error proceeding from a ruler:
6 Folly is set in very high places, while the rich
sit in low places.
7 I have seen servants on horses and princes
walking on the ground like servants.
8 Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and
whoever breaks through a wall will be
bitten by a serpent.
9 Whoever quarries stones may be hurt by them,
and whoever splits wood is endangered
by it.
10 If the iron is dull and its edge is not
sharpened, more strength must be used;
but wisdom has the advantage of bringing
success.
11 If the serpent bites before it is charmed, there
is no profit for the charmer.
12 The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious,
but the lips of a fool swallow him up.
13 The beginning of the words of his mouth is
folly, and the end of his speech is evil
madness.
14 Yet the fool multiplies words.
Man does not know what will be;
who can tell him what will be after him?

15 The toil of fools wearies each one, for he does
not know the way to the city.
16 Woe to you, O land, whose king is a child and
whose princes feast in the morning!
17 Blessed are you, O land, whose king is of noble
birth and whose princes eat at the proper
time, for strength and not for
drunkenness!
18 Through laziness the roof sags, and through
idle hands the house leaks.
19 A feast is prepared for laughter, and wine
gladdens life, and money answers
everything.
20 Do not curse the king even in your thoughts,
and do not curse the rich in your
bedroom, for a bird of the sky may carry
your voice, and a winged creature may
report the word.

11

1 Cast your bread upon the waters, for after
many days you will find it.
2 Give a portion to seven, and also to eight, for
you do not know what calamity will come
upon the earth.
3 If the clouds are full of rain, they empty it on
the earth;
and if a tree falls to the south or to the
north, where the tree falls, there it will be.
4 Whoever watches the wind will not sow, and
whoever looks at the clouds will not reap.
5 Just as you do not know the path of the wind or
how the bones grow in the womb of a

pregnant woman, so you do not know the
work of God, who makes everything.
6 In the morning sow your seed, and in the
evening do not let your hand rest, for you
do not know which will prosper, this or
that, or whether both alike will be good.
7 Light is sweet, and it is good for the eyes to see
the sun.
8 If a man lives many years, let him rejoice in
them all, but let him remember the days
of darkness, for they will be many.
All that is coming is vanity.
9 Rejoice, young man, in your youth, and let your
heart cheer you in the days of your youth.
Walk in the ways of your heart and in what
your eyes see, but know that for all these
things God will bring you into judgment.
10 Remove grief from your heart and put away
suffering from your flesh, for youth and
the prime of life are fleeting.

12

1 Remember your Creator in the days of your
youth, before the days of trouble come
and the years draw near when you say, “I
have no pleasure in them”;
2 before the sun and the light, the moon and the
stars are darkened, and the clouds return
after the rain;
3 in the day when the keepers of the house
tremble and the strong men bend, when
the women who grind cease because they

are few, and those who look through the windows grow dim;

4 when the doors to the street are shut as the sound of grinding fades, when one rises at the sound of a bird and all the daughters of song are brought low;

5 when they fear heights and terrors are in the road, when the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper is weighed down, and the caper berry fails.

For man goes to his eternal home, and mourners go about the streets.

6 Before the silver cord is snapped and the golden bowl is broken, before the pitcher is shattered at the spring and the wheel is broken at the cistern,

7 and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

8 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "all is vanity."

9 Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge. He weighed, searched out, and arranged many proverbs.

10 The Preacher sought to find pleasing words and to write upright words of truth.

11 The words of the wise are like goads, and the sayings of the masters of collections like firmly driven nails; they are given by one shepherd.

12 Beyond these, my son, be warned: Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the flesh.

13 The conclusion of the matter, all having
been heard: Fear God and keep his
commandments, for this concerns all mankind.
14 For God will bring every deed into
judgment, with every hidden thing, whether
good or evil.

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