

ECCLESIASTES SUMMARIZED

PROFIT OF PURSUITS WITH A GODLY PERSPECTIVE (1:1-11)

All life seems empty and vain. There is a monotonous sameness to life that lacks variety, and an appreciation of past experiences.

THE PROFIT OF PURPOSEFUL PURSUITS (1:12-2:26)

King Solomon's experimental investigations revealed that there is much vanity in secular and cultural pursuits. However, there is some value in these when one recognizes God's sovereign purpose in them. For wisdom is better than folly and industry is better than sloth, because God has given wisdom and industry to man for his profit and enjoyment.

GOD-CENTERED SOLUTIONS TO LIFE'S FRUSTRATIONS (3:1-7:14)

He also found that life is filled with frustrations that make life seem vain, but there are practical God-centered solutions to these problems that can enable a person to have an enjoyable life amid frustration. Man is frustrated when human frailty confronts divine sovereign purpose; he is frustrated when he confronts human wickedness in high places with no apparent intervention of God; he is frustrated by the apparent common end of man and beast; he is frustrated when he sees human oppression with widespread indifference; he is frustrated by the extremes of rivalry, sloth, miserliness and greed; he is frustrated by fleeting popularity, corrupt government, the fading satisfaction of riches, and man's uncertain destiny. These frustrations are solved by recognizing God's sovereign purpose in all things, by practicing sincere worship of God, by enjoying one's portion from God, and by choosing the more excellent things of life.

THE PROFIT OF GODLY-MODERATION (7:15-9:12)

He found that there is great profit in exercising godly moderation in one's lifestyle. One should be moderate in judging others, moderate in his self-image, moderate in listening to gossip, moderate in his attitude toward ruler's injustices, and fate.

PROFITABLE PROVERBS ABOUT PERPLEXING PROBLEMS (9:13-12:8)

He found that one may profit by giving heed to the wisdom available to him in the form of proverbs on wisdom, good government, industry and sloth, and stewardship of one's time.

CONCLUSION (12:9-14)

He concluded that it is profitable, though wearisome to search out words of truth and preserve them for others; it is necessary to have a fear of God and to keep His commandments.

Ecclesiastes Chapters 1- 12

Title: The Words of Qoheleth (1:1)
Theme: The Vanity of Life: What Profit? (1:2-3)
Prologue: The Monotonous Sameness of Life (1:4-11)

- A. The Sameness of Life's Experiences
 - 1. Sameness of the life cycle (v. 4)
 - 2. Sameness of the time cycle (v. 5)
 - 3. Sameness of the weather cycle (v. 6)
 - 4. Sameness of the water cycle (v. 7)
 - 5. Sameness of the sensation cycle (v. 8)
- B. The Lack of Variety in Life (1:9-10)
- C. The Lack of Appreciation in Life (1:11)
 - One does not remember former things
 - Man does not profit from the lessons of history

I. The Profit of Secular Pursuits (1:12-2:26)

- A. The Vanity of Secular Pursuits (1:12-2:11)
 - 1. The Vanity of Intellectual Pursuits (1:12-18)
 - a. Intellectual pursuits are given of God, a sore travail, to exercise man (v. 13) [1 Kings 4:30-33]
 - b. Intellectual pursuits lead to unsolvable problems (vv. 14-15)
 - c. Intellectual pursuits lead to frustration (vv. 16-18)
 - There is no end to knowledge. The deeper one searches,
the more complex the knowledge.
 - 2. The Vanity of Sensual Pursuits (2:1-3)
 - 3. The Vanity of Cultural Pursuits (2:4-11)
 - a. Beautiful buildings (v. 4)
 - b. Beautiful gardens (vv. 4-6)
 - c. Beautiful possessions (vv. 7-8a)
 - d. Beautiful music (v. 8b)
 - e. These brought pleasure (vv. 9-10)
 - f. They were vanity, no lasting value (v. 11)
- B. The Value of Secular Pursuits (2:12-26)
 - 1. The Pursuit of Wisdom better than Folly (2:12-17)
 - a. Wisdom excels folly (vv. 12-13)
 - b. Wisdom has temporal benefit (v. 14a)
 - c. The common end of wise and fool is frustrating (vv. 14b-17)
 - 2. The Pursuit of Industry better than Sloth (2:18-23)
 - a. One may leave wealth to an unworthy heir (vv. 18-19)
 - b. Possessions are accompanied by grief (vv. 20-23)
- C. Conclusion: God intends for man to enjoy His Provisions (2:24-26)
 - 1. God's gifts to man:
 - a. To enjoy food and drink
 - b. To enjoy good in labor
 - c. To enjoy wisdom and knowledge
 - 2. Summary: secular pursuits have value only as one recognizes God's sovereign purpose in them.

II. The Frustrations of Life Under the Sun (3:1-6:12)

(A series of life's frustrations with a common-sense solution for each one, plus a final conclusion.)

- A. The Frustration of Human Frailty and Divine Purpose (3:1-14)
(Man is bound by it, cannot understand it)
 - 1. God has an appointed time for everything (vv. 1-8)
(Man is bound to God's systematic scheme of things)
 - 2. God's ways are unfathomable (vv. 9-11)
 - a. God gives man travail (v. 10)
 - b. Man has "eternity" in his heart (v. 11)
 - c. Man cannot fathom God's work (v. 11)
 - 3. Solution: God's Purpose: (vv. 12-14)
 - a. To rejoice and do good (v. 12)
 - b. To enjoy food and drink (v. 13a)
 - c. To enjoy labor (v. 13b)
 - d. To fear God (v. 14)
- B. The Frustration of Human Wickedness and Divine Justice (3:15-22)
 - 1. God's requirements are unchangeable (v. 15)
 - 2. Man fails in the highest realms (v. 16)
 - a. Justice (in the courts)
 - b. Righteousness (in the temple)
 - 3. God will judge all men (v. 17)
 - 4. Yet the common end of mankind and beast is frustrating (vv. 19-21)
 - a. Both die (v. 19)
 - b. Both return to dust (v. 20)
 - c. Future state of both is uncertain (v. 21)
 - 5. Solution: (v.22)
 - a. Rejoice in own work
 - b. Full knowledge of future is lacking
- C. The Frustration of Human Oppression and Indifference (4:1-3)
 - 1. The oppressed weep and are comfortless (v. 1)
 - 2. The oppressors continue exercising cruel power (v. 1)
 - 3. Solution: Better to be still-born or dead than either (vv. 2-3)
- D. The Frustration of Human Rivalry and Sloth (4:4-6)
 - 1. There are those who toil because of rivalry (v. 4)
 - 2. There are those who do not work (v. 5)
 - 3. Solution: Contentment with less is better than much with vexation
(1 Timothy 6:6 Godliness with contentment is great gain) (v. 6)
- E. The Frustration of Miserliness and Greed (4:7-12)
 - 1. There are those who are miserly and greedy (vv. 7-8)
 - 2. Solution: Companionship brings purpose to life and is much better (vv. 9-12)
- F. The Frustration of Fleeting Popularity (4:13-16)
 - 1. New kings are popular (v. 15)
 - 2. Afterward the public turns against him (v. 16)
 - 3. Solution: (given first !!) An inexperienced youth is a better king than a senile old man
(vv. 13-14)
- G. The Solution to Frustrations: Sincere Worship (5:1-7)
(Four exhortations regarding sincere worship)
 - 1. Place obedience above sacrifice (v. 1)
 - 2. Pray with few words (in public) (vv. 2-3)
 - supported by a proverb (v. 3)
 - 3. Perform your vows (vv. 4-7a)
 - supported by a proverb (v. 7a)
 - 4. Practice the fear of the Lord (v. 7b)

- H. The Frustration of Corrupt (Bureaucratic) Government (5:8-9)
1. The poor are oppressed by local authorities (v. 8a)
 2. The higher rulers oppress their subordinates (v. 8b)
 3. Solution: a monarchy
 "An advantage to a country on the whole is a king" (v. 9)
 (HCL says the King is God)

- I. The Frustrations of Riches (5:10-6:9)
1. Riches do not satisfy (vv. 10-11)
 -- supporting proverb (v. 12)
 2. Riches are easily lost (vv. 13-14)
 3. Riches are not kept in death (vv. 15-17)
 4. Solution: God provisions (vv. 18-20)
 - a. Enjoy food and drink
 - b. Enjoy good of labor
 - c. Occupation with God's joy avoids pessimism (20)
 5. Yet a further frustration:
 -- A prosperous man to whom enjoyment is not given (6:1-9)

- J. The Frustration of Uncertain Destiny (6:10-12)
1. Man's destiny seems foreordained (v. 10a)
 2. Man cannot resist God (v. 10b)
 3. Man does not know the benefit of life's events (vv. 11-12a)
 4. Man cannot see the overall plan of God and how he fits into it (v. 12b)
 5. Solution: [implied]
 -- Only God knows; man must trust Him.

III. Proverbs of Better Things (7:1-14)

A series of what is better ["good"] under the sun. (cf. 6:12 -- "what is good").

One or more TOB ["Good"] proverbs followed by one or more proverbs of explanation or exhortation.

Note: this is not pessimism!! Look for the underlying truth!!

- | <u>A. The Better</u> | <u>The Contrast</u> | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| 1. Reputation | fine perfume | (v. 1a) |
| 2. Death-day | birth-day | (v. 1b) |
| 3. Mourning | carousing | (v. 2a) |
| | -- explanatory proverb | (v. 2b) |
| 4. sorrow | laughter | (v. 3) |
| | -- explanatory proverb | (v. 4) |
| 5. Wise man's rebuke | fool's song | (v. 5) |
| | -- explanatory proverb | (vv. 6-7) |
| 6. Ending | beginning | (v. 8a) |
| 7. Patient spirit | proud spirit | (v. 8b) |
| | -- explanatory proverb | (vv. 9-10) |
- B. Conclusion: (vv. 11-14)
1. Wisdom with family possessions is good and profitable (vv. 11-12)
 2. Submit to God's sovereignty; enjoy the good; profit from adversity (vv. 13-14)

IV. The Profit of Moderation (7:15-9:12)

- A. Be Moderate in Judging Others [implied] (7:15)
 - 1. The righteous sometimes die young
 - 2. The wicked sometimes live long
- B. Have a Moderate Self-View (7:16-20)
 - 1. Be moderate with respect to: (vv. 16-17)
 - a. Righteousness and wickedness
 - b. Wisdom and folly
 - 2. It is good to: (vv. 18-19)
 - a. Hold to the one [righteousness, wisdom]
 - b. Withdraw from the other [wickedness, folly]
 - 3. There are none who do not sin (v. 20)
- C. Be Moderate in Listening to Hearsay (7:21-29)
 - 1. Don't listen too closely, even you deride others (vv. 21-22)
 - 2. Because there are few truly wise (vv. 23-29)
 - 3. It is even worse among women (v. 28)
- D. Be Moderate in Attitude toward Rulers (8:1-9)
(It is wise to submit to governmental authority even though despotic.)
- E. Be Moderate in Attitude toward Injustices (8:10-17)
(It is wise to fear God even though sinners seem to go unpunished, and there are chance injustices. (vv. 10-14)
Conclusion: (vv. 15-17)
 - 1. We should enjoy God's provisions (v. 15)
 - 2. God's ways exceed man's understanding (vv. 16-17)
- F. Be Moderate with Respect to Fate (9:1-12)
 - 1. All things happen the same for the righteous and wicked (vv. 1-3)
 - 2. The living have hope (vv. 4-6)
 - 3. One should enjoy life and work hard (vv. 7-10)
 - 4. The Law of Chance is no respecter of persons (vv. 11-12)

V. Proverbs on Life Under the Sun (9:13-12:8)

- A. Proverbs on Wisdom and Folly (9:13-10:15)
 - 1. Wisdom is better than weapons, folly destroys good (9:13-18)
 - 2. A little folly does not become a wise man (10:1-3)
 - 3. A wise man appeases the king's wrath (10:4)
 - 4. A man's station in life is no measure of his wisdom (10:5-7)
 - 5. Wisdom has practical value in life (10:8-10)
 - 6. A fool is characterized by many words and misguided effort (10:11-15)
- B. Proverbs on Good Government (10:16-20)
 - 1. Good rulers are characterized by: maturity, nobility, industry, sobriety (vv. 16-19)
 - 2. Slander has wings (v. 20)
- C. Proverbs on Industry and Sloth (11:1-8)
 - 1. Liberality brings return benefits (vv. 1-2)
 - 2. Industry is a better policy than procrastination because man's ability to foresee favorable conditions is limited (vv. 3-6)
 - 3. Conclusion: Enjoy life's pleasantness; don't overlook the lessons of hardship (vv. 7-8)
- D. Proverbs on Youth and Old Age (11:9-12:8)
 - 1. Don't waste youth on folly for it brings ultimate judgment (11:9-10)
 - 2. Youth should be mindful of God; old age and senility interfere with fulfilling postponed piety. (12:1-8)

CONCLUSION:

- 1. The Preacher's Purpose: (12:9-12)
 - (a) To teach people knowledge; (b) To search out words of truth
- 2. The Preacher's Program: (12:13-14)
 - (a) Fear God; (b) Keep His commandments; (c) Expect judgment of deeds