

Ecclesiastes 9:1-6

Introduction:

In the concluding verses of the eighth chapter Solomon spoke of the complexities of “*life under the sun.*” Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he declared that not even wisdom can help explain or fully understand these mysteries. There are no simple answers.

When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on earth, even though one sees no sleep day or night... a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. For though a man labors to discover it, yet he will not find it; moreover, though a wise man attempts to know it, he will not be able to find it. Eccl 8:16-17

Like Job, many have sought to understand the purpose or a reason for things that happen. From the broad world of the nations and their impact on their lives to the things that occur in the lives of their friends, family or themselves “*under the sun.*” Often, when things go wrong, we seek for the reason that we might avoid it in the future. But even Solomon, with all his wisdom and inspiration could not find this solution, the key that unlocks the mysteries of dominion or lack of dominion. These passages are here warn those who love the Lord and want to serve Him that many things have no answer. With all that is the crooked and lacking we just don’t have enough pieces of the puzzle. As we ponder the life of Job, we see him forced down a path that led him further into a maze of uncertainty and doubt from which he might never have found his way back if God had not intervened. Instead of “wasting” our lives seeking something we may never find. We must simply make the decision to move on without an answer. For our own mental health, and our ability to focus on the things that matter, we must leave these solutions in the hands of God. Some things are secret and though we chaff under such constraints, they are nonetheless true.

“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. Deut 29:29”

As the Psalmist considered these enigmas and mysteries, he let everyone know that he had found peace and comfort in just leaving such things to God and living a life of humble trust as a little child in the arms of his mother.

Lord, my heart is not haughty, Nor my eyes lofty. Neither do I concern myself with great matters, Nor with things too profound for me. 2 Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, Like a weaned child with his mother; Like a weaned child is my soul within me. Ps 131:1-2

Even Job, having been forced to realize just how much he did not know through God’s many questions was content to simply trust that God could do everything and knew everything. With that knowledge, he was content, to leave his life in God’s hands and accept without question that whatever happened, as Paul later stated clearly would be for the best.

“I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. 3 You asked, ‘Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Job 42:2-3”

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Rom 8:28-29

Those who search to comprehend the complexities and anomalies of life are finally led, like Solomon to the conclusion that most things cannot be unraveled, explained or understood. At that point one can become cynical and disillusioned or they can be humble enough to let it go, content to find out later.

The first three verses introduce another element that rises to the very top of the greatest of all the mysteries and inscrutable realities of “*life under the sun.*” No matter how hard one tries, he cannot find a formula for success in life. No matter what steps are taken, there are no guarantees. God has so ordered “*life under the sun*” due to the curse that no one knows what the future holds for them or their loved ones.

No matter what one does or avoids, it will not always make any difference to how each “life under the sun” unfolds. There is “*no cause and affect*” principle to life “*under the sun.*” Not even true righteousness and godly wisdom can help! One can do everything right and still fail in “life under the sun.” No one knows what the future holds, and no one has control over how it will unfold for them. Death, illness, war, financial setbacks, treachery, and multitudes of other factors are beyond the control even of the most godly and pure person. As he pointed out in the third chapter, “*to everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven,*” and when that time comes no matter what preparations have been made, it will overwhelm them all.

As Solomon expressed this truth, it wrings from our heart the sentiment he uttered at the beginning of the book. “***Vanity of Vanities,*” says the preacher “*Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.*”**

All that is crooked and lacking “under the sun” traces back to one thing. The one thing necessary for life to have meaning, substance, lasting value and satisfaction is dominion. Without control over ones life, possessions, and the lives of those they love, it doesn’t matter what one gains because there is nothing one can do to keep it. All that one builds and enjoys can be gone in a moment of time leaving nothing but dust and ashes.

For the Christian, with the additional light of the gospel, God bids us stop looking at this life and begin looking for the life to come where the dominion will be returned for eternity.

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.
2Cor 4:16-18

1. For I considered all this in my heart, so that I could declare it all:

This is the third time in this section that he has used this same formula to introduce his conclusion.

*All this I have seen, and **applied** my heart to every work that is done under the sun: There is a time in which one man rules over another to his own hurt.* Ecc 8:9

*When I **applied** my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on earth, even though one sees no sleep day or night,* Ecc 8:16

In each, he makes the same affirmation. He has “*given*” his heart, “*applied*” his mind, and “*considered*” all in his heart. He now sums all this up into one final conclusion. Hence these verses are among the pivotal conclusions to the book of Ecclesiastes. It is the reason why “*all is vanity*” “*under the sun*” and it is also the reason why we must “*fear God and keep his commandments.*”

As in other places in Scripture, God allowed the human mind of Koheleth to be entered into Scripture. These were his conclusions, based on his wisdom, but since they were the right answers, God stamped them with divine inspiration. Since all Scripture is God breathed(2Tim. 3:15-16) and all prophets spoke as moved by the Holy Spirit(2Pet 1:20-21), we know Koheleth was “*moved by the Holy Spirit*” to say these things. Yet it was he who “*considered*” and he who “*declared*” it.

that the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God.

The basic premise of his conclusion goes back into the previous chapter.

Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely 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 as a shadow, because he does not fear before God. 14 There is a vanity which occurs on earth, that there are just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked; again, there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity. Ecc 8:12-14

This is a fundamental conclusion that nothing “under the sun” can contradict. It may not seem like this is true, and as a matter of fact, he is about to reveal that even though it is true, it does not change the outcome “under the sun,” nor give any more dominion as a result of it.

The “righteous” and the “wise” are the same people referred to in 8:12 as “those who fear God, who fear Him openly.” The just person is one who always does what is “lawful” and “right” in the eyes of God. It is also one who has been “justified and vindicated by God.” The wise are those who have the “mastery of the art of living in accordance with God’s expectations,” and those who “fearing God, lives in accordance with what God expects.” These people have God’s solemn promise that they and their works are in God’s hand.

In God’s hand is a Hebrew idiom. So what does it mean to be in the hand of God? The term “hand” is used over 1600 times in the OT. It can be the literal “hand,” or it can be used as “a figure of speech” “by which God promises His protection.”

yād(yawd) The primary meaning of this noun is “the terminal part of the arm used to perform functions of man’s will.” ... Significant theologically is the manifold way in which the word “hand” is employed idiomatically. These idioms arise from the versatility of the hand. The phrase “into (or “under”) someone’s hand” conveys authority involving responsibility, care, and dominion over someone or something. (TDWNT #3027)

This is how it was used when Moses was hid in the cleft of the rock, as well as Isaiah’s prophecy of God’s care for His coming Messiah.

And the Lord said, “Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. 22 So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. 23 Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.” Ex 33:21-23

And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; In the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, And made Me a polished shaft; In His quiver He has hidden Me.” Isa 49:2

The righteous and the wise and all their works are in God’s open hand. He will protect and shield them, no matter what “life under the sun” might bring into their lives.

For You, O Lord, will bless the righteous; With favor You will surround him as with a shield. Ps 5:12

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, And He delights in his way. 24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the Lord upholds him with His hand. 25 I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread. 26 He is ever merciful, and lends; And his descendants are blessed. Ps 37:23-26

Paul also spoke of this in his final epistle as he contemplated his own death.

For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. 2 Tim 1:12

Koheleth has assessed all the works under the sun, he has compiled and studied these things thoroughly. He knows in his heart that God cares for His people, and that all that they have is in His hand, that they are protected, shielded and surrounded by His providential care. Like Paul, he knew that He is able to keep what we commit to Him.

Yet even this knowledge, did not help unravel the mysteries of life. Even with this assurance and the role God plays in the lives of the righteous, not even the most righteous and wise of both men and women have dominion “under the sun.” God will stop the natural course of life under most circumstances. It is not “life under the sun” that God’s providential care is primarily directed toward. For this reason, in spite of the knowledge that ultimately the righteous and wise will prevail, it gives no help or guidance for what “life under the sun” might bring.

People know neither love nor hatred by anything that is before them.

There are two possible ways to understand how “people know neither love or hatred.” First is just to simply take it at face value and conclude that no one knows love or hate by what is before him. They can’t tell the difference between love and hate by what is occurring in their lives. But is this true? Do none of us understand the difference between love and hate. First, most people know whether they love or hate and second, they know if others around them love or hate.

The second possibility takes us back to the previous verse. That although the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God, no one knows whether they are loved or hated by God by all that is before them because everything comes alike to all. "Under the sun" no one knows whether God loves and takes pleasure in their lives, or hates and disapproved of their lives. No matter what "life under the sun" brings, it does not reflect God's feelings or attitude toward us or the life we have chosen to live. This is exactly what Jesus affirmed in the Sermon on the Mount.

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. Mt 5:44-46

No one can deduce love or hate by all that is before them "under the sun." This is the great paradox that makes life vanity, but it is still true. Hence the lives and works of the righteous and wise are definitely in the hands of God. His favor and grace rest upon them, but no one can deduce that from how "life under the sun" is progressing for them. Nothing in one's "life under the sun" can reveal anything about God's feelings toward their lifestyle.

Another problem with the verse is the ambiguity of the term "before" in English. It can refer to:

Time Past: "I came here **before** you did," or "My parents were married **before** I was born."

Time Future: "How can I know the outcome **before** it occurs."

Position: "I am standing **before** the king," or "walk **before** me and be perfect."

The Hebrew term has the same ambiguity. It can refer to what is "before and behind," "formerly, from beforetime" which would put it in the past, "toward," "in front of," which would be the future, or "in the presence of," "in the face of" which would be in the present.

paniym, ... f) as an adverb of location temp: before and behind, toward, in front of, forward, formerly, from beforetime, before g) with preposition: in front of, before, to the front of, in the presence of, in the face of, at the face or front of, from the presence of, from before, from before the face of (BDB # 6440)

The verse could therefore be affirming:

(1.) People cannot know of God's love or hate for what they do from anything they can learn from those who have lived before them. But this is false. We can definitely learn from what happened in the past about God's feelings of love and hate toward what people do:

But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 6 Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. ... 11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 1 Cor 10:5-7, 11

Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. Rom 11:22-23

(2.) People cannot know of God's love or hate for what they do from anything they can learn about what is actually transpiring in their life at the present moment. This is how the KJV, NKJ ASV and ESV translate:

*People know neither love nor hatred by anything they see before them. All things come alike to all: NKJV
No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them. All things come alike to all: KJV
whether it be love or hatred, man knoweth it not; all is before them. All things come alike to all: ASV
Whether it is love or hate, man does not know; both are before him. It is the same for all ESV*

(3.) People cannot use what they know of God's love or hate for what they do to determine anything that will happen to them in the future. This is how the NASB and NIV translate it:

*Man does not know whether it will be love or hatred; anything awaits him. It is the same for all. NASB
but no man knows whether love or hate awaits him. All share a common destiny NIV*

It doesn't seem necessary to choose between the second and third possibility. since God is not bound by time, and His attitudes in the present will continue to be His attitudes in the future, and since life under the sun will remain constant until the end, time is not a factor. The lives and works of the righteous and wise are definitely in the hands of God, and His favor and grace rest upon them. But people cannot know either His love or His hatred of what they do by anything that is before them in the present, nor can they use it to deduce what might come in the future.

That this perfectly fits the context is obvious for the next verse affirms that no one could possibly tell love or hate from anything before them because everything occurs alike to all.

2. Everything occurs alike to all: One event happens...

This is the conclusion that makes life under the sun "vanity." It doesn't matter what you do or don't do, life will bring what it brings. Moral and ethical considerations have no affect. This is one of the consequences of the curse. Under grace and forbearance and with God's eternal purpose in operation, "life under the sun" brings exactly the same things to all. No matter how close one gets to God, it will not have any affect.

This opening phrase is literally "all which all," "all who all," or "all that which all." It is made up of two "all's" separated by a relative pronoun: "all... relative pronoun... all." A relative pronoun qualifies the two words it is placed between. It is similar to a "+" "-" or "=" in math. It qualifies ideas. Depending upon the context it can be "who," "which," or "that which."

834 'asher- 1) (relative pronoun) a) which, who b) that which (what)

It is common in both Greek and Hebrew to leave the subject to the reader to supply from the context. This is what has led to the difference in the translations:

*All things come alike to all:(KJV, ASV) It is the same for all. (NAS),
All share a common destiny(NIV) Everything occurs alike to all (NKJ)*

"Same," "alike," and "share," are the relative pronoun, and "All things," "all" and "everything" are the "whole" or "entirety" of the things under consideration. Everything that occurs "under the sun" "comes alike" "is the same" and "occurs alike" to everyone. He will clarify exactly what he means by this broad statement as the verse proceeds.

One event happens

The term "event" is the key to this section, and is only used a few times in Scripture and most of thjose uses are in the book of Ecclesiastes. It is used in other places of an "unforeseen meeting," "accident" or "chance" happening.

4745 miqreh- unforeseen meeting or event, accident, happening, chance, fortune (BDB)

It's use in Scripture makes it very clear to what it refers.

*Then she left, and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers. And **she happened to come** to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. Ruth 2:3*

*And watch: if it goes up the road to its own territory, to Beth Shemesh, then He has done us this great evil. But if not, then we shall know that it is not His hand that struck us— **it happened to us by chance.** 1 Sam 6:9*

*Nevertheless Saul did not say anything that day, for he thought, "**Something has happened** to him; he is unclean, surely he is unclean." 1 Sam 20:26*

*The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I myself perceived that **the same event happens to them all.** 15 So I said in my heart, "**As it happens to the fool, it also happens to me,** and why was I then more wise?" Then I said in my heart, "This also is vanity." Eccl*

2:14-15

For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity. Eccl 3:19

From the definition and its use in Scripture, it is clear that Koheleth is speaking of the chance things that life brings. All the chance things that life can bring both good and bad can come upon all the different types of people who exist on this earth whether they are good or evil.

There is no rhyme or reason to "life under the sun." All that "happened to come" "happened by chance" or "has happened," "under the sun." is the same for all. All the "same events" and "as it happens" that comes about "under the sun" will happen to all the different moral and ethical types of people.

The term "event" takes in anything of good or bad fortune that can enter ones life through no fault or reward of their own. These are things that are met without any real intention of doing so on the part of the one who is involved.

What he is now affirming is that according to the unfathomable laws of "life under the sun," instituted as a result of the curse, there is no longer any moral code seen "under the sun." There is no retribution for wickedness, nor reward for righteousness. The exact same events occur "under the sun." to both with no means of determining, how, when or why.

Any isolated event of fortune or misfortune that can happen in life will happen without rhyme or reason to all. This can be all boiled down to a simple equation. Take the variables "A" and "B." Make "A" equal all that can and does happen to the wicked. All the just retribution and terrible consequences you can imagine ought to fairly rest upon the shoulders of the wicked. Now make "B" equal all that can and does happen to the righteous, all the good things that happen, all the rewards and blessings that "life under the sun" can bring to the righteous. No matter what you can imagine for "A" and "B," Koheleth now affirms that "A = B." That all the good things that can happen to the righteous will also be received by the wicked and that all the terrible things that could happen to the wicked will also happen to the righteous.

That is a much more difficult equation for people to accept than any found in math, geometry or trigonometry. Job's three friends struggled with this, failed to grasp it, fell into grave error, and earned God's wrath for falsely accusing Job of sin.

And so it was, after the Lord had spoken these words to Job, that the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has. Job 42:7

The disciples of Jesus also fell into it when they assumed that the reason the man was born blind was due to sin:

And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. Jn 9:2-3

In both of the above, they violated the truth that Koheleth here reveals. You cannot deduce God's love or hate, by the events that occur in one's life. There is no class of humanity to whom this is untrue. No man can become so wicked or so righteous that this is not the case. This makes any outcome in "life under the sun" impossible to predict. There is no point of reference with which to figure it out. There is no pattern to be found. No cause and affect to be discovered. No model or blueprint from which to build.

After explaining the all that this event comes to he now turns to the all that these things happen to.
to the righteous and the wicked;

These are the same terms used in 8:14. They describe the opposite ends of the spectrum of that which is moral, legal and right. The righteous(6662) person is one who does what is "lawful" and

“right” in the eyes of God, and has therefore been “justified and vindicated by God.” The wicked(rasha`7563) person are those “who have done wrong, are still living in sin, and are intent on continuing with wrong doing.” They do “not seek God” are intent on that which “challenges God.”

There could not be a greater distinction between the moral character of those who manifest these two terms. One loves God and is justified by God(loved by God), the other challenges God and are intent on continuing with wrong doing. One would think that God could not possibly deal with these two people in exactly the same way “under the sun.”

Yet the exact same things happen to both. Both good things and bad things happen to both without any distinction.

to the good, and the clean, and the unclean;

His second contrast is between the good and clean on one side and the unclean on the other. A good(2896) person is one who “contribute(s) positively” is “pleasant.” It is someone who is “good” “in every sense of that word.” The term “characterizes a people as ‘friendly’ or ‘useful.’” It is someone who in every “given word, act, or circumstance contributes positively to the condition of a situation.”

A clean person is someone who has availed himself of the means God has given to be sinless. Not by deed and personal consecration, but by faith and submission to God’s plan. But though this is a gift of grace, God gives those who possess it the right to call themselves clean. They have no “impurity, filthiness, defilement, or imperfection.” Like refined gold, they are “pure” and “genuine.”

tahor, “clean; pure.” The word denotes the absence of impurity, filthiness, defilement, or imperfection. It is applied concretely to substances that are genuine or unadulterated as well as describing an unstained condition of a spiritual or ceremonial nature.... Gold is a material frequently said to be free of baser ingredients. ... God demands that His people have spiritual and moral purity, unsullied by sin. Anyone not clean of sin is subject to divine rejection and punishment. (Vine’s #2889)

“to be clear, bright, and shining; to be pure, clean, purged; to be clean from all pollution or defilement, as opposed to... and implying that purity which religion required, and is necessary for communion with God. As there is impurity in sin, so there is a purity arising out of reconciliation with God. (Wilson 78-79)

Surely those people who have done the things necessary to appear good and clean in the sight of God would find that life would spare them some of the difficulties and trials. That God would keep them from the more trying circumstances, but no, the same events happen to them just as it does to those who are unclean. An unclean person is someone who is “defiled” and “polluted.” Yet it is also a word of extremes. It is “*whatsoever is loathsome or unlovely, noisome or unsightly.*” It turns the stomach, causes the eyes to turn away, smells of stench and filth. In the moral realm it describes “*the greatest pollution.*”

“to be or become unclean, impure; to be defiled, polluted. chiefly spoken of Levitical uncleanness, both of persons and animals(i.e. animals not to be eaten, ... It speaks the greatest pollution, the sordidness and filthiness of habit, the gore of blood, the muddiness of water, whatsoever is loathsome or unlovely, noisome or unsightly, all these meet and make up the meaning of this world.” (Wilson p. 460)

So side by side God sees the soul of one who is clean, pure, good and pleasant and next to him one who is polluted and filthy, the very dregs of a polluted mind. Yet “life under the sun” makes no distinctions in what it brings to any of them.

To him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice.

The offering of sacrifice was the central core to the Old Testament religion. It stressed one’s consciousness of sin, and need to pay the price when they violated any of God’s laws. Those who sacrificed were those who sought to keep the law, those who felt the need to be clean and right in his sight. Also these sacrifices were used to show gratitude, thanksgiving, and praise to God for all the good He has done for them. Those who refused to sacrifice were the profane and unclean, they were the rebellious and unbelievers, the unthankful and ungodly. They were tempting God

with their rebellion. Yet God remained silent. Their life “under the sun” held no clue that there was any difference between them. The exact same good and bad things came alike to both of them.

As is the good, so is the sinner;

Good(2896) is a repetition of the term above. One who “*contribute(s) positively*” and is “*pleasant,*” “*characterizes a people as ‘friendly’ or ‘useful.’*” This time he contrasts such a person with a sinner. A sinner is someone who is guilty of “*moral failure toward both God and men.*” and has erred “*from the path of duty and right*”

chata’, “to miss, not to hit the mark, spoken of an archer, slinger, Jdg. 20:16; also of the feet, to miss, to make a false step, to stumble and fall, Prov. 19:2; to sin, i.e. to err from the path of duty and right; to sin away anything, i.e. to forfeit by sinning, to incur as penalty, ...” (Wilson p 395 #2398)

chata’, “to miss, sin, be guilty, forfeit, purify.”... The basic meaning of this verb is illustrated in Judg. 20:16: There were 700 left-handed Benjamite soldiers who “could sling stones at a hair breadth, and not miss.” The meaning is extended in Prov. 19:2: “He who makes haste with his feet misses the way”... From this basic meaning comes the word’s chief usage to indicate moral failure toward both God and men, and certain results of such wrongs.... (Vine’s # 2398)

Once again we have the black and white contrast between a man who is a moral failure, refusing to live up to his duties and one who is contributing positively to every circumstance by being friendly and useful. Yet once again, “life under the sun” makes no distinction between them, pouring out both blessings and curses with no concern or consideration for such things. Will God not make a distinction here? Will he not manifest His wrath upon the sinner and His pleasure upon the good? No, not even here will there be any difference while living “under the sun.”

And he who takes an oath as he who fears an oath.

He who takes an oath is one who esteems it lightly, carelessly or falsely. The term “take an oath” is defined.

shaba’, “to swear; take an oath.” This is a common word throughout the history of the Hebrew language. The fact that it occurs more than 180 times in the Hebrew Bible attests to its importance there also.... Often “to swear or to take an oath” is to strongly affirm a promise. ... Allegiance to God is pledged by an oath. (Vine’s #7650)

This term can be used in either a good bad sense depending upon whether or not the oath is taken in reverence with the idea of keeping it. Those who swear falsely are considered to be among the worst of sinners(Lev 19:12; Mal 3:5). Those who fear an oath are those who hold the taking of an oath “*in awe*” and “*reverence.*”

yare’, “to be afraid, stand in awe, fear.” This verb occurs in Ugaritic and Hebrew (both biblical and post-biblical). The Bible attests it approximately 330 times and in all periods.... Used of a person in an exalted position, *yare’* connotes “standing in awe.” This is not simple fear, but reverence, whereby an individual recognizes the power and position of the individual revered and renders him proper respect. In this sense, the word may imply submission to a proper ethical relationship to God;... (Vine’s #3372)

So there is no distinction between those who take the name of God in vain in their promises and those who fear every oath they make. There are those who use God’s name to cheat and enrich themselves and use his name to get out of trouble and make their lies seem true. Yet one can see no difference in the lives of those who fear and respect God’s name so highly they will not take an oath unless it is of the highest of importance and once taken will fulfill it at all costs. One would think it would be evident that life would be better for the one than the other but even here it makes no difference.

There just isn’t anything one can do or not do that will make any difference in the outcome “under the sun.” So each of these categories will have the same events occur. No amount of wisdom or even inspiration can find any noticeable distinction statistically between them.

3. This is an evil in all that is done under the sun:

The inspired verdict of this set of circumstances is that this is an evil in all that is done. “Evil” is

used 27 times in Ecclesiastes, in two distinct ways. One moral and ethical and the other material and physical.

In morals it describes things that are “*morally evil or hurtful*,” “*wicked*,” “*bad or evil*,” used “*to denote evil words, evil thoughts, or evil actions*.”

In the material realm it describes things that are “*bad or unpleasant in the sense of giving pain or unhappiness*.” it is “*the antithesis of shalom (peace; welfare, well-being)*.” Since *shalom* is free from conflict and disorder, its antithesis is pain and unhappiness, conflict and afflictions.

Only the context of each passage will give us the true direction for its meaning. Sometime both uses are found in the same passage.

*In the day of prosperity be joyful, But in the day of **adversity(material evil)** consider: Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other, So that man can find out nothing that will come after him. 15 I have seen everything in my days of vanity: There is a just man who perishes in his righteousness, And there is a wicked man who prolongs life in his **wickedness(moral evil)**. Ecc 7:13-15*

What about in this passage? Does the fact that “*the same event happens to all*” lead to terrible moral evil or only to physical evil? Although for the righteous this is only a material evil, it doesn’t fit the context.

*This is an **evil** among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of **evil**, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead. Ecc 9:3*

This evil leads to evil and madness in the heart. This is the evil that makes the gospel powerless in the hearts of those who have prosperity in wickedness. This is the evil that led Job to say terrible things about God. So although it does bring grievous “*pain*” and “*unhappiness*,” to all that is done under the sun, that is not the context here.

that one thing happens to all.

This is the word “event” in the previous verse. It is the one “*unforseen meeting*,” “*accident*” or “*chance*” happening that occurs to all without distinction. When the wicked prosper and have a long and fruitful life and the righteous die young in great anguish and agony it is an evil. It was an evil that the same exact things happen to all.

Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil;

As we look at the billions living in the world today, who can argue with this conclusion made nearly 3000 years ago? Man have not changed in the least. They are willing to look at “*life under the sun*” as all there is, and the lessons it teaches corroborate their conclusion and set their heart toward evil and madness.

The term “sons of men” was first used in distinction to the “sons of God” in Genesis 4-5. Those who went out from the presence of Jehovah were the sons of men and those who served the Lord and lived in submission to Him were the sons of God. It may have the same meaning here. Because this doesn’t happen to the true servants of God, only to those who are not servants of God.

They stop thinking clearly about the brevity of life and how they got here? They don’t ponder how the world was made and their duty and obligation to the Creator. They become ever more selfish and self-centered. The moral component of evil now comes into further play. They become “*morally evil or hurtful*,” “*wicked*,” “*bad or evil*.” What difference does it make. Life gives back the same thing to all. get what you can get. This then leads to their “*evil words*,” “*evil thoughts*,” and “*evil actions*.”

madness is in their hearts while they live,

This fact leads to madness in the hearts of the sons of men. This is a “*moral madness*,” a temporary insanity that affects their relationship to God. Such sons of men “*rave with foolish conceit*,” because they have such a “*departure from wisdom that the mind without any control rushes on with a blind fury*.”

madness "... to shine; to make oneself shine, to boast of oneself, to be foolish; to be puffed up with vain glory, to vaunt, to rave with foolish conceit; hence to be mad, to rage... madness, implies so great a departure from wisdom, that the mind, without any control, rushes on with a blind fury..." (Wilson p 262)

Such people live in this life as though it all ends here(madness), as though there is no God(madness), as though there are not consequences(madness). Then they die!

and after that they go to the dead.

Though some have concluded that this phrase describes the "one event" that happens to all. But it is too limited. While some use the fact that they will die as a reason for madness, most do not live evil and unproductive lives because they are going to die just as the righteous. They live wicked lives and are filled with madness because they can see no outward distinction between what they are receiving in their youth and what the righteous are receiving. What they are receiving in their families and what the righteous are receiving. That the righteous have troubles also. These are the things that bring madness into the hearts of men

They are not in trouble as other men, Nor are they plagued like other men. 6 Therefore pride serves as their necklace; Violence covers them like a garment. 7 Their eyes bulge with abundance; They have more than heart could wish. 8 They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression; They speak loftily. 9 They set their mouth against the heavens, And their tongue walks through the earth. ... And they say, "How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?" 12 Behold, these are the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase in riches. Ps 73:5-9, 11-12

There is great futility and madness overcoming their thinking and reasoning ability. Through lust and selfishness, they become blind to the grave issues of life. There is no one to blame but themselves for this, but Koheleth only observes what has occurred not why. When they do seek to look at these things more closely and compare their lives to that of the righteous they see no distinction and thus they put it out of their minds. Once again, the goodness of God which should lead them to repentance is taken for granted and leads them deeper into folly. Yet even the greatest warning God has left was death itself and it too does not lead them to sober thinking and reflection. They simply go on to the dead to join the multitudes before them who made the same mistakes.

4. But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope,

While the subject of the "one event" will resume and conclude in 9:11-12; he now takes a few moments to discuss the true ramifications of death "under the sun." As long as one is alive there is hope. Yet hope for what? What hope does Solomon describe here? As long as one is joined to the living there is hope... for repentance or hope... for a continued life of madness?

Since we are now close to the final conclusion "*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. 14 For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil. Eccl 12:13-14*", this may be a nod in that direction. As long as one is joined to all the living there is hope that he will leave his madness and begin to fear God and keep His commandments.

Even our own English proverb, "*while there's life there's hope*," is meaningless unless we can find a way to live after death. All will die, so that proverb has no benefit except as a temporary salve for only a few moments. Since those who are dead have no hope for the future and their future is fixed, without the true hope of forgiveness and eternal life, it is only a temporary proverb.

for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

Apparently a proverb of the day. The lion was a regal and great animal which the Jews compared to the highest and the noblest.

Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him? Gen 49:9

The throne had six steps, with a footstool of gold, which were fastened to the throne; there were

armrests on either side of the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the armrests. 19 Twelve lions stood there, one on each side of the six steps; nothing like this had been made for any other kingdom. 2Chr 9:18-19

A dog on the other hand was the most contemptible of beasts to the Jew. An unclean scavenger.

You shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the price of a dog to the house of the Lord your God for any vowed offering, for both of these are an abomination to the Lord your God. Deut 23:18 NKJV

Yet though the lion be greater in every way than the dog, death changes everything! Even the highest becomes lower than the lowest after death. The unclean corpse of lion is worse than the unclean living dog. Thus death is the great equalizer. Looming dark and foreboding across the path of all men, the end of everything for the mad and wicked and the beginning for the righteous and holy.

5. For the living know that they will die; But the dead know nothing,

As far as “life under the sun” is concerned, the following conclusions must be drawn. The living know that they will die. The living know that they are going to die, and therefore the living can do something about it. But “life under the sun ends at death. We bring nothing in(naked)and we take nothing out(naked). The dead know nothing about “life under the sun” any longer. The dead man is no longer listening or seeing what is going on around him, he is no longer aware of what goes on. His eyes, ears, nose, mouth and hands have been left behind to be buried. Without these senses, he knows nothing of what transpires under the sun. You know this is such an obvious and sobering thought, yet the wicked in their madness overlook it.

And they have no more reward,

Not only do they not know anything any longer, but they can no longer enjoy anything. There is no longer any “wages” “pay” or “reward” for their efforts and toil. The joys of life “under the sun” are forever closed. They have nothing to laugh about, nothing to feel glee and joy over, no rewards, no joys, no chances to gain or master anything. They will get only what God has to give.

For the memory of them is forgotten.

Even that which some might have counted as a reward is removed. They will not be remembered.

There is no remembrance of former things, Nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come By those who will come after. Eccl 1:7

Few, no matter how famous are remembered for long. Life moves on, children grow old and die as do grandchildren and soon the earth is wiped clean of all memory and it is as though we had never been. What a humbling yet necessary thought for those filled with madness and evil to follow. If anything will humble and bring one to his knees, it is this and this alone.

6. Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished;

Another sobering thought about death, everything that was once so important ceases to matter at death. All the strong and powerful emotions of life: love and hate, and even envy, powerful passions that move men to so do many things can no longer be acted upon. They are gone forever. They perish at death and cannot be kindled again.

All that man hopes for in life, all the loves, all the lusts, they are all doomed to fail and draw to a close. Remember, this is stated to balance those things that are spoken of in the first few verses. Man should not be filled with madness, he should not allow the inconsistencies of the events of “life under the sun” to blind him to these realities. It doesn’t take much meditating along these things to realize how foolish it is to live only for what is here and what is now when death is looming just over the horizon. Yet most solve this problem by ignoring and not thinking about it. What a terrible solution to such a terrible subject.

Better to go to the house of mourning Than to go to the house of feasting, For that is the end of all men; And the living will take it to heart. 3 Sorrow is better than laughter, For by a sad countenance 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 mirth. Eccl 7:2-4

Nevermore will they have a share in anything done under the sun.

Death forever draws to a close the affairs of this life. It is the curtain that drops and can never be lifted to look back. It is the sobering event that happens to the righteous and the wicked which brings sanity back to some.

Death is the single event that makes all the rest of it make sense. To place one's life into the hands of God may not alter anything in this life under the sun, but it will certainly affect what comes immediately after death. Meditate on that thought for a few moments and every other thing pales into insignificance.

The day is coming, moving closer and closer every moment when we will die and then we will never again have any share of the joys and pleasantness of life under the sun. When that day comes, do you want God to be able to bless you with eternal life, or do you want to have God angry with you. No matter what this life fails to teach about this, death teaches it all so clearly and forcefully, that it must be overlooked to miss it!

Ecclesiastes 9:7-9

Introduction:

In the concluding thoughts of the eighth chapter Koheleth began directing the flow of the book toward some of the most difficult issues of life. Issues that had led him to the conclusion first uttered in 1:2: *"All is vanity!"* The inequities and unfairness of life can make any heart despondent. He sought *"to see the business that is done on earth,"* and *"find out the work that is done under the sun."* He wanted some kind of formula or set of circumstances that would always lead to dominion and success. As he weighed it out and gathered all the facts, it soon became obvious to him that he was way over his head. There was simply no way for him to comprehend it all. There was no way for him to put all the information he had into any kind of a clear formula. In the previous six passages he offered a short summary of this information.

The most important conclusion he drew there centered on the truth that there are no rules or standards by which someone can escape calamity or guarantee success *"under the sun."* Not even moral and ethical conduct that we know brings one favor from God can do it. *"Under the sun"* there is no correlation between being righteousness and receiving blessings or wicked and receiving a curse.

There is no advice to give the young that will insulate them against the perils of life. Being righteous will not keep us safe from robbery or accidents. It will not keep our family safe from all harm. It will not keep away disease, nor will it stop sorrow and bereavement. Though he will not fully conclude this thought and how one should respond until the last two chapters, he does offer advice about how to be happy in spite of this knowledge of peril.

Two facts have definitely come out of his inquiry. First, *"it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him"* (8:12) and *"the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God"* (9:1). Second, though God will ultimately fulfill all His promises to the righteous, *"under the sun"* the same time and chance works for both the wicked and the righteous. The righteous will see the terrible calamities they thought should go to the wicked enter their lives. At the same time they will see the wicked receiving the blessings they thought were reserved only for them. God demanded the righteous walk by faith.

For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. 37 For, "Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; 38 but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him." 39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.
Heb 10:36-39

In this respect, Ecclesiastes is an excellent prerequisite to the gospel. It gives the foundation for Jesus' warning that we are only strangers and pilgrims here on the earth and that there are greater principles at stake and greater blessings to be gained than are available *"under the sun."* God is seeking to save as many as possible from the curse of sin. To accomplish this, God must punish nations, allow sinners to get away with sin while giving them time to repent, and allow the righteous to be mistreated. There are circumstances in *"life under the sun"* that make it impossible for Him to always act on their behalf.

Yet Solomon through inspiration revealed that though the righteous cannot have guaranteed success and blessings by living a righteous, clean, and good life, there is still much to be gained. We should never reject this life as a complete waste and wait for next. There are many redeeming qualities to this life. God want us to seize our live under the sun and enjoy the things he revealed here.

This is the sixth time in 9 chapters that Solomon has given this same answer. As he looks at it from every angle and sets it against all the adversities and trials that can occur in this life, he always comes back to the same answer. Though man brought a curse upon him because of his sins, God still wants man to enjoy the material creation.

**From the Hand of God & the Gift of God(2:24; 3:13; 5:18)
Our Heritage & Portion in Life(3:22; 5:18, 19; 9:9)**

Nothing is better	<i>Should eat and drink, and his soul should enjoy good in his labor.</i>
Nothing is better	<i>To rejoice, to do good, eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor</i>
Nothing is better	<i>Should rejoice in his own works</i>
Good and fitting	<i>To eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor</i>
Has nothing better	<i>Under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry; Eat your bread with joy, And drink your wine with a merry heart Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life</i>

- 1 **Nothing is better** for a man than that **he should eat and drink**, and that **his soul should enjoy good** in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God. 25 For who can eat, or **who can have enjoyment, more than I?** 2:24-25
- 2 I know that **nothing is better** for them than **to rejoice**, and **to do good in their lives**, 13 and also that every man **should eat and drink** and **enjoy the good** of all his labor — it is the gift of God. 3:12-13
- 3 So I perceived that nothing is better than that **a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his heritage**. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him? 3:22
- 4 Here is what I have seen: It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and **to enjoy the good of all his labor** in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; **for it is his heritage**. 19 As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to **receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor** — **this is the gift of God**. 5:18-20
- 5 **So I commended enjoyment**, because **a man has nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry**; for this will remain with him in his labor all the days of his life which God gives him under the sun. 8:15
- 6 Go, **eat your bread with joy**, And **drink your wine with a merry heart**; For God has already accepted your works. 8 Let your garments always be white, And let your head lack no oil. 9 **Live joyfully with the wife whom you love** all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for **that is your portion in life, and in the labor** which you perform under the sun. 9:7-9

It is such a simple answer. Too simple for some. Leupold offered an interesting observation.

“Though this counsel has been offered already in 2:24; 3:12, 13, 22; 5:18; 6:12; 8:15, the very simplicity of it is apparently apt to lead men to despise it because it is not a particularly brilliant solution. Since it is really a treasure of wisdom, that recommends itself ever more forcefully each time it is considered, the author keeps on hammering away at it so as to make an impression.” (Leupold p 213).

Though this life is only temporary and fraught with the perils of tragedy and loss, God still wants His children to gratefully enjoy His creation. Though God does not guarantee we can get through “*life under the sun*” unscathed from pain, sorrow and trouble, He still desires we enjoy this life as fully as possible.

7. Go, eat your bread with joy,

The term “go” is generally used “*of commencing or entering upon an action or enterprise.*” Koheleth offered the righteous the proper path to enter or action to take after they have grasped and understood the truth he has just revealed.

“ to go, to go away, to go out; to go one’s way; by a peculiarity of idiom, often employed in the sense of commencing or entering upon an action or enterprise...” (Wilson p 190)

The “*action*” or “*enterprise*” that they are now to undertake is to eat their bread with “*joy*.” This is the eighth and final time this term is used in the book(2:1, 2, 10, 26; 5:20; 7:4; 8:15). It has been translated “*mirth*,” “*pleasure*,” “*joy*” and “*enjoyment*” in the book. It comes from a term that primarily speaks of “*a smiling, cheerful, merry countenance, free from care; sometimes of a louder joy, to be or make merry.*”

to rejoice, to be joyful, to be glad: the primary idea seems to be that of a smiling, cheerful, merry countenance, free from care; sometimes of a louder joy, to be or make merry, spoken of persons feasting; hence to rejoice before Jehovah... (Wilson p. 346)

God wants us to eat our food with “*a smiling cheerful merry countenance*,” He wants us to eat “*free from care*,” and rejoicing before Him. This is exactly what Paul wrote many years later.

forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; 5 for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. 1Tim 4:3-5

Although men may and do contradict God, He has been very clear. He wants our food to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. He told those in Lystra something similar.

Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” Acts 14:17

Nothing Solomon has revealed should take away the joy, pleasure and gratitude we feel for our food.

and drink your wine with a merry heart;

Although the NKJ chose to translate this term “*merry*,” it is actually the same term was used in 9:2 “*the good and the clean and unclean*” and “*as is the good, so is the sinner. There is was defined: “contribute(s) positively” is “pleasant,” one who is “good” “in every sense of that word,” “characterizes a people as ‘friendly’ or ‘useful.’”* Here the terms broader use is taken into account. Things that are “*favorable*,” “*festive*,” “*pleasing*” “*pleasant*,” and “*delightful*.”

drink your wine with a merry heart; (NKJ, ASV, KJV)
drink your wine with a cheerful heart (NAS)
drink your wine with a joyful heart, (NIV)

When drinking beverages like wine, God wants our heart to be “*good*,” and “*festive*,” filled with “*delight*” and “*joy*.” This is the proper attitude to those who come to the same conclusions Koheleth did about “*life under the sun*.” But it is important to note the reason why they can do so. It is important to remember that the Hebrew term “*wine*” is very different from the English. While the English term always has the connotation of alcohol, the Hebrew seldom does. Of the multitude of uses in Scripture only a few refer to what our wine does today.

Wine Is a Mocker!

The Scriptures are clear that drunkenness and the alcohol that creates it are a portal leading otherwise pure and holy men where they would never go sober. Lot and his daughters (Gen 19:30-38) or Noah on his bed(Gen 9:20-24) would not have occurred if alcohol’s influence had been removed. Alcohol makes a fool of the righteous by stealing their reasoning ability and dulling their inhibitions. Alcohol leads into temptation while at the same time decreasing our ability to resist or flee from it. God placed drunkenness in the lists of sinful activities (Rom 13:13-14; I Cor 5:11; 6:9-11; Gal 5:19-21). There can be no doubt that the abuse of alcohol is a sinful act.

With this in mind, are there any legitimate uses for alcoholic beverages? Can a Christian drink wine, beer, or liquor for relaxation and enjoyment without the guilt of drunkenness?

Scriptures for and against the moderate use of alcohol by Christians have been set forth for many years. Some cite verses where wine is called a blessing, others cite verses calling it a curse. Some teach that only the immoderate use of alcohol is sinful, and that social drinking is justified for the following reasons:

- ☞ *God only condemned drunkenness.*
- ☞ *God called wine a blessing.*
- ☞ *Jesus made wine.*
- ☞ *Paul told Timothy to drink a little wine.*

Ambiguity in the Term “Wine”

Whenever a word has more than one meaning, one must approach the passages using that term with caution and wisdom. The general term for wine is *yayin* in Hebrew and *oinos* in Greek. Even without the definitions of the word, one can see this illustrated by the very different pronouncements made for and against it in Scripture.

He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the service of man, That he may bring forth food from the earth, 15 And wine that makes glad the heart of man, Oil to make his face shine, And bread which strengthens man’s heart. Ps 104:14-15

Go, eat your bread with joy, And drink your wine with a merry heart; For God has already accepted your works. 8 Let your garments always be white, And let your head lack no oil. Eccl 9:7-8

Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise. Prov 20:1

Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? 30 Those who linger long at the wine, Those who go in search of mixed wine. 31 Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup, When it swirls around smoothly; 32 At the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper. 33 Your eyes will see strange things, And your heart will utter perverse things. 34 Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, Or like one who lies at the top of the mast, saying: 35 “They have struck me, but I was not hurt; They have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?” Prov 23:29-35

And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no wine.” 4 Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.” 5 His mother said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it.” 6 Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. 7 Jesus said to them, “Fill the waterpots with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. 8 And He said to them, “Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast.” And they took it. 9 When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. 10 And he said to him, “Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!” John 2:3-10

How can this be? How can wine “*make glad the heart of man*” if it brings “*woe, sorrow, contention, complaining and wounds?*” How can we “*drink wine with a merry heart*” when it “*bites like a serpent and stings like a viper?*” How could Jesus make “*six waterpots of stone,*” “*containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece*” of wine when wine is “*a mocker, and a brawler*” and those led astray to drink it are “*not wise?*”

Alcohol is the Problem!

It is obvious that we cannot harmonize these Scriptures, and since Scripture can’t be broken, there must be something different about the wine. The only way for wine to be a blessing in some instances and a curse in others if there is something different about it. The difference Scripture identifies is some wine has alcohol and some does not. The most logical answer is that blessed wine is non-alcoholic while wine bringing a curse contains alcohol.

First, it was the alcohol in the wine Noah and Lot drank that cursed them. Second, without alcohol, there is no danger of drunkenness. Third, wine that is only fresh grape juice is a blessing because there is no danger in it. Such wine can “*make glad the heart of man.*” Fourth, we can “*drink wine with a merry heart*” when it contains no alcohol. The 150 to 180 gallons of wine Jesus made would be harmless without it alcohol but very dangerous with it. Finally, Only when wine contains alcohol does it bring “*woe, sorrow, contention, complaining and wounds,*” “*bites like a serpent and sting like a viper*” and is “*a mocker, and a brawler,*” Only alcohol changes wine from blessing to curse.

Wresting Scripture

Wine(“*yayin*” or “*oinos*”) is used of fresh grape juice, fermented grape juice or grape vinegar. Only the context of each verse reveals which. Yet even the Lexicons do not help make this distinction.

But if we use a passage where wine means fresh grape juice and justify drinking alcohol we are wresting the scripture to our own destruction(II Pet 3:14-17). The same wine cannot be a blessing and a curse! A distinction must be made. The truth is God consistently condemned wine containing alcohol.

Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise. Prov. 20:1

By linking this wine to strong drink it is clear that these beverages contain alcohol. It is the intoxicating ability of this wine that makes it a mocker(lit. - *making mouths at us*). It is alcohol that creates the brawler and leads the wise astray.

Wine with alcohol mocks us(we would say it *sticks out the tongue at us*)! When the mask is torn away from this “friend” it’s hideous face of malicious deception is revealed. It bids us drink and be merry, but mocks us behind our back for our folly! As a cunning animal it hides its intentions until we are close enough to strike!

All who drink such wine are led astray to a path leading away from wisdom. The farther down the path to alcoholic beverages one walks, the further from the habit of wisdom they are going.

Alcohol is Man’s Enemy!

The above Proverb strips away alcohol’s allure, revealing it in stark clarity. Like a cunning dog, it wags its tail as man’s best friend, but then bites. Alcohol is a wolf in sheep’s clothing. The deceptive friend who loves us to our face but ridicules and destroys us behind our back.

Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long over wine, those who go to taste mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly; At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your mind will utter perverse things. Prov 23:29-33

Once again, what kind of wine is described here? Is this wine without alcohol? Obviously not! Only wine with alcohol can begin red and sparkling in the cup, go down smoothly, look friendly and safe yet bite in the end.

Even today alcoholic beverages are portrayed and advertised like this. The sophisticated friend that brings popularity and success. A good way to relax and enjoy an evening with friends. The alcohol industry spends millions annually to portray it just like this! God freely admits that this is how it begins, but tells the wise and the godly to look deeper. How does it end? What are the fruits of a long term relationship with alcohol?

Wine containing alcohol brings woe, sorrow, contentions, complaining, wounds and red eyes. Only alcohol can make wine do this! It is alcohol that bites like a serpent and stings like an adder. Only intoxication allows “eyes to “*see strange things*” and a mind to “*utter perverse things.*”

Let's be honest brethren. God is not going to identify such a beverage as a curse here and then call it a blessing elsewhere. If it is a curse it is always a curse. If it is a blessing it is always a blessing. Only when alcohol is added does it change from a blessing to a curse.

The Great Deception

Medical science and public safety agencies are now validating what God revealed long ago about alcohol's curse. Once in the brain, before it touches motor skills, it is affecting inhibition and compromising the conscience. Things godly people would never do sober, they will do after a few drinks. Even when motor skills are intact, one can still be drunk enough to sin. Those who drink socially may never stagger or slur their speech, but still be drunk enough to succumb to temptation.

The first drink of alcohol can make the impossible frighteningly possible! Only those who refuse to drink from the sparkling cup can be assured they are sober! The transition from friend to enemy occurs almost immediately after the first drink. The impairment of conscience is the first thing alcohol affects and begins to lose the capacity of sound judgment.

Sadly, statistics continue to prove that alcohol is man's enemy. More than ten percent who take a first drink will become alcoholics. Fifty percent of traffic fatalities, murders, divorces, and violent crime are directly related to alcohol. Think of it! If alcohol were not consumed, these things would be cut in half! Alcohol is a close companion to misery and woe.

Brethren, we would be staggered by the cost of alcohol on the human race. All the woe, sorrow, fighting, complaining and wounds it has caused. Promising lives cut off, shattered homes, children who cry themselves to sleep, lost jobs, ruined health, and wasted youth. This is the cost to multitudes who make alcohol their friend. Truly alcohol is a biting adder and stinging viper!

Can Alcohol be a Blessing?

When God calls wine a blessing can he be speaking of the above? Is it fair to the Scriptures if we do not discriminate how the term is used? Did Jesus really make over a hundred gallons of intoxicating wine to bless a wedding feast? Can you imagine the terrible evil it would have made possible? Would Jesus supply a wine changing the wedding into what Peter condemned as drunkenness, revelry and a drinking party?

For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles-- when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. 1 Pet 4:3

Since alcohol is a biting serpent, stinging viper and growling mocker, Jesus did not make it! Wine with alcohol is a curse! Wine without it is a blessing! Did Jesus create a blessing or a curse? What a question! After reading the Proverbs, it is an insult to the Son of God to say that He created 120 to 180 gallons of alcoholic wine.

Brethren, alcohol and Christianity cannot coexist peacefully. The more Christianity takes root in a good and honest heart the less likely one is to drink alcohol. The more alcohol takes root the less likely one is to remain a faithful Christian. They are paths to entirely different destinations. One cannot go both ways. The path to wisdom leads away from alcohol.

For God has already accepted your works.

Since the term "for" is a term indicating "causal relations of all kinds," we have to ask what is the connection between this conclusion and the rest of the sentence.

kiy (kee); a primitive particle [the full form of the prepositional prefix] indicating causal relations of all kinds, antecedent or consequent; (by implication) very widely used as a relative conjunction or adverb [as below]; often largely modified by other particles annexed: (Strongs #3588)

It is offered as the reason(cause) why one should eat their bread with joy, drink their wine with a merry heart. God has just revealed that man has no dominion or control over their future. The same

events come upon all and there is no formula or method by which this can be controlled.

But nevertheless He counsels His people to eat with joy and drink with a merry heart. He offered as consolation for their lack of dominion and control, the promise that He had already accepted their works. Since a great deal of the interpretation of this passage is based upon the term “*already*,” it is important to fully understand it as it was used then. The research is somewhat limited since this term is only found in Ecclesiastes, where it is used eight times. It is an “*adverb of time*” or an “*extent of time*” describing things that have “*already*” happened. Sometimes it is “*a great while*” or “*long ago*” while other times it is “*already*” or even “*now*” referring to things that have already happened though they are still present.

kebar from 3527; properly, extent of time, i.e. a great while; hence, long ago, formerly, hitherto... already, (seeing that which), now.” (Strongs #3528)

Ecc. 1:10 It has ***already*** been in ancient times before us.
Ecc. 2:12 What can the man do who succeeds the king?-- Only what he has ***already*** done.
Ecc. 2:16 Since all ***that now is*** will be forgotten in the days to come.
Ecc. 3:15 That which is has ***already*** been, and what is to be has already been;
Ecc. 4:2 Therefore I praised the dead who were ***already*** dead,
Ecc. 6:10 Whatever one is, he has been named ***already***,
Ecc. 9:6 Also their love, their hatred, and their envy ***have now*** perished;
Ecc. 9:7 For God has ***already*** accepted your works.

Although it always referred to things in the past, how far into the past can only be determined by context. Yet Koheleth here stated that the reason man can rejoice in his food and drink is because God has ***already*** accepted his works.

First, from all other teachings in the Scriptures this can only apply to those who “*who fear God, who fear before Him*” (8:12) and to “*the righteous and the wise and their works*” who “*are in the hand of God*” (9:1). This is a comfort and hope only for the righteous!

The distinctions he made in verse 1-2 and will make again in 11-12 between the moral and the immoral, the clean and unclean the good and the sinners are clear. The same events will happen to both without distinction.

Yet the righteous have one thing that the wicked do not. They know God has already accepted their works. The term “*accepted*” is actually one of the tamest ways to translate the word. It is generally used of things that God will “*be pleased with, accept favorably.*” When speaking of “*God’s being pleased with someone, the English versions often translate it as ‘be delighted.’*” It speaks of things that someone is “*well pleased with,*” or wants to “*take delight in,*” “*particularly to accept graciously one with a present.*” Hence the translators could have actually translated it as God is already “*delighted with your works.*”

“*ratsah* to be pleased, be pleased with, accept favorably, satisfy.” This is a common term in both biblical and modern Hebrew. Found approximately 60 times in the text of the Old Testament, one of its first appearances is in Gen. 33:10: “*Thou wast pleased with me.*” ... When *ratsah* expresses God’s being pleased with someone, the English versions often translate it as “*be delighted,*” which seems to reflect a sense of greater pleasure: “*...mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth*” Isa. 42:1; ... On the other hand, when one must meet a certain requirement to merit *ratsah*, it seems more logical to translate it with “*to please*” or “*to accept.*” For example: “*Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams...?*” Mic. 6:7; ... (Vine’s #7521)

“*ratsah*... to be well pleased with, to take delight in a person or thing; particularly to accept graciously one with a present, or with offerings and prayers... to bear with a patient, acquiescing, submissive mind; in opposition to reluctance, impatience, distrust, or despair... delight, acceptance, approbation; good will, favor, grace...” (Wilson p. 4)

What a wonderful promise God makes to those who have no other means of knowing His favor! What you can't see "*under the sun*" is abundantly testified in Scripture. God has assured His people that if they keep His covenant and trust Him with all their heart He has already accepted their works. Like Abraham before them, they are waiting for the city whose builder and maker is God.

By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Heb 11:9-10

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. Heb 11:13-16

It is easy to eat one's food with "*a smiling cheerful merry countenance,*" and drink their wine with a "*good,*" "*festive,*" filled with "*delight*" and "*joyous*" heart when one knows that God has already accepted their works, that come what may, it will ultimately be well with them, and that they are only strangers and pilgrims "*under the sun.*" It doesn't matter any more what happens here because God has built a city for them. They "*desire a better country that is a heavenly one.* They enjoy each day and wait with patience for God's reward.

God has made precious and exceeding great promises to those who believe in Him, trust Him, and keep His word. Regardless of outward circumstances, God will do what He has promised. Never let outward circumstances affect your outlook on God's approval or disapproval of your life. God has already accepted your works if you are righteous in accord with the Law. Since you have full assurance of this, you can enjoy your food and drink and be patient for the Lord will take care of the rest.

8. Let your garments always be white,

This verse leaves us somewhat perplexed to interpret since our own culture is so different. It is hard for us to know exactly what the wearing of white signified to them. For us white is a sign of purity. A glance through a concordance may or may not give the answer. It appears from a passage in Esther that white was linked with royalty and rejoicing, while Isaiah and Ezekiel may be implying that it has some link to wealth, prosperity, or comfort.

So Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, with a great crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. Esth 8:15

Moreover, the manufacturers of linen made from combed flax and the weavers of white cloth will be utterly dejected. Isa 19:9

Damascus was your merchant because of the abundance of goods you made, because of your many luxury items, with the wine of Helbon and with white wool. Ezek 27:18

But there is also a spiritual and moral component to the wearing of white. God used the idea of white snow and white wool as an allusion to moral purity.

"Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.

Jesus promised that those who are worthy would walk with Him in white (Rev. 3:4-5; 7:9, 13-14). But He also advised the Lukewarm church in Laodicea to buy white garments from Him.

I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. Rev 3:18

When Jesus was transfigured his garments became white (Mt 17:2), Angels also appeared in

white(Matt 28:3; Mark 16:5; John 20:12; Acts 1:10). Thus far does a concordance take us. Those who have studied the times and the culture proclaim much the same thing.

“In the light of what preceded we are inclined to accept without hesitation the suggestion of BDB that white is here a “sign of cheerfulness and joy,” as also commentaries generally agree though the thought offered by others is not foreign to the context when they claim that “white garments become the emblems of purity and festivity” (*Ginsburg*).” Leupold p. 214-215)

“The white garments are in contrast to the black robes of mourning and thus are an expression of festal joy, of a happy mood; black and white are according to the ancients colour symbols, the colours respectively of sorrow and joy, to which light and darkness correspond..” Delitzsch Vol 6 p. 363

“White” in the Bible signifies glory, purity and joy. The Preacher is arguing for a full, happy life to be lived by the ones who labor through life with God’s blessing... The white attire of angels(Mk 16:5) and of men(Acts 1:10) represents messengers of God who have His approval ... The people in Solomon’s day were admonished to wear white as a sign of God’s approval. (Kidwell, Ecclesiastes & Song of Solomon, p. 230)

It is obvious from these quotes that it is all guesswork. There is no clear indication here of whether the white is to be word “as a ‘sign of cheerfulness and joy,’” “the emblems of purity and festivity,” “an expression of festal joy” and “a happy mood,” “signifies glory, purity and joy,” or “a sign of God’s approval.”

All of this could be true, or then again, perhaps in that day and age, it only meant that one of the basic and simple pleasures of life was wearing clean comfortable clothing. Any of these could be true. Since God has accepted your works let your garments manifest it by being white (live in purity). Festivity and joyfulness tie in with verse 7 and 9 in that they both speak of being merry and living joyfully. Clean clothing fits with this verse on personal grooming which is a delight in and of itself(let your head lack no oil). Let the reader decide for himself. They are all true.

and let your head lack no oil.

Here again, there are some who see festivity and joy, and others who see comfort.

Ointment and perfume delight the heart, And the sweetness of a man’s friend gives delight by hearty counsel. Prov 27:9

And Joab sent to Tekoa and brought from there a wise woman, and said to her, “Please pretend to be a mourner, and put on mourning apparel; do not anoint yourself with oil, but act like a woman who has been mourning a long time for the dead.” 2 Sam 14:2-3

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Ps 23:5

Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil. I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. Ezek 16:9-11

“You shall sow, but not reap; You shall tread the olives, but not anoint yourselves with oil; And make sweet wine, but not drink wine. Mic 6:15

From the above scriptures two things are evident. Anointing the head with oil was a part of the normal grooming process by which they prepared for the day. It was a part of their comfort to use it. It also shows that oil and gladness are joined together. Hence, it is purely a matter of opinion whether he was speaking of the one or the other or even both.

9. Live joyfully with the wife whom you love (NKJ, ASV, KJV)

9. Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, (NAS, NIV)

For the first time, Koheleth adds the married state to the things God has given man “under the sun” that lead to joy and contentment. He has already revealed that **eating and drinking**(2:24-25; 5:18-19; 8:15; 9:7), **enjoying one’s labor**(Ecc 2:24; 5:18-19), and **being merry**(8:15); are all things God has given to mankind to enjoy “under the sun.” They passed through the curse and are still man’s path to true satisfaction and fulfillment “under the sun.”

God here revealed that marriage should also be added to this list. It was a gift from God dating back to the garden. As a matter of fact, all the gifts spoken of in Ecclesiastes with the exception of drinking are all specifically mentioned as gifts from God from the beginning. Man was given all the fruit of the trees in the garden(except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he was to tend the garden and take dominion of the earth(labor), and when it was noted that it was not good for man to be alone God brought him the gift of a woman(marriage).

"Life under the sun" is enhanced and made more enjoyable when it is enjoyed with a wife whom you love. He inferred this earlier in the book when speaking about being alone.

Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up. 11 Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken. Eccl 4:9-12

The use of two over and over again leads the mind to marriage. Although it is not expressly stated that this has anything to do with marriage, it is fulfilled in that state more often than any other.

The term *"live joyfully"* or *"enjoy life"* is actually the same construction as that found in Ecc 2:1(Please review the comments found there). What he actually said is one should *"see"* life with *"the wife he loves."* The basic idea behind this term is taking the time to *"observe," "perceive," "gain understanding," "examine,"* and *"get acquainted with"* something. When one goes out and sees *"with one's own eyes,"* they are experiencing something for themselves.

ra'ah "to see, observe, perceive, get acquainted with, gain understanding, examine, look after (see to), choose, discover." This verb occurs only in Moabite and all periods of Hebrew. It appears in the Bible about 1,300 times.... Basically *ra'ah* connotes seeing with one's eyes... (Vine's #7200)

Koheleth therefore advised the righteous to *"observe," "examine"* and *"get acquainted"* with life with a wife whom they love. This is the natural extension of God's counsel in the garden of Eden. Since it is not good for man to be alone, and since he created a woman to be a helper who would be suitable for him(Gen 2:18), the most profitable and enjoyable way to get acquainted with *"life under the sun"* is with a wife whom you love. Since the entire context of this section is the joy and comfort such things bring, the translators simply used the word *"enjoy"* or *"joyfully."* instead of *"observe"* or *"get acquainted"* with. Truly, any man who seeks to get the most he can out of his *"life under the sun"* and to minimize the *vanity* should rejoice with the wife of his youth.

Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice with the wife of your youth. 19 As a loving deer and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; And always be enraptured with her love. Pr. 5:18-19

He who finds a wife finds a good thing, And obtains favor from the Lord. Pr. 18:22

Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. 11 The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain. 12 She does him good and not evil All the days of her life. Pr. 31:10-12

A wife is a most precious gift from God, one that if properly chosen and carefully maintained will bring great joy to both. Koheleth, like Paul so many years later made it very clear that all of the value of the husband/wife relationship is contingent upon the husband loving his wife. This term described something *"in which a man delights, or which he earnestly desires; it implies ardent and vehement inclination of the mind, at the same time tenderness and fullness of affection."*

'ahab... to love that in which a man delights, or which he earnestly desires; it implies ardent and vehement inclination of the mind, at the same time tenderness and fullness of affection, and is to be taken in the same extensive sense as the English word "love;" and is used of the unspeakable love and tender mercies of God in covenant with his people..." (Wilson p 260-261)

'ahab or *'ahab* "to love; like." This verb occurs in Moabite and Ugaritic. It appears in all periods of Hebrew and around 250 times in the Bible. Basically this verb is equivalent to the English "to love" in the sense of having a strong emotional attachment to and desire either to possess or to be in the

presence of the object. First, the word refers to the love a man has for a woman and a woman for a man. 'Ahab (or °ahab) is also used of the love between parents and their children. In its first biblical appearance, the word represents Abraham's special attachment to his son Isaac: "And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest..." Gen 22:2. (Vine's OT:157)

There is something wonderfully satisfying and enjoyable about this love. A woman is a wonderful gift from God. One to be cherished, loved and appreciated. In this respect nothing has changed from then to now.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ... So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. Eph 5:25-26; 28-29

Each man is responsible for the joy and love he receives from his wife. It is up to him to see(experience) life with the woman he loves. It is interesting to note that the polygamous Solomon extols the value of a monogamous relationship. Once again inspiration takes precedence over practice or the foolish notions of a human author.

all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life,

In spite of all the joys to be found in good food and satisfying drink in comfortable clothes and good grooming, and in a good wife whom you love, life "under the sun" is still "vain." These things change nothing. The Holy Spirit is not mitigating or changing any of the conclusions drawn in the book. He only gave the ways to minimize the sorrow and maximize the enjoyment. Twice in this verse it is emphasized that the days that we spend under the sun are going to be vain. Looked at collectively, all of our days will add up to a vain life, and looked at individually, all of our days no matter how many they might be will be days of vanity.

Since true dominion is gone and the same events come to all regardless of their preparation, life "under the sun" truly is futile and meaningless. With nothing brought in and nothing brought out, with no control over what we have while here, and the possibility of everything coming crashing down in a moments notice without warning, we live day by day. But this is all ground that has been covered over and over before. The two things that make this verse different are the phrases "which he has given you under the sun" and "that is your portion in life."

In both these phrases, God's control shines through. He may not act to change the events that happen by chance to all(9:1-2; 11-12), but this does not imply He is not in complete control. God gave us the days of our lives and they are our portion from Him. The term *give* is a very broad term used in the OT over 2,000 times. In this context it means "to give, entrust, commit."

nathan (naw-than') to give; to lay, set, place; to make, to do, the varied use of this word may be classed under these significations. I. To give, ... to give in the hand of anyone... to entrust, commit... under this head it bears the sense, to grant, to give forth, ... II To set, place... used for planting, fixing, & c. III to make to do; .. cause to be..." (5414

When God breathed the breath of life into Adam and Eve and gave them dominion over all the creation, he entrusted and committed it into their care. He asked them to be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth while subduing and taking dominion over it and tending the garden. He thus committed it all into their care. This did not change after the curse, it was diminished but not removed. The days are still ours, to do all the above as we choose. They have been given to us, but in our youth, as all things begin, he warned that we will render an account of how we used them.

Rejoice, O 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 the sight of your eyes; But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment. 10 Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, And put away evil from your flesh, For childhood and youth are vanity. Eccl 11:9-10

We must never lose sight that they are a gift and though we have no control over them, we should

be grateful we have them and use them wisely.

for that is your portion in life,

The term "*portion*" describes a "*part taken from a whole*" that one is then given. has in something. It can be the spoils of war, a portion of the food, a portion of land, or a portion of life.

"*chalaq* ... to divide, to divide out as a spoil, to take away a portion,... a part or portion taken from a whole...that which is assigned to man by God for his enjoyment... (Wilson p. 318-319 #2505).

"*chalaq*... The word has legal connotations similar to *nahālâ* "give as a possession" but with the more specific implication of what is granted. ... The verb is commonly used of parceling out shares (RSV "allotments") of land (Num 26:53), whether by lot (Num 26:53), inheritance (Prov 17:2), or other forms of division (Prov 29:24). More commonly it refers to a share in an inheritance. (TDWNT #2505)

After the curse, our portion was greatly diminished. God initially gave eternal life with access to the tree of life and complete dominion over all things. After the curse, all is vanity and the best we can gain as a portion is "*all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity!*" Yet even this is a gift of grace.

He determined after the curse of sin just how much would be left in this life for man to enjoy. He here revealed that the portion of man his share of the whole and what is assigned to him is food, drink, clothing, grooming, a job we enjoy and a woman that we love.

If we wish to enjoy what God has portioned, then we must accept by faith that this is it. This is the very best life offers "*under the sun*" after the curse. If we have these things then seeking anything more is the "*wandering of desire.*" (Ecc. 6:9), which at the best is a waste of time and in its most sinister form becomes a covetousness that knows no bounds and crushes all joy from life for we no longer enjoy even the things we have. If we do not have all these things yet, then Koheleth bids us to seek them. But not to look any further. This is all there is to enjoyment "*under the sun.*"

and in the labor which you perform under the sun.

All that was said above about the enjoyment now applies also to our labor. God wants us to enjoy our work. To be challenged and succeed, face adversity and conquer, set goals and reach them are all blessings from the Lord. There is joy in such labor. The joy of accomplishment, of seeing things get done.

This too ought to be our portion both in our job, and in the things we do in our spare time. To work around the home, to work with one's hands is the best cure for despondency. Indolence leads to depression. A job we do enjoy doing, or a slothful and lazy attitude is not conducive to happiness in this life. God created man to work and to tend. This is also his portion from God.

Ecclesiastes 9:10-12

Introduction

As the author now moves to the conclusion of this section, he guards his readers against the possible reactions that these undisputed facts could lead to. Some of these reactions are very natural, and even have a semblance of wisdom, but God wants His people to reject them. It has now been clearly established that all that exists in “life under the sun” is vanity.

1. There is nothing new under the sun, and no matter how hard man strives, he cannot fix the problems that have resulted from the curse.
2. Wealth and pleasure do not bring lasting satisfaction.
3. There is a time and a season for everything and man must learn to bend to them, for he cannot change them.
4. There will be times when man oppresses man and sometimes nothing can be done about it.
5. Some will find success only to die before they can enjoy it.
6. Sometimes the righteous will receive the what the wicked deserves, while other times the wicked will receive what the righteous deserve.
7. The same events come to all, and morality will not deliver anyone from them.

Though all these conclusions the same theme has echoed: “Life under the sun” is vanity, futile, empty, meaningless and empty.

What does God expect His faithful servants to do with all this inspired information? God repudiates the heathen philosophies. The cynicism, apathy, pessimism, and indifference of the Stoic is countered with God’s advice to “*eat your bread in happiness, and drink your wine with a cheerful heart,*” to enjoy their labor, the wife they love, and the comforts of clothing and grooming(9:7-9). While God’s advice that “*whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might*” destroys the Epicurean philosophy of giving one’s life to pleasure and refusing responsibility.

Though it is true that this world is not our home, God does not want us falling prey to the follies of those who use their own wisdom to decide how to deal with it. He wants men to enjoy what He has created and not simply put their lives on hold while they are here. He wants men to work and do all they can to fulfill His original intent.

After making man in His image and likeness, He determined that they should rule over all the earth(Gen 1:26), He then told man to “*Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule*”(Gen 1:28) After the curse, God added, “*cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life*”(Gen 3:17) and “*by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread,*” “*till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.*” (Gen 3:19).

It is evident from these commands that the things revealed in Ecclesiastes are only an elaboration of God’s will for man. The curse does not change God’s intent that man do all the above to the best of his ability. Man is still to see “*life under the sun*” as a great challenge. No longer the exclusive challenge for the spiritual ones are also important, but God doesn’t want His people to become hermits or opt out of life.

They are to be great examples of how to truly enjoy this life as it was meant to be enjoyed and to serve God with might and toil along with gladness and singing both in the spiritual realm and in the material. What follows is just as much a command of God as any other.

10. Whatever your hand finds to do,

The true conclusion to all the information God has described about “*life under the sun*” both in this book and throughout the rest of Scripture is now revealed. Because “*all is vanity*” and because the “*same event comes to all,*” God wants us to develop this attitude toward life.

The term “*whatsoever*” is actually very similar in construction to “*everything occurs alike to all*” in 9:2. It is the same term “*all*” and the same relative pronoun “*alike*”(please review the comments on verse two). As noted in verse two, a relative pronoun is a term that qualifies the two thoughts it is placed between. In this case it is placed between “*all*” and “*hand finds to do.*” It could therefore be translated as “*all that your hand finds to do,*” or “*everything that your hand finds to do.*” “*All that*” or “*everything that*” “*life under the sun*” brings that you hand can find something to do with or about should be entered into with all your might. God doesn’t want His people to grow despondent, or jaded. He wants them to be filled with zeal, enthusiasm, and ambition all that days of their lives. No matter how hard and difficult life becomes and how little return one might see from his efforts, God still wants the his righteous and faithful people to have an optimism that leads them to get involved and to work hard.

God wants our hands to “*find*” things to do. This term can refer both to searching for the things one knows are out there to be found as well as finding things one was not looking for. The central idea is that of something that has been lost, overlooked, misplaced, or not known and now has been found, comprehended or understood.

matsa’, “to find, meet, get.” ... It is attested both in biblical (about 455 times) and post-biblical Hebrew... *Matsa’* refers to “finding” someone or something that is lost or misplaced, or “finding” where it is. The thing may be found as the result of a purposeful search, ... On other occasions, the location of something or someone may be found without an intentional search... *matsa’* may connote not only “finding” a subject in a location, but “finding something” in an abstract sense. This idea is demonstrated clearly by Gen. 6:8: “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” ... *matsa’* can also mean “to discover.” God told Abraham: “If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes” Gen. 18:26. ... (Vines #4672)

When an opportunity arises out of careful searching and purposeful thought on the one hand or by an accidental occurrence and chance on the other when it is found God expects us to act. It doesn’t matter whether the opportunity leads us to do something we truly want to do or something we detest, if our hand has found it, we must get involved. Even helping an enemy, or neighbor we don’t know we are to act. Even when we are so busy we would rather not get involved God wants us to act.

"If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again. 5 If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it. Ex 23:4-5

"You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep going astray, and hide yourself from them; you shall certainly bring them back to your brother. 2 And if your brother is not near you, or if you do not know him, then you shall bring it to your own house, and it shall remain with you until your brother seeks it; then you shall restore it to him. 3 You shall do the same with his donkey, and so shall you do with his garment; with any lost thing of your brother's, which he has lost and you have found, you shall do likewise; you must not hide yourself. 4 "You shall not see your brother's donkey or his ox fall down along the road, and hide yourself from them; you shall surely help him lift them up again. Deut 22:1-4

God wants us to realize that if we can and we should. He does not want us to be sluggards, but examples of diligence and hard work. This concept is similar to the term “*diligence*” found in the NT. When we have children, raising them is something we have “*found to do.*” Keeping up our home is also something we have “*found to do*”

God wants us to be prepared to buy up every opportunity to do what is good. There are times when he uses man to fulfill His purposes. Man must always be ready at each time he finds something to do whatever he can.

And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Gal 6:9-10

But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good. 2 Thess 3:13-14

The final term is “*do.*” Koheleth has used over 45 times in this book to describe the various aspects of life “*under the sun.*” “*In its primary sense this verb represents the production of various objects.*”

It can also “mean to make something into something” or “the general concept of producing some product.”

`ashah, “to make, do, create.” It occurs ... about 2,625 times in the Bible... In its primary sense this verb represents the production of various objects. ... The verb can mean to make something into something... Depending upon its object, *`ashah* has several other nuances within the general concept of producing some product... Used absolutely this verb sometimes means “to take action” ...” (Vine’s # 6213)

Whenever a hand finds something that it can produce, or make something into something, then God wants us to do it. But not only does God speak of what we ought to do, but how we ought to do it.

do it with your might;

This is a common word for “*strength*,” “*power*,” “*force*,” and “*ability*.” Its most basic meaning is “*an ability to do something*.” It was used in Scripture of Samson’s strength, of the strength of the land to produce crops, or someone’s ability to withstand hard times.

koach, “strength; power; force; ability.” This Hebrew word is used in biblical, rabbinic, and modern Hebrew with little change in meaning. The root is uncertain in Hebrew, but the verb is found in Arabic (*wakaha*, “batter down,” and *kwch*, “defeat”). *Koach*, which occurs 124 times, is a poetic word as it is used most frequently in the poetic and prophetic literature. The basic meaning of *koach* is an ability to do something. Samson’s “strength” lay in his hair Judg. 16:5, ... It is even possible to say that a field has *koach*, as it does or does not have vital “powers” to produce and harvest: “When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength [i.e., crops]...” Gen. 4:12... The internal fortitude was best demonstrated by the difficulties and frustrations of life. A strong man withstood hard times. The proverb bears out this important teaching: “If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small” Pr. 24:10. (Vine’s #3851)

In short, doing something with one’s “might” refers to each individual person’s inherent strengths and abilities. Whatever they are, God wants us to put all that we have into it. As in our love for Him, we must give all our heart, soul, mind and strength to do something. The four terms that follow are examples of the kinds of products or productions that God expects the righteous to do with all their might.

for there is no work or service or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.

The term “for” is the same term used back in 9:7 (please review). It generally emphasizes “*causal relations of all kinds*.” The reason(cause) for the admonition to do what your hand can find to do with all your might is “*because*,” or “*since*” there is no work, service, knowledge or wisdom in the grave where we are going. The connection centers on the fact that what we can do now, we will no longer be able to do then. Ecclesiastes has made it clear that there is not much that we can do to change the things in this life, but there are some things we can do! The point of this verse is that we need to do them while we can do them. What God needs His people to do for Him “under the sun” will no longer be possible then. The four things listed above that make up such an important part of our service to the LORD will no longer be necessary once we die. As in an earlier chapter of the book:

For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity. 20 All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust. 21 Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to the earth? Ecc. 3:19-21

Koheleth leaves completely alone what happens next. Once life “under the sun” is closed, he takes us no further. For the purpose of this book, it is immaterial what happens next. He will touch on it at the end of the book where he says: “*Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it.*” Eccl 12:7 These four terms “*work*,” “*service*,” “*knowledge*” and “*wisdom*” have already been introduced in different portions of Ecclesiastes. book.

“work” was introduced in the first few chapters as the effort and toil that man does “under the sun.” Koheleth had noted all the *works* that men had done(1:14), He decided to prove the enjoyment one can derive from life by making his *works* great(2:4) and then proceeded to build houses and vineyards(2:4), made gardens, orchards, and fruit trees(2:5), water pools(2:6), acquired male and female servants, had herds and flocks(2:7), gathered silver and gold and special treasures(2:8), singers, delights, and musical instruments(2:8). At the end, he looked on all the *works* of his hands(2:11).

The second term translated “service” in the NKJ, “device” in the KJV and ASV, and “planning” in the NAS and NIV. It is a term used to describe the “reasoning, reckoning” and thinking of man.

cheshbown- account, reasoning, reckoning (BDB #2808)

Koheleth used this term earlier when speaking of his own quest to find “the reason of things” and “to find out the reason.” of some things.

*25 I applied my heart to know, To search and seek out wisdom and the **reason** of things, To know the wickedness of folly, Even of foolishness and madness. ... 27 "Here is what I have found," says the Preacher, "Adding one thing to the other to find out the **reason**, Eccl 7:25, 27*

The time to do this is while we live “under the sun.” There will be no more of this in the grave.

The third term “knowledge” is used eight times in the book. It is more than just the knowing of facts. It is used of the “perception” and “skill” one can develop as they gain “discernment,” “understanding” and “wisdom” in their fields of endeavor.

da`ath- knowledge a) knowledge, perception, skill b) discernment, understanding, wisdom BDB #1847

This is one of the exciting things about life. As we do things over and over again we see patterns, find what causes mistakes and what brings success. grow and develop in our line of work and in the other endeavors of our “life under the sun,” we gain this special knowledge that makes us good at the things we do. It gives us greater dominion over these things. It is satisfying and enjoyable to gain such knowledge. But now is the time to gain and use it for there is none of this once we go to the grave. Two uses of this stand out in this respect.

*I communed with my heart, saying, "Look, I have attained greatness, and have gained more wisdom than all who were before me in Jerusalem. My heart has understood great wisdom and **knowledge**." 17 And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind. Eccl 1:16-17*

*For in much wisdom is much grief, And he who increases **knowledge** increases sorrow. Eccl 1:18*

*For wisdom is a defense as money is a defense, But the excellence of **knowledge** is that wisdom gives life to those who have it. Eccl 7:12*

The final term is “wisdom.” It is one of the largest terms in the Scriptures, taking in both the spiritual and material side of life. It is used and extolled many times in the first ten chapters of Proverbs. Solomon praised it as something to seek above silver and gold. It is a great possession to master and hold. Yet it too is something to be gained with all one’s might here “under the sun” for the value that it has here will not pass from this life into the next. All the wisdom and knowledge we glean to work and enjoy in this life will be left behind because God will make everything new and nothing here will be as it will be there.

Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.” Rev 21:5

in the grave where you are going.

This is the first and only time this term is used in Ecclesiastes. While the KJV and NKJV translate the term with “grave,” the ASV, NASB, and ESV chose to keep the original Hebrew word “*sheol*” which has a much fuller meaning than grave.

in Sheol, whither thou goest. ASV

in Sheol where you are going. NASB

in Sheol, to which you are going. ESV

she'ol ... The 66 occurrences of this word are distributed throughout every period of biblical Hebrew.

First, the word means **the state of death**: “For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?” Ps. 6:5; cf. 18:5. It is **the final resting place** of all men: “They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave Job 21:13. ... “Sheol” is parallel to Hebrew words for “pit” or “hell” Job 26:6, “corruption” or “decay” Ps. 16:10, and “destruction” Prov. 15:11. **Second**, “*sheol*” is used of **a place of conscious existence after death**. In the first biblical appearance of the word Jacob said that he would “go down into the grave unto my son mourning” Gen. 37:35. All men go to “Sheol”-- a place and state of consciousness after death Ps. 16:10. The **wicked receive punishment there** Num. 16:30; Deut. 32:22; Ps. 9:17. They are put to shame and silenced in “Sheol” Ps. 31:17. Jesus alluded to Isaiah’s use of *she’ol* 14:13-15 in pronouncing judgment on Capernaum Matt. 11:23, translating “*sheol*” as “Hades” or “Hell,” meaning the place of conscious existence and judgment. It is **an undesirable place for the wicked** Job 24:19 and **a refuge for the righteous** Job 14:13. Thus “*sheol*” is also **a place of reward for the righteous** Hos. 13:14; cf. 1 Cor. 15:55. Jesus’ teaching in Luke 16:19-31 seems to reflect accurately the Old Testament concept of *she’ol*; it is a place of conscious existence after death, one side of which is occupied by the suffering, unrighteous dead separated by a great chasm from the other side peopled by the righteous dead enjoying their reward. (Vine’s # 7585)

Generally, when we speak of the grave we only describe the place where the body has remained and corrupted. This term is used that way many times in Genesis and only the context can help us determine if there is more that the final place for the body to return to dust. Yet it is also used in the prophesy Peter quoted in his first sermon only changing **sheol** to **hades**.

*For You will not leave my soul in **Sheol**, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. Ps 16:10*

*For You will not leave my soul in **Hades**, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. Acts 2:27*

Although the KJV, NKJ and NIV may have the better logic here by translating “grave,” since up to this point in the book Solomon has not taken us past the grave. Yet it seems better to translate it *sheol* everywhere it is used and the allow the reader to make his own decision just as those who spoke Hebrew did.

Since family is no more, home and job are lost, food and drink no longer needed, and no further need for work, service, knowledge, and wisdom in the grave where we are going, we must take advantage of every opportunity while living “under the sun.” We should want to look back on this life as a time when we accomplished all we could to fulfill God’s desire that we enjoy what He created for us in the ways He designed. When we look at the spiritual realm this becomes even more powerful! The time to serve God is now. There is no service of the kind we have now. There are so many people we can talk to and help now that will be too late then. So much to do now that cannot be done later, that is forever closed to one once they leave this life.

11. I returned and saw under the sun that –

Koheleth has used this expression when he is returning to a thought that he had not quite finished(see 4:1,7). In this case, he began the ninth chapter giving the reason why this life is too complicated to develop a formula for success(8:16-17). There is nothing here for man to use as traction or a handhold to gain absolute dominion. So he now returns to this one event that happens to all:

All things come alike to all: One event happens to the righteous and the wicked; To the good, the clean, and the unclean; To him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As is the good, so is the sinner; He who takes an oath as he who fears an oath. Eccl 9:2

Since the exact same events will occur no matter how good or bad your spiritual relationship with God. Since there is no single set of circumstances that will always work and guarantee anyone who does them will pass this life unscathed from its problems and completely successful. He used several illustrations and proverbs to illustrate his point, and now returns to make his final conclusions about the mindless vanity(futility) of life “under the sun”

He exposed the truth that many of the things one simply takes for granted just are not true. they should be true, and we think they are true, but if you carefully examine how things go in this life,

you see clearly that he is right and that life “*under the sun*” is so arbitrary and unfair! Things that ought to be true are not.

The race is not to the swift,

Although a little ambiguous in English since we have many types of races, the Hebrew speaks specifically of a foot race.

mērōs ... The root *rūs* is that of the common Hebrew word meaning "to run, " "make haste by running." It occurs over seventy-five times in the OT and frequently in postbiblical Hebrew. (TDWOT #4794)

As a race begins, most people would believe that the fastest runner there will be the winner. Yet Solomon has carefully observed and seen that it just isn't true. The swiftest person does not always win.

So many things can happen between the start and the finish of any race that there is no way for anyone to predict who will be the winner. The fastest person may not be feeling good, may get hurt, or simply have an off day. Someone who does not even deserve to win the race could actually become the winner. Yet this truth goes much further than the simple running of a race. It can apply to “life under the sun” as well. Those who look in their youth like the most likely to quickly succeed in all that life can bring often do not, while those who look as though life will pass them by completely end up on the very top of it. No one can predict and often, no one can even tell why after it happens.

Nor the battle to the strong,

The term battle refers to “*war*” or “*combat*” “*the over-all confrontation of two forces.*”

milchamah ... “war; battle; skirmish; combat.” This word has a cognate only in Ugaritic. Biblical Hebrew attests it 315 times and in all periods. This word means “war,” the over-all confrontation of two forces Gen. 14:2. It can refer to the engagement in hostilities considered as a whole, the “battle”: “...and they joined battle with them in the vale of Siddim” Gen. 14:8. This word is used not only of what is intended but of the hand-to-hand fighting which takes place: “And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp” Exod. 32:17. *milchamah* sometimes represents the art of soldiering, or “combat”...” (Vine’s #4421)

When the battle is joined, it is not a given that the “strong” always wins. Once the battle begins, no one knows what will happen. Even the strongest (a word for “*hero*” and “*in the context of battle, the word is better understood to refer to the category of warriors.*” Hence when there is a war, not always do the heros and warriors always win.

gibbor ... “hero.” This word appears 159 times in the Old Testament.... In the context of battle, the word is better understood to refer to the category of warriors. The *gibbor* is the proven warrior; especially is this true when *gibbor* is used in combination with *chayil* (“strength”). The KJV gives a literal translation, “mighty men [*gibbor*] of valor [*chayil*],” whereas the NIV renders the phrase idiomatically, “fighting men” (cf. Josh. 1:14). David, who had proven himself as a warrior, attracted “heroes” to his band while he was being pursued by Saul 2 Sam. 23. When David was enthroned as king, these men became a part of the elite military corps. ... (Vine’s # 1368)

Not always does the battle, whether it be an actual war or simply a contest of strength between two opposing parties always end as one would suppose. It is so much more complicated than this. If all battles could be figured out simply by each side determining who has the most warriors and heros, there would be a lot fewer wars. Those who are the strongest do not always win life's battles. Often those who appeared so weak live the longest while the strong die young. No one can predict, it is far beyond such calculations.

Nor bread to the wise,

One would certainly conclude that those who seek for wisdom and understanding would always have bread. This is a term that generally refers to the grain that makes it or the bread itself, but can also refer to food in general.

lechem “bread; meal; food; fruit.” This word has cognates in Ugaritic, Syriac, Aramaic, Phoenician, and

Arabic. *lechem* occurs about 297 times and at every period of biblical Hebrew... This noun refers to "bread," as distinguished from meat... "Bread" was baked in loaves: *lechem* can represent food in general. In Gen. 3:19 (the first biblical occurrence), it signifies the entire diet: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread..." This nuance may include meat, as it does in Judg. 13:15-16: "And Manoah said unto the angel of the Lord, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee. And the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread..." In 1 Sam. 14:24, 28, *lechem* includes honey, and in Prov. 27:27 goat's milk. *lechem* may also represent "food" for animals: "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry" Ps. 147:9; ... (Vine's # 3899)

In one's youth, they may predict success based upon wisdom and mental ability. One may assume that they will always have enough to eat, based upon their keen abilities to assess life and be successful, but even in this, it does not always happen. Such things do not always come to those who most likely appear that they will gain them. Often other circumstances intervene and leave one astonished with the way "life under the sun" actually worked out for that person. "That's life" is our way of coining this truth. "Life under the sun" is so full of eddy's and bends in the river that the current often carries us back the way we have already come (we aren't really getting anywhere) and we don't even recognize it. Other times we can see it, but there is nothing we can do about it. When this occurs neither speed, or strength, or wisdom or understanding and skill avails anything.

Nor riches to men of understanding,

Again, there are those who seem to have such an understanding of financial dealings and the way life works that it just seems sure that they will become wealthy, yet some never do. It seemed a sure thing, they would have all is necessary yet it doesn't always work out that way. All their understanding doesn't seem to help them. Yet we know instinctively that those who "*deal wisely, consider, pay attention to, regard, notice, discern, perceive,*" and "*inquire*" ought to succeed when they direct this toward wealth. Yet it doesn't always happen that way.

bin ... "to understand, be able, deal wisely, consider, pay attention to, regard, notice, discern, perceive, inquire." This verb, which occurs 126 times in biblical Hebrew, has cognates in Ugaritic, Arabic, Ethiopic, late Aramaic, and Syriac. *Bin* appears in all periods of biblical Hebrew. (Vine's #995)

Nor favor to men of skill;

Men of skill are individuals who carefully scrutinize things around them and gain the knowledge of how things work and the best way to deal with them. They are men of skill because they have the ability to get in there, tackle the problem, and come up with a solution. Yet these people do not always get favor. This is a broad term describing "*whatever is pleasant and agreeable.*"

chen ... "favor; grace." The root with the meaning "to favor someone" is a common Semitic term. ... The Hebrew noun *chen* occurs 69 times, ... The first occurrence is in Gen. 6:8: "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." ... The basic meaning of *chen* is "favor." Whatever is "pleasant and agreeable" can be described by this word. When a woman is said to have *chen*, she is a "gracious" woman Prov. 11:16; ... *chen* also denotes the response to whatever is "agreeable." The verbs used with "favor" are: "give favor" Gen. 39:21, "obtain favor" Exod. 3:21, and "find favor" Gen. 6:8, (Vine's # 2580)

Its use here probably parallels that of Joseph while in prison.

*But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him **favor** in the sight of the keeper of the prison. Gen. 39:21*

Because God gave him wisdom, everything he did turned out well, and he therefore gained favor in the sight of the chief jailor. The jailor viewed him as being a pleasant and agreeable person and therefore used him in difficult situations. As he solved these problems, he gained even more favor. This is of course how it is supposed to be. But it is not always this way! For quite some time even Joseph must have doubted as he sat in prison that this favor and skill had profited him.

But time and chance happen to them all.

Here at last are the real factors that make or break someone regardless of their natural abilities and hard work. It all comes down to time and to chance. Koheleth used this term thirty-one times when

he introduced it in chapter three. He then referred to it again in chapter eight and now returns to it again to make some final conclusions. This is an important term for those who live “under the sun.” Time refers to “*a period of time*” in which something can be done which we often translate with “*opportunity*.” It can also be an “*appointed time*” or a “*season*,” which describes the rigid nature of time. Things have to be done when they can be done. It is pointless to attempt them when it is not the right time. It is a mixture of both these meanings that is used in the book. After opening the third chapter with this general truth, Koheleth then related many things that are rigid and fixed. A fixed period for something to happen. there is a time to be born and a time to die, etc.

To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven: Ecc 3:1

1 to be born	to die;
2 to plant	to pluck what is planted
3 to kill	to heal;
4 to break down	to build up;
5 to weep	to laugh;
6 to mourn	to dance;
7 to cast away stones	to gather stones;

8 to embrace	to refrain from embracing
9 to gain	to lose;
10 to keep	to throw away;
11 to tear	to sew;
12 to keep silence	to speak;
13 to love	to hate;
14 of war	of peace.

In the eighth chapter he returned to this theme to stress again that time is the master with full dominion “under the sun.” We must bend our will to it, or be crushed.

And a wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment, 6 Because for every matter there is a time and judgment, Though the misery of man increases greatly. 7 For he does not know what will happen; So who can tell him when it will occur? Eccl. 8:5-7

Here, *time* is set forth as the master again! All of man’s great abilities, the swift, the hero, the wise, the discerning, and the able must all bend to it. None of these things matter when the time is not right. Time reigns “*under the sun*” when it is time, those with ability will gain the end they seek. When the time is not right, others with less ability will gain while those with great abilities will fail.

He now introduces “*chance*,” but before we take this in the direction of English speaking people, we have to look at the original word. Yet there is a difficulty here since it is only used here and one other place in Scripture. We must rely more on the original meaning of the term and don’t have enough Scriptures to see how the Spirit bent the term to his will. For these reasons we have to be very careful not to build a doctrine that fits our culture, but doesn’t really have validation in Scripture. After looking at all the definitions what conclusions should we draw?

pega` “an occurrence, a happening, a chance...” (BDB #6294)
pega` “an occurrence, incident.” (Wilson p. 72 #6294)
pega` “(peh’-gah); from 6293; *impact* (casual)...” (Strongs #6294)

So our understanding of the term is based on the ideas of “*an occurrence*,” “*incident*,” “*impact*,” or “*happening*.” Every translation (KJV; ASV; NASB; NKJV; ESV; NIV) has used “*time and chance*.” Using the main idea of the definition, the truths revealed earlier in the chapter about the one event, and the rigid nature of time, it seems best to understand the term in its narrowest meaning. As the world turns natural events happen: Trees fall, storms come, accidents happen, life unfolds and we are often simply caught up in some event that was going to occur and we just happened to be there when it did. These events fall without rhyme or reason and end up impinging plans and outcomes. They are incidents with an impact, or occurrences that create trouble.

These events change the course of one’s life, often without our knowledge and sometimes with grave impact. This is the ultimate application of his opening conclusion:

I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind. 15 What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be numbered. Ecc 1:14-15

When the time to die comes and by chance a car cuts us off and we head toward the cliff we

cannot avoid, or a chance entrance of a virus into our body gains the upper hand, or the time for the financial world to collapse leads to the chance event of our bankruptcy, we are impinged and no matter who we are, what our gifts might be, and how well we have used our days, there will be nothing we can do. No amount of preparation will help. We can become swift, strong, swift, wise, discerning, and skillful and it won't change the outcome. We can fear God or not fear God and it won't change the outcome.

This is the sad reality of what the curse did to our life "under the sun." When a large rock begins its roll down the mountain if no one is there, there is no incident. But if someone is in its path, it will destroy them and no amount of righteousness, purity, holiness, wisdom skill or perception, can move that rock.

It works both ways. There will be seasons of convenient opportunity when good things appear out of nowhere. Times when things simply go our way through no effort or toil on our own. We are simply blessed by time and chance. We know not how or why, but life "under the sun" smiles upon us. Yet there are also times of impingement when whether by accident or violence through no tangible fault of our own, life simply throws difficulties to us. These can be directed by Satan(Job), by God(David), by life(what is described here). We simply cannot know and the Bible gives no means of doing so. The book of Job leads to the conclusion that this question cannot be answered.

12. For man also does not know his time:

He concludes with the most powerful impingement of all. Death nearly always enters "life under the sun" at a moment we do not expect and do not desire, and no one knows when that time will be. There is a time to die([Ecc 3:2](#)). But no one knows when that time will be. This term for knowledge is primarily what is "*observed*" or "*experienced*." It is knowledge that comes from "*experience with the senses*," "*by investigating and proving*," and "*by reflection and consideration*." No matter how much observation and investigation one does regarding death, and no matter how many tests they do on their own body, until there is an actual problem, there is no way to predict when or how it will come. Most people do not know their time. There are those with terminal illnesses who are diagnosed and become an exception to this, but for most people, there is simply no way to know when an accident or illness is going to strike them down. A healthy 20 year old has no more guarantee of tomorrow than a healthy 80 year old does. Accidents of every description, sickness and disease, and other factors make life such an uncertain thing. There are no observations, investigations, or reflections that will help.

Like fish taken in a cruel net, Like birds caught in a snare,

These two illustrations are given as examples of how "life under the sun" operates. No one can know his time just like these two circumstances. When a fisherman arises early in the morning to gather his net and head out to the fishing grounds, the fish are "blissfully ignorant" of the fate coming upon them. They do not have the intelligence to even consider the possibility. They simply begin to swim as they do any other day, but the net is soon cast and falls across them. They are soon taken, and there is no escape. One moment they are swimming in the water, the next they are captured in the net. They may see it darkening the sun as it descends upon them, they may swim as hard as they can to escape, but the net falls to the bottom and they are caught, and life simply ends.

This is how death descends upon most men. They get up in the morning like every other morning, they begin their daily pursuits like always, and suddenly like the illustration above, they see death coming. They may have a few moments to ponder it without being able to stop it, or they may not have any time at all. Yet nothing anyone can do to begin each day can stop this or change the way it works.

Birds are caught in a snare in exactly the same way. The trap is laid, perhaps that day, or perhaps many days before. The birds are flying from tree to tree, doing what they always do. The snare is hiding awaiting them. As long as they stay away from that particular tree all is well. But suddenly, the leader swerves in the wrong direction, and the next moment they are caught in the snare.

Struggling and seeking for the way of escape that is simply not there. Completely unsuspecting one moment forever captured the next. So God would have us view our own death that we might be continually prepared for it.

So the sons of men are snared in an evil time,

In exactly the same way that it happens to the fish and it happens to the birds, so the sons of men are snared. This term carries the thought of “*to be ensnared*” or “*to be entrapped*.”

yaqosh- to lure, to entice, to snare, to lay a snare or lure, to set a trap...1) to lay snares (figurative of devices of wicked)... b) (Niphal) to be ensnared, to be caught by bait c) (Pual) to be entrapped 3369

This is exactly how death comes. Whether by accident or illness or by trauma or disease, death ensnares and entraps. Man does everything he can to escape it. He seeks to see it coming and strives for means to avoid and escape it. But for everyone the day finally comes when all escapes are blocked, and man is captured.

This always comes in an evil time. This is the same term for time discussed above. It is the appointed time described in Ecc 3.

The sad fact is that because Adam chose to sin, he brought death to all men. Because of the curse of sin, death entered the world and then came to all men because they too sinned. It is therefore now appointed to men to die.

but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die. Gen 2:17

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—... Rom 5:12

And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, Heb 9:27

Koheleth however is not primarily focusing upon this truth. His point is the method by which death is meted out. Though God can mete out death directly as a punishment to sinners, and Scripture reveals that He does do this sometimes(the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, Nadab and Abihu, etc.), the normal means is quite different. God has left death for most people to time and chance.

It is the just punishment for sin(globally), but individually, death is about as fair as a net taking a fish or a snare taking a bird. The death of most people “under the sun” is bitterly empty and futile! Most of them never should have happened. It was a case of “being at the wrong place at the wrong time.” Death always comes at an “evil” time. Though this Hebrew term(ra’-7451) can have a moral emphasis such as “*wicked*,” “*morally evil or hurtful*,” it does not have that here. This is a time that is “*bad or unpleasant in the sense of giving pain or unhappiness*,” and is “*the antithesis of shalom*.” Ponder the antithesis of the time to be born and the time to die. The time to be born is a day of goodness, it is pleasant and the very essence of “shalom.” It is a day of happiness and rejoicing. The “time to die” from the perspective of “under the sun” is an evil time. It is a day of mourning, a day of bitter tears. A day to be avoided and a day to flee. Yet like the net and the snare, every man is ultimately ensnared by it.

When it falls suddenly upon them.

This too is a part of God’s plan for how death comes upon all men. There is no way to predict or plan for it. The first indications that one is going to die are always sudden and without warning. It simply “falls” suddenly. This term is a very general term for falling down.

“naphal- to fall, as a house or city; in war; to fall sick, asleep: (Wilson p 155; #5307)

“naphal- to fall, to lie, to be cast down, to fail... 2) to fall (used of violent death)... 1) to cause to fall, fell, to throw down... (BDB 5307)

It is used of the walls of Jericho falling down flat(Josh. 6:5,20) of Joshua falling down upon his face to plead with the LORD(Josh 7:6,10). It is also a common term for death. “*120,000 men had fallen*” Jdg. 8:10, “*he fell dead*” - Jdg. 5:27. God described death as something that falls suddenly. The

term “suddenly” comes from a root word describes “a *wink*.” It is something instant, quick and unexpected. It comes “*suddenly, surprisingly, instantly!*”

pith'owm / pith'om- as an adverb: 1) suddenly, surprisingly as a substantive: 2) suddenness (BDB # 6597)

pith'owm from 6621; instantly:...” (Strongs # 6597)

6621 *petha` (peh'-thah)*; ... a wink, i.e. moment... quickly or unexpectedly... at an instant...”

The most dreaded and feared enemy of those who live “under the sun” comes suddenly and quickly. Death can only come in an evil time, but it is a time that can seldom be prepared for since it comes instantly and without warning. Even with our current technology, we have not changed this much. We can now predict some forms of death, but this changes nothing for though we can move back the time of revealing it a little, the initial revealing is no different that what is described here. It always comes suddenly and without warning. All violent deaths though are instant and without warning.

The one thing that comes out of this section and that we must all keep firmly in mind is that God reveals death is a part of “time and chance.” He brought it originally into “life under the sun” as punishment for sin, but it doesn't not follow that every death is a punishment for sin. It is like the fish and the net and the bird and the snare, unexpected, instantaneous, and without rhyme or reason.

Koheleth now turns to a new subject. Some see a connection between the previous section and this one while others do not.

Ecclesiastes 9:13-18

Introduction

At first glance, It is difficult to see the connection between his concluding thoughts about how little control man has over “*life under the sun*” and the discussion of wisdom that begins here and takes us through the end of this chapter. But the connection is clear when we consider the context. He has just finished speaking about the various conditions one can have in life and how they often have no impact on the outcome.

He first dealt with moral and spiritual conditions of the heart and found that they have no impact on how “*life under the sun*” unfolds for each person. One can be righteous or wicked, clean or unclean, one who sacrifices or one who does not, good or a sinner, honor an oath or break on oath, and the exact same things will occur in your life. These things do not impact how “*life under the sun*” will develop for us. Since these important spiritual values have no affect on this life, many are filled with madness and evil. Yet generation after generation still proves the same truths exist.

All things come alike to all: One event happens to the righteous and the wicked; To the good, the clean, and the unclean; To him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As is the good, so is the sinner; He who takes an oath as he who fears an oath. 3 This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing happens to all. Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. Eccl 9:2-4

Solomon then moved to the things that can be developed in this life to help make things successful and prosperous, but he found the same thing. All preparations for success do not guarantee success. One can train and become the swiftest and still lose the race. One can prepare to become a hero and still lost the battle. One can gain the wisdom and skillful understanding to create masterpieces in all realms of life and still fail to become great. The sad reality of life under the sun is that the cyclical times one lives in and over which they have no control will have more impact on their lives than these other things.

I returned and saw under the sun that — The race is not to the swift, Nor the battle to the strong, Nor bread to the wise, Nor riches to men of understanding, Nor favor to men of skill; But time and chance happen to them all. Eccl 9:11

Now, he expands and gives an example of how great wisdom that affects and brings about great good may still have no impact on the life of the one who has it.

13. This wisdom I have also seen under the sun, and it seemed great to me:

This was an event that Solomon saw and it made a powerful impression on him. A dire set of circumstances had occurred, and an amazing solution had been found. What impressed him was the “wisdom” that had been exhibited.

chokmah, “wisdom; experience; shrewdness.” This word appears 141 times in the Old Testament. Like *chakam*, most occurrences of this word are in Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. ... can refer to technical skills or special abilities in fashioning something.... *chokmah* is the knowledge and the ability to make the right choices at the opportune time. The consistency of making the right choice is an indication of maturity and development.... (Vine’s # 2451)

Someone had extraordinary “*wisdom, experience and shrewdness.*” Through “*technical skills or special abilities,*” They had devised a plan that made “*the right choices at the opportune time.*” What they had done had seems “great” even to the wise Solomon.

gadol or (shortened) *gadol-* as an adjective: great a) large (in magnitude and extent) b) in number c) in intensity d) loud (in sound) e) older (in age) f) in importance 1) important things 2) great, distinguished (used of men) 3) God Himself (used of God)...” BDB 1419

As a man of great wisdom himself, our author found this event either in “*magnitude and extent,*” or in “*intensity/importance,*” to be “*distinguished.*” Something to be held up and extolled. What this man had done was an amazing example of the great value of wisdom to resolve even the most

complicated problems that could bring the most terrible of consequences.

In every way this is a superlative example of what Solomon noted above. Beyond any doubt this event proved that *“time and chance happen to all,”* and that not always does the bread go *“to the wise, Nor riches to men of understanding, Nor favor to men of skill.”*

In addition to the amazing skill in solving the problem was the complete lack of value it brought to the one who possessed it.

14. There was a little city with few men in it;

The story opens up with a small city with only few men within. What inferences can we draw? First, and the most obvious is a small city has few defenses. It will not have great and tall walls, strong gates or be well defended. Everyone will know how vulnerable that city would be. Secondly, a small city is going to be closer knit. Mostly likely, everyone would know each other, so it would be much harder not to remember the one who saved it.

and a great king came against it, besieged it, and built great snares around it.

A king is generally great or small based on the size of the nation, the size of his army, or the power and reputation he has already gained. These facts clearly made the outcome very bleak for the small city and its citizens. Under normal circumstances this would spell the doom of the city when a great king makes up his mind to besiege and ensnare it. These are the circumstances Jesus described in His parable concerning being His disciple.

Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? 32 Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. 33 So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. Luke 14:31-33

The term besieged was the word used to describe what happened before Jericho was destroyed. They compassed (marched around) the city for seven days

cabab “to turn, go around, turn around (change direction).” Biblical Hebrew attests the word in all periods and about 160 times. Basically this verb represents a circular movement—“to take a turning.” ... A second emphasis of *cabab* is “to go around,” in the sense of to proceed or be arranged in a circle. ... This is the action pictured when Israel besieged Jericho, except with the further nuance of encircling in a processional and religious march... (Vine’s #5437)

The great snares were the siege-works necessary to breach the city. There was no way in and no way out and the walls were in danger of being overthrown.

matsowd or (fem.) *metsowdah* or *metsodah*- as a masculine noun: 1) siege-works, a bulwark 2) a hunting implement, a net as a feminine noun: 3) a net 4) fastness, a stronghold (BDB #4685)

The main idea is that the cities fate was nearly sealed and there was little hope of any escape.

15. Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city.

With Solomon’s earlier commendation of this *“great wisdom,”* this was an amazing feat. This poor man came up with a plan that would save the people’s homes, their lives, their lifestyle and freedom. It would bring so many wonderful blessings to the people of that city. Their wives and children would be spared the sword or worse, they would be spared from slavery or death. They would be spared watching their city be burned or destroyed. One can hardly imagine the thanks and honor which was due this man for what he had done!

Yet no one remembered that same poor man.

Yet the sad reality is that while living *“under the sun”* there is no moral or any other reason that would obligate them to be grateful or give him honor. Sometimes such a man will become a hero who is remembered until the end of time and other times he will be forgotten. In spite of all had been done for them, they did not choose to remember or be thankful or appreciate it.

This is exactly what Solomon had described in the previous verse. The honor is not always to the

wise man who delivers his friends and fellow citizens from a life of slavery or from death.

This is how most view God's great wisdom in delivering sinner through Jesus death on the cross. Instead of being thankful, most of Israel soon forgot Jesus and the miracles and blessings He had brought to them.

The moral of this story is simple and clear. If you have wisdom, use it in ways in which your reward is secure regardless of what it brings "*under the sun*" God is not unrighteous to forget like man is:

For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. Heb 6:10

16. Then I said: "Wisdom is better than strength.

The author now draws his conclusion. First and foremost what is learned from this story is wisdom is better than strength. Strength could not have delivered that city from its fate, but wisdom did deliver it. Therefore wisdom should be cultivated and sought after. It should be prized highly and recognized as a great asset.

Nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, And his words are not heard.

Yet in spite of the above truths, wisdom is subject to the same time and chance as all other things in this "life under the sun." The poor man's wisdom was despised. The term "despised" refers to things that are held in "*contempt,*" or "*neglect.*" "*it is opposed to the act of esteeming, appreciating or caring for.*"

"bazah ... to do that which implies contempt; to slight, neglect, make little account of, to treat contemptuously and proudly;... it is opposed to the act of esteeming, appreciating or caring for; it implies sometimes only to make little account of..." (Wilson p. 119 #959)

Nobody cared after the city was delivered. They did not appreciate the man who did it and they did not listen to anything he later had to say. They neglected and made little account of the poor man's wisdom. They did not even remember what he had done for them well enough to continue to respect him or heed his words.

What should have happened in a perfect world would be for him to be treated with respect. He had clearly proven himself to be wise and capable of protecting them. They should have honored him, sought his counsel and offered him respect. Yet it does not always happen that way. Sometimes people just forget.

17. Words of the wise, spoken quietly, should be heard

There is a slight difference in the various translations, although the end result is the same.

The words of the wise heard in quietness are {better} than the shouting of a ruler among fools. (NAS)
The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of a ruler of fools. (NIV)
Words of the wise, spoken quietly, should be heard rather than the shout of a ruler of fools. (NKJ)
The words of the wise heard in quiet are better than the cry of him that ruleth among fools. (ASV)
The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools. (KJV)

Wise men who know what they are talking about, often speak quietly. They have no need to shout or speak with emphasis. Truth and right are emphasis enough. Those who simply speak the facts clearly and quietly ought to be heard. It would be so much better for those who hear if they would heed them.

Rather than the shout of a ruler of fools.

The term "ruler" refers to someone who has "*dominion*" or the right to "*reign*" over others.

mashal "to rule, reign, have dominion." It is found approximately 100 times in the text of the Hebrew Old Testament. ... *mashal* is used most frequently in the text to express the "ruling or dominion" of one person over another Gen. 3:16; 24:2. Cain is advised "to rule over" or "master" sin Gen. 4:7. ... As

Creator and Sovereign over His world, God “ruleth by his power for ever” Ps. 66:7. (Vine’s # 4910)

This is clearly either hyperbole or sarcasm. The person under consideration is a king or leader of fools. Which would mean he is the greatest fool of them all.

The context of this passage is difficult. He may still be speaking of the city above. The people in that this would therefore be fools? Perhaps it was the shout(prideful boast) of this ruler that got them into trouble in the first place. Yet the truth of this statement also stands on its own. It is clear that the quiet words of a wise man should hold more weight than the shouts of a ruler over fools.

18. Wisdom is better than weapons of war;

The above story also teaches that wisdom has greater value and better results than weapons of war. What could not have been gained through strength or weapons, was gained through the wisdom of the wise man.

But one sinner destroys much good.

He spoke of this sinner back in 9:2 as one of the classes of people who have the same events happening to them regardless of their moral makeup. A sinner is someone who is guilty of “*moral failure toward both God and men.*” and has erred “*from the path of duty and right.*” Though such a person will have the same quality of life under the sun as the good and useful person, Solomon here reminds us that though life may bring the same to both the good and the sinner, it is not reciprocated. The sinner does not bring good to life “under the sun.” He does the opposite. The sinner destroys much good. He causes it to perish and vanish.

'abad- 1) to perish, to vanish, to go astray, to be destroyed ... b) (in the Piel) 1) to destroy, to kill, to cause to perish, to give up (as lost), to exterminate... 2) to blot out, to do away with, to cause to vanish, (figuratively)... (BDB #6)

One sinner can destroy all the good that a wise man’s wisdom can bring. He does this by refusing to listen and even doing the opposite of what is right.