

## STUDIES IN ECCLESIASTES (22)

### Some Better Things (1)

#### Ecclesiastes 7:1-10

As we continue our study of the book of Ecclesiastes, we are addressing a number of applications associated with life. We are in the midst of a portion of this book that is similar to the proverbs as Solomon makes general observations about life, and in so doing how true understanding of life leads to God. As one observed, we have greater focus on life ABOVE the sun. But, at least for the time being, these proverbs seem to be a little more orderly than many of the proverbs in the book so named.

Also, we find even greater focus on wisdom, according to the NKJV, the words “wise and wisdom” were used about 19 times in chapters 1-6 (first half of the book), and they are found some 35 times in the last 6 chapters. Thus, it is worthy of note, that when we speak of wisdom, we are addressing one who seeks the wisdom that is from above (James 3:17). More on that in a latter lesson.

Tonight, we begin to notice how Solomon lists 7 things that are better, and they will all lead us to God. Let us briefly notice these.

#### I. **A good name is better than precious ointment (1)**

- a. The importance of reputation. Solomon says that a good name is better than great wealth (here the example is a valuable perfume – something Jews cherished and often viewed as a sign of prosperity, similar to today – perfumes can be cheap or very expensive. Those who wear expensive perfume often do so as a status symbol). Solomon’s point is that your name is of greater value than great wealth. Consider Proverbs 22:1 says something similar, *“A good name is to be chose rather than great riches; loving favor rather than silver and gold.”*  
We understand this today. There are well known individuals and companies that build reputations for reliability and integrity. They VALUE their name and will often pass on something lucrative because it does not have a good enough reputation. Example: Many talk show hosts will only endorse products they are fully comfortable with and that express their values. Why? Because of the amount of time they have spent developing trust from others AND a few extra dollars is not worth the damage that might be done to their reputation. And WE, THE CONSUMER, accept that. We may consider a product because we trust the one who endorses it.  
ON THE OTHER HAND, consider how there are many who gain great wealth or power, but they have a terrible reputation for dishonesty and corruption. What good is their material gain if they are despised? Proverbs 10:7, *The memory of the righteous is blessed, But the name of the wicked will rot.*
- b. **“Remember who you are”**. Something that is often said by concerned parents as their children are leaving home, or perhaps going on a date. It is a reminder: Do not ruin the good name others have built for you (your heritage) and don’t ruin THEIR name either. When I act, I need to think about how it affects the name of my family? My parents have a good name and if I have any respect for them, I should preserve and honor that name. And I should do so where my children are concerned as well. A good name is so valuable because it does not come over night. It takes years to develop a good reputation. AND it can be ruined in a very brief span – a single word or act.  
Cf. Ecclesiastes 10:1, *Dead flies putrefy the perfumer’s ointment, And cause it to give off a foul odor; So does a little folly to one respected for wisdom and honor.*
- c. **Do not RUIN the name of Jesus that you are to be wearing**. - Perhaps the most important name we wear from an eternal perspective is the name Christian. It means we belong to Christ. We ought to ensure that whatever we are doing, we are not denigrating His noble name.

Consider Romans 2:23-24, the name of God was blasphemed by their conduct.  
Titus 2:10 - am I adorning the doctrine of Christ?

## II. The day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth (1)

- a. How is this a truth? **The day of one's birth**, an innocent child is brought into this world. He brings pleasure to his family and others. But then life comes – he has his whole life ahead of him, complete with its troubles and burdens. For those who are not wise and responsible, it can be filled with misery. So many things we have addressed over and over about this fallen world demonstrate the vanity of this life.  
**BUT, at one's death** – he/she ceases to have to deal with such. Death ENDS everything about this physical life. You don't have deal with your sickness anymore and broken down bodies (if you age). You don't have to deal with other burdens – the ugliness of society around you, taxes and debt, day to day chores, the vanity of worries about what is going to happen, and perhaps some other troubles catered to your life. So in THAT CONTEXT, we see Solomon's point.
- b. **If you are prepared.** Ultimately, to whom is it true that one's death is better than his birth? It is the one prepared to stand before God as he leaves this life. It is those like Paul who could say he was ready (2 Timothy 4:6-8); Earlier he said in Philippians 1:21-23 – where Paul said to “die is gain” and then he had a desire to “depart and be with the Lord which is far better.”  
OR Stephen who died the martyr's death (Acts 7:59-60). Consider again Revelation 14:13, *Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' "* “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.”
- c. **Could this relate to the previous phrase** (about reputation)? Some have observed that one's reputation is not complete until he completes this life. Then you finally see the totality of who one was. Was he godly or hypocritical? (How many have their true secrets and skeletons revealed only after their death?)  
Did he start out with integrity but end in failure – as did King Solomon (what we have recorded), King Saul (who for a short while – about 2 years – was humble as king, but failure after that) and others who quit being honorable.  
The point is, who you are in NOT sealed until this life is over.

## III. Better to go to the house of mourning than the house of feasting (2)

- a. In modern vernacular, Solomon observes that it is better to go to a funeral than to a party.
- b. **Why is that true?** As He notes, For that is the end of all men – throughout the book of Ecclesiastes we have discussed the subject of death (and will continue to do so) – what it means and how to prepare for it. The fact that we are going to die MUST always be in the back of our minds – Hebrews 9:27 – *it is appointed for men to die, but after that the judgment.*  
NONE are exempt (cf. Ecclesiastes 3:20, etc.), unless you are alive when the Lord returns – but even then, the end result is the same – your material life is over. See also Romans 5:12, Genesis 3:19, etc.
- c. **And the living will take it to heart** – most do not want to die (at least right now), and when faced with a funeral of a loved one, you are reminded that it could happen to you as well.  
There are many who live their lives as if they have all the time in the world – especially youth and those in the prime of their life. They get caught up in reckless behaviors and “partying” all the time. Some do foolish and dangerous things thinking they are invincible.  
A funeral brings mortality into reality and makes you take a spiritual inventory. RARELY does one leave a party thinking to himself, “You know, I need to get my life in order.” There is nothing more sobering than an untimely death – especially that of youth. Sometimes it is the ONLY thing that will wake up one who is living an unrestrained life.

IV. **Sorrow is better than laughter (3-4)**

- a. This verse is a continuation of vs. 2, but I believe it takes the thought of mourning further.
- b. First let us note, that **laughter, like so many other things is NOT wrong within itself**. In fact, it is good medicine (though that is NOT a Biblical proverb). Ecclesiastes 3:4 reminds us there is a time to laugh. It can do much good to lift up the soul.  
But it is NOT an escape from life! Yet many turn to laughter and merry thinking that funniness will cause their problems to go away. They don't!
- c. **It is SORROW that leads to real and lasting change.** That is what repentance is about! It is a realization of your sinfulness and the determination to change. 2 Corinthians 7:10-11.  
Be reminded of how Jesus started the "Sermon on the Mount" – Matthew 5:3-4 – Blessed are the poor in spirit...Blessed are those who mourn..." That is what leads to meekness, craving righteousness, and so forth.
- d. Thus, **The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, But the heart of fools is in the house of mirth** (vs. 4) – again, we return to the funeral home over the party.  
BUT, I believe this goes further. NOTE that this is where the wise man is. It seems as if this one CHOOSES to go there.  
I would add to that there are other houses of mourning – churches where your sin has been exposed and where you turn to your brethren for help and strength (cf. James 5:13-16);  
Homes where you come to see your problems and that of others and the need to fix things;  
Hospitals where you see the sick struggling to get better, etc. – a you resolve to pray for them and help them as they recover  
Places where you see the sinfully broken people of this world and you GRIEVE because of where they are headed (much like Jesus mourning and weeping over the fate of Jerusalem - Luke 19:41-44).  
YET in this place you find the heart of the fool that refuses to change his standing.

Truly, we do not have to look very far to see the vanity of this world and its ways. BUT, if we are striving to be right with God, we can look ahead and live a life that is governed by the wisdom that is from above rather than the wisdom of this world. It truly is the BETTER way, as we have begun to see in this text.

So what about you? Where is your heart found? If it is not in the place God wants it to be, let me encourage you to make whatever changes are needed right now and let me help you if that is your need. Think about it!

