

Eccl. 6:10-?
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A. 6:10-12, Man's Dependence on a Holy God.

NB: The book has 222 verses, 111 through 6:9 and 111 from 6:10 on.

This short paragraph raises questions that man cannot answer by himself, but that Qohelet, speaking for God, answers in ch.7.

1. The Scope of God's sovereignty, 10a.
God has determined both the impersonal and the personal events of history.
 - a) He has named that which is, the impersonal aspects of our lives. Cf. Adam in the Garden, and the renaming ceremonies of the patriarchs. To give something a name is to define its character and determine its destiny.
 - b) "It is known what man shall be," the personal side.
2. Man cannot oppose God, 10b,11. (Vertical impotence)
 - a) 10b, he cannot contend with or enter into judgment with God.
 - 1) He cannot complain about the events, since they are determined.
 - 2) He cannot complain about his lot in them, since he is determined!
 - b) 11, "things" = Heb. "words." The words that a man might multiply to try to contend with God, only lead to vanity, not to any advantage for man.
3. 12, Man cannot learn about his own state (horizontal impotence).
Two parallel clauses, each with three parts:
 - a) Assertion of ignorance, posed both times as a rhetorical question. Man not only cannot contend with God; he cannot even tell what God is going to do with him!
 - 1) Who knows?
 - 2) Who can say?
 - b) That which no one knows:
This pair illustrates that the good men seek is often to leave something after themselves, to attain to some sort of immortality through their deeds. Yet they cannot guarantee themselves this.
 - 1) what is good for man;
 - 2) what shall be after man.
 - c) Man's condition.
 - 1) The days of his life, which he passes like a shadow. That is, he doesn't spend any longer living than a shadow does (cf. 8:13). Temporal limitation. Faces us with eternity.
 - 2) Under the sun. Geographical limitation. Faces us with

heaven.

B. 7:1-14, Things to Value

In answer to the challenge, "Who can tell man what is good" (6:12a), Qohelet here does! Of the 52 occurrences of "good" or "better" in Eccl., 14 (1/3) are in this chapter! v.14 similarly corresponds to the second half of 6:12.

Ironically, the "good" that Qohelet singles out is sorrow! It has much to teach us about life and God's ways with us. Note how incongruent this all is with a Santa Claus god (but entirely consistent with a truly loving God).

We can discern a simple ABBA chiasm here. The outer members (1-6,13-14) tell *why* to bear sorrow, from two perspectives, while the center members (7-10,11-12) tell *how*, first negatively, then positively.

1. 7:1-6, Why bear sorrow? (Human perspective)

These six verses list benefits of sorrow and mourning. Two main benefits: the intrinsic value of death as life's graduation; and the lessons others can learn at such a time.

a) v.1, It is at death rather than birth that one can finally assess a man's reputation. Before then, he either has not yet acquired it, or can yet lose it through sin. The verse brings out the point by juxtaposing a terse, perhaps well-known proverb (tob shem mishemen tob) with another comparison that we are to understand follows the same pattern, not only in degree of betterness, but in kind.

b) vv.2-6, the lessons we learn.

Two verses contrast sorrow and pleasure, and show the benefit of the former over the latter. Two more classify people as wise or fools depending on their response.

1) Sorrow and pleasure:

a> v.2, Mourning (more than festivities, &IMXA) stimulates men to think about the deep issues of life, because death is universal, and forces us to contemplate our end. Emphasis here is on the PLACE; next verse focuses on the ACTIVITY.

b> v.3, It is sorrow, not laughter, that accomplishes moral improvement. Even in salvation, we enter by way of repentance.

2) Because of the benefit of sorrow over pleasure, one who always flees to pleasure is a fool, and one who contemplates sorrow is wise.

a> v.4, Corresponding exactly to v.2, the wise man prefers the house of mourning, while the fool prefers the house

of festivity.

b> vv.5-6 similarly pick up the "laughter" theme from v.3. Laughter and songs do not improve us. Only the rebuke, sorrowful though it seems, can make us better.

2. 7:7-10, How Not to Bear Sorrow

Here he illustrates faulty responses to sorrow and grief.

a) v.7a, Oppressing those under us (passing sorrow's buck down the line)

b) v.7b, Bribing those over us (to avoid the trouble they would otherwise give us).

c) v.8, Pride

1) +O91WB)AX:ARI71YT D.FBF73R M"/R"95)\$IYT/O92W +O71WB)E75REK:-R73W.XA MI/G.:BAH.-R75W.XA00?

d) v.9, Anger

1))AL-T.:BAH"71L B.:/R75W.X/:AKF73 LI/K:(O92WS K.I74Y KA80(AS B.:/X"71YQ K.:SIYLI73YM YFN75W.XA00?

e) v.10, Living in the past

1) HF/RI74)\$ONI80YM HFY71W. +OWBI73YM M"/)"92L.EH? K.I91Y LO71) M"XFK:MF73H \$F)A71L:T.F (AL-ZE75H00?

3. 7:11-12, How to Bear Sorrow: Wisdom

a) 11 +OWBF71H XFK:MF73H (I75M-NAX:ALF92H W:/YOT"73R L:/RO)"71Y HA/\$.F75ME\$00?

b) 12 K.I91Y B.:/C"71L HA75/XFK:MF73H B.:/C"74L HA/K.F92SEP? W:/YIT:RO74WN D.A80(AT HA75/XFK:MF73H T.:XAY.E71H B:(FLE75Y/HF00?

4. 7:13-14, Why bear sorrow? (Divine Perspective)

Because God sends it, to keep our eyes on him.

a) 13 R:)"73H)ET-MA(:A&"74H HF/):ELOHI92YM? K.I74Y MI70Y YW.KAL03 L:/TAQ."80N)"73T):A\$E71R (IW.:T/O75W00?

b) 14 B.:/YO70WM +OWBFH03 H:EY"74H B:/+O80WB W./B:/YO71WM RF(F73H R:)"92H? G.A74M)ET-ZE70H L:/(UM.AT-ZEH03 (F&F74H HF75/):ELOHI80YM? (AL-D.IB:RA81T \$E/L.O63) YIM:CF94) HF75/))FDF91M)AX:ARF73Y/W M:)75W.MFH00?