

Worldly Kings & the King of the Universe (Part 2)
Ecclesiastes 8:1-17 (12-17)
Reading: Proverbs 1:1-7

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Join me in Ecclesiastes 8:1-17 (prev: 1-11; this evening: 12-17)

Solomon's theme is still wisdom for **living** under fickle *human authority* (**king...supervisor**).

Five principles for living wisely under an earthly king.

- 1. You can't ignore the king's *authority* (vv.2-6). Solomon had *four tips*:**
 - a. *Obey the rules.*
 - b. *Live in loyalty.*
 - c. *Don't complain.*
 - d. *Don't buck the system (no shortcuts).*
- 2. You must understand the king's *limits* (vv.7-8).**
 - a. *He isn't superman!*
 - b. Even the king can't tell the future.
 - c. He can't tame the wind or deny death.
 - d. He can't get away w/ evil: *evil will not deliver those who practice it.*
- 3. You might suffer under the king's *evil* (vv.9-11).**
 - a. Not *all* kings are *good kings*!

This time, we'll examine...

Two more principles for living wisely under an *earthly king*.

- 1. You should fear the King of kings (vv. 12-15)**
- 2. You should consider a wise king's *conclusions* (v.1; vv.16-17).**

...pray...

You can rejoice in the King of kings (vv. 12-15)

1. **Context: read vv.9 – 11.** Sometimes *good men* suffer under **evil authority**.
 - a. Kings & authorities **abuse** their power. People who depend on them **suffer!** → Life *under the sun* (where no man **fears God**)...
 - b. Nothing's **sacred!** Such men even **exploit religion** to their own evil purposes.
 - c. No one **learns** the hard lessons of history. Bad kings **pass** from the scene. Men **forget**. Over & over, like the **label on the shampoo bottle: rinse & repeat! (2x)**
 - d. Inefficient & ineffective **courts**. **Due process** is *ignored* & **evil** is *undeterred*. (OBTW **evil (11)?**→*men's hearts*; not their *environment*.)

2. **Discouraging?** Solomon counters with a **divine principle**. "*It will be well for those who fear God.*"
 - a. Sense **contrast** between *evil king* of **vv. 9-11** & *truth* of **vv. 12-13**.
 - i. A **sinner (sinful king)** may **multiply** his *evil*. **Lengthen** his *evil* (v.12 "*evil days*"> "*days*").
 - ii. **Principle for the wise man: fear God.** Indeed, *fear Him openly*. Open *fear of God* in the face of *evil authority*.
 1. Remember those **Hebrew children** in Dan 3? *Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego*. K. Nebuchad ordered them to *bow & worship* a golden image, & they openly refused. The king threatened death; the young men held firm: "*Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up*" Christ came to them in the furnace & preserved them!

2. You see **contrast** between **v.12 & 13** (same principle).
The sinner may **lengthen** his evil, but he *won't prosper*.
Not *really*. Not in the *end*.

a. Prosperity in the wicked? **Optical illusion!** Like the shimmering image of an **oasis in a desert**, so is the **apparent prosperity** of the wicked. The wicked man appears to *flourish*, but he doesn't!

b. Solomon gives **2 reasons (v.13)**:

i. The sinner's **days** are simply a **shadow**.
When the **sun sets**, the shadow *vanishes!*

ii. Fundamentally, the wicked king ignores life's *basic principle of wisdom*. Does he *fear God?* **No!** He **refuses** to fear Jehovah!

3. You can't miss this **truth** in **Eccl. Wisdom** for living in tough times is always tied to the ***fear of the LORD***.

3. But Solomon admits, there is an apparent **problem**. *Real life* doesn't always seem to work according to **principle!** (**Read v.14**)

a. **Bad things** happen to *good people* (as if they were *wicked*). **Good things** happen to *bad people* (as if they were *righteous*)! ***What's up w/ that!***

i. Eccl. Context is still the **authority**. → **Evil leaders. Innocent, victimized subjects. All of them are found under the sun.**

ii. **Big frustration** for Solomon (**7:15**)

b. **Futility** (keyword). Solomon says it **2X**. ***Emptiness from beginning to end. Futility from first to last.***

c. But, *don't miss this*, that's the way life can look ***under the sun!*** = ***"in the earth."*** **I.e.** if you won't understand life from *God's perspective*; this is how life will often *appear*.

4. Here is Solomon's *temporary solution* (appeals to it often, **2:24; 3:12, 22; 5:18; now here**): "***Do the best you can.***"

- a. *Eat, drink & be merry.* Not to **drown your sorrows** in *hedonism*, but to **numb yourself** against what you can't understand by **living just for today**. Don't ask any *hard questions*.
- b. **V.15 temporary solution** sounds a little like *live for the weekend*. Just deal w/ the **M-F toil**, & then *sleep in, cut the grass, fire up the grill, get out the boat*. It's that *shampoo label* all over again: **rinse & repeat!** (2x) That "*eat, drink & be merry*" cycle becomes your **coping mechanism** for the *frustrations of life under the sun*.
- c. ***Is that all there is?*** Is that *all* you were **created for**? PAUSE.
- d. The wise king says it *again*. Now he says it **twice**: this is *as good as it gets*, first to last, ***under the sun***.

5. ***Beloved***, I want to draw your attention back to **v.12 (read)**. The *eternal truth* here is: ***live your life in the fear of God*** (→ **above the sun**)!

- a. ***Beloved***, you can **rejoice** in this: *the King of Kings is the King of all worldly kings* (good or bad).
- b. ***Fear Him***, it will be *well*.

You should consider a wise king's *conclusions*.

1. King Solomon *introduced* his discussion of **worldly kings (ch.8)** with a **principle** about wisdom back in **v.1 (read)**.
 - a. His **2** questions are one in the same: *who is like the wise man?*
 - b. The *wise man digs deep!* This idea of *interpretation* suggests **digging way deep** below the surface of a mystery.
 - c. *Godly wisdom* brings **two benefits** to men & women who pursue it: wisdom *illuminates & transforms...*
 - i. **Wisdom illuminates.** Remember our *def'n?* "*Wisdom is seeing & responding to life from God's perspective.*" Wisdom *shines God's light* on life's *principles & problems*.
 - ii. **Wisdom transforms.** Transformation that is *specific*. The once *stern face* now *beams*. The idea is **joy!** *Wisdom bring joy!*
(PAUSE)
2. **V. 1** promises *illumination & joyful transformation in the kingdom!* But **vv. 2-15** unfold *moral perplexity under the sun!* → What's the *answer?* ...
Plenty of reason to **pursue wisdom!** **Read vv. 16-17.**
 - a. Solomon was *all about wisdom*. He dedicated his life (*heart*) to see the "*stuff of life*" from *wisdom's perspective*.
 - i. The king pulled **all-nighters** trying to *map* it all out! (Ever stay up day & night **cramming** for a test or **writing** a paper?)
 - ii. He **analyzed** at it **all (17): I saw every work of God.**

3. Do you know what the wisest man of his times *concluded*? Here is the *caution* from a man who *saw it all & wore himself slick!* Some *problems & explanations & truths* are **too big** for anyone. He says it *over & over & over*:
- a. *Man cannot **discover** (keyword, 8).* Not even answers *under the sun*.
 - b. *Man will not **discover**.* No matter how *hard he searches*.
 - c. *The wise man...cannot **discover**.* No matter *what he says!*
 - d. Some truths (incl the *moral dilemma* of **ch.8**) are **God's property**.
 - i. **Dt. 29:29 (Moses)** – The *secret things* belong to LORD our God, but the *things revealed* belong to us & to our sons forever, so that we may observe all the words of this law.
 - ii. **Isa 55:8-9**: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, declares the LORD. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.”
 - e. The *final solution* is really all about *humility & a willingness to trust in God*. I can't help but detect a trace of *foolish intellectual pride exposed* at the very end of Solomon's conclusion!
 - *Though the wise man should say, “I know,” he cannot discover!*

Life's inequities got you frustrated (“futility”)!?! Take a page from Solomon's memoirs – some answers simply belong to God.

I want to *end* w/ Solomon's *beginning*: read v.1.

There is an undeniably *supernatural* aspect of wisdom. *Illumination* of **truth** & *transformation* of the **heart** are the work of God by His **Holy Spirit**.

Wisdom is **not** simply a *self-help recipe* of *facts, warnings, principles* that anyone can pick up & profit by.

Wisdom is **truth** that must be *illuminated* by the Spirit & *supernaturally empowered* by the Spirit.

Do you know what the **big goal** of Spirit-fueled wisdom is? Not to *improve your finances*, or even to *strengthen your marriage* (though both are good).

Rescue & regeneration of sinners. → *Salvation*. In **2 Tim 3:15** – *from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation thru faith which is in Christ Jesus*.

Here is what ties all this **OT wisdom** to the *Gospel*. Wisdom brings you to **Jesus!**

Wisdom says *life under the sun* isn't enough; often just *bad!*

Wisdom says I need *light*.

Wisdom says I need *joy*.

Wisdom says I need *change* (inside, out).

Wisdom says I *can't figure it out!*

Wisdom says I'll *humble* myself & *turn* to the LORD & *trust* in Christ.

1 Cor 1:30 – *But by [God's] doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, & redemption.*

Trust Christ, follow Christ ... now that's smart!

...pray...