

How God Governs the World (vv. 10-17)

VERSE 10 So then, I have seen the wicked buried, those who used to go in and

out from the holy place (וּבִכְן רָאִיתִי רָשָׁעִים קִבְּרִים וְבָאוּ וּמִמְקוֹם קָדוֹשׁ יִהְיֶה לָּהֶם)

[waw w/prep beth w/adv ken so + Qal perf.1s. ra-ah see + adj.m.p.abs. rasha wicked + Qal pass.part.m.p.abs. qabar bury + waw w/Qal perf.3p. bo go + waw w/prep min w/noun m.s.constr. maqom place + adj.m.s.abs. qadosh holy + Piel impf.3m.s. halak go], **and they are**

soon forgotten in the city where they did thus (וְיִשְׁתַּכְּחוּ בְעִיר אֲשֶׁר כִּן־עָשׂוּ)

[waw w/Hithpael impf.3m.p. shakach forget + d.a.w/prep beth w/noun f.s.abs. ir city + rel.pro. asher + adj.m.s.abs. ken thus + Qal perf.3p. ashah]).

This too is futility (גַּם־זֶה הֶבֶל [conj gam also + adj.m.s.abs. zeh this + noun m.s.abs.

hebel vanity, futility]).

VERSE 11 Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly

(אֲשֶׁר אֵין־נִעְשֶׂה פְתָגָם מִעֲשֵׂה הָרָעָה מִהֲרָה) [rel.pro. asher + Niphal perf.3m.s. ashah +

noun m.s.abs. pithnam sentence + noun m.s.constr. ma-ssheh deed + d.a.w/adj.f.s.abs. ra-ah evil + adv meherah hastily]), **therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are**

given fully to do evil (עַל־כֵּן מִלֵּא לֵב בְּנֵי־הָאָדָם בָּהֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת רָע) [part al w/adv ken

“therefore” + Qal perf.3m.s. male fill + noun m.p.constr. ben so + d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. adam + prep beth w/3m.p.suff. “among them” + prep lamed w/Qal infin.constr. ashah do + adj.m.s.abs. ra evil]).

VERSE 12 Although a sinner does evil a hundred times and may lengthen his life

אֲשֶׁר חָטָא עֲשָׂה רַע מֵאַתַּת וּמֵאַרְיֵךְ לֹ ([rel.pro. asher “Although” + Qal part.m.s.abs. chata sin; “sinner” + Qal part.m.s.abs. ashah do + adj.m.s.abs. ra evil + adj.f.s.constr. meah hundred + waw w/Hiphil part.m.s.abs. arak be long “my lengthen” + prep lamed w/3m.s.suff. “his”], **still I know that it will be well for those who fear God, who fear Him openly** כִּי גַם־יִוְדַע אָנִי אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה־טוֹב לְיִרְאֵי הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר יִירָאוּ מִלְּפָנָיו/ [prep ki still + conj gam also + Qal part.m.s.abs. yada know +pro.1s. ani I + rel.part asher that + Qal impf.3m.s. hayah be + noun m.s.abs. tob good; “well” + prep lamed w/adj.m.p.constr. yare fearing + d.a.w/noun m.p.abs. Elohim + rel.pro. asher who + Qal impf.3m.p. yare fear + prep min w/prep lamed w/noun both p.constr.w/3m.s.suff. paneh face; “openly”]).

VERSE 13 But it will not be well for the evil man and he will not lengthen his days

כַּצֶּל אֲשֶׁר אֵינְנוּ יִרָא מִלְּפָנָיו אֱלֹהִים) ([waw wnon m.s.abs. tob “well” + neg lo + Qal impf.3m.s. hayah be + prep lamed w/adj.m.s.abs. rasha evil, wicked + waw w/neg lo + Hiphil impf.3m.s. arak be long; “lengthen” + noun m.p.abs. yom day + d.a.w/prep kaph w/noun m.s.abs. tsel shadow + rel.part asher “because” + adv ayin not + adj.m.s.abs. yare fearing + prep min w/prep lamed w/noun both p.constr. paneh face + noun m.p.abs. Elohim]).

VERSE 14 There is futility which is done on the earth (הֶבֶל אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה עַל־הָאָרֶץ)

יֵשׁ [existential part yesh there exists + noun m.s.abs. hebel futility + rel.pro. asher + prep al upon + d.a.w/noun both s.abs. eretz],

that is, there are righteous men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the

wicked [אֲשֶׁר יֵשׁ צְדִיקִים אֲשֶׁר מִגִּיעַ אֲלֵהֶם כְּמַעֲשֵׂה הַרְשָׁעִים] [rel.pro. asher + part yesh + adj.m.p.abs. tsadeq righteous + rel.pro. asher + Hiphil part.m.s.abs. naga touch, reach; “it happens” + prep el w/3m.p.suff. “to whom” + prep kaph w/noun m.s.constr. ma-asheh deed + d.a.w/adj.m.p.abs. resha wicked].

On the other hand, there are evil men to whom it happens according to the deeds

of the righteous [וַיֵּשׁ רְשָׁעִים שְׂמוֹנֵעַ אֲלֵהֶם כְּמַעֲשֵׂה הַצְּדִיקִים אֲמַרְתִּי] [waw w/part yesh + adj.m.p.abs. resha + rel.pro.prefix w/Hiphil part.m.s.abs. naga “happens” + prep el w/3m.p.suff. “to whom” + prep kaph w/noun m.s.constr. ma-asheh deed + d.a.w/adj.m.p.abs. tsadeq righteous].

I say that this too is futility [אֲמַרְתִּי שֶׁגַּם־זֶה הֶבֶל] [Qal perf.1s. amar + rel.pro w/conj gam + adj.m.s.abs. zeh + noun m.s.abs. hebel].

VERSE 15 So I commended pleasure, for there is nothing good for a man under

the sun except to eat and to drink and to be merry [הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ כִּי אִם־לֶאֱכֹל וְלִשְׂתוֹת] [waw w/Piel perf.1s. shabach commend + pro.1s. ani + d.o. + d.a.w/noun f.s.abs. shimbah pleasure + rel.pro. asher + adv ayin nothing + noun m.s.abs. tob good + d.a.w/prep lamed w/noun m.s.abs. adam + part tachton under + d.a.w/noun both s.abs. shemesh + part ki except + d.o. + prep lamed w/Qal infin.constr. akal eat + waw w/prep lamed w/Qal infin.constr. shatah drink + waw w/prep lamed w/Qal infin.constr. shamach be merry],

and this will stand by him in his toils *throughout* the days of his life which God

has given him under the sun [בְּעַמְלֹו יָמָיו אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן־לֹו הָאֱלֹהִים תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ]

וְהוּא יִלְוֵנוּ [waw w/pro.3m.s. hu this + Qal impf.3m.s.w/3m.s.suuff. tawah join; “will stand by” + prep beth w/noun m.s.constr.w/3m.s.suff. amal toil + noun m.p.constr. yom + noun m.p.constr.w/3m.s.suff. chayyim life + rel.pro. asher + Qal perf.3m.s. nathan give + prep lamed w/3m.s.suff. + d.a.w/noun m.p.abs. Elohim + part thachath under + d.a/w/noun both s.abs. shemesh)].

VERSE 16 When I gave my heart to know wisdom and to see the task which has

been done on the earth [לְדַעַת חִכְמָה וְלִרְאוֹת אֶת־הָעֵנִין אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה עַל־הָאָרֶץ]

כִּי־נָתַתִּי אֶת־לִבִּי [prep kaph w/rel.pro. asher + Qal perf.1s. nathan give + d.o. + noun m.s.constr.w/1s. leb + prep lamed w/Qal infin.constr. yada know + noun f.s.abs. chokmah wisdom + waw w/prep lamed w/Qal infin.constr. ra-ah see + d.o. + d.a.w/noun dual abs. ayin eye + rel.pro. asher + Niphal perf.3m.s. ashah + prep al + d.a.w/noun both s.abs. eretz] (**even**

though one should never sleep day or night) [בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה שָׁנָה בְּעֵינָיו אֵינְנוּ רְאוּהָ]

כִּי גַם [part ki though + conj gam even + d.a.w/prep beth w/noun m.s.abs. yom + waw w/d.a.w/prep beth w/noun m.s.abs. layil night + noun f.s.abs. shena sleep + prep beth w/noun dual constr.w/3m.s.suff. ayin eye + adv ayin not; “never” + Qal part.m.s.abs. ra-ah see)],

VERSE 17 and I saw every work of God, I concluded that man cannot discover the

work which has been done under the sun (אֶת־הַמַּעֲשֵׂה אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה תַּחַת־הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ)

וְרָאִיתִי אֶת־כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי לֹא יוּכַל הָאָדָם לְמַצּוֹא

[waw w/Qal perf.1s. ra-ah see + d.o. + noun m.s.constr. kol + noun m.s.constr. ma-asheh work + d.a.w/noun m.p.abs.

Elohim + part ki for + neg lo + Qal impf.3s. yakol be able + d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. adam + prep

lamed w/Qal infin.constr. matsa find + d.o. + d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. ma-asheh work + rel.pro.

asher + Niphal perf.3m.s. ashah + part tachath under + d.a.w/noun both s.abs. shemesh sun]).

Even though man should seek laboriously, he will not discover (לְבַקֵּשׁ וְלֹא יִמְצָא)

בְּשֹׁל אֲשֶׁר יַעֲמֹל הָאָדָם [prep beth w/rel.pro. asher + rel.pro. asher + Qal impf.3m.s. amal

labor + d.a.w/noun m.s.abs. adam + prep lamed w/Piel infin.constr. baqash seek + waw w/neg

lo + Qal impf.3m.s. matsa find]; **and though the wise man should say, "I know," he**

cannot discover (וְגַם אִם־יֹאמֵר הַחָכָם לָרַעַת לֹא יוּכַל לְמַצּוֹא) [waw w/conj gam + part

im though + Qal impf.3m.s. amar say + d.a.w/adj.m.s.abs. chakam wise + prep lamed w/Qal

infin.constr. yada know + neg lo + Qal impf.3m.s. yakol be able + prep lamed w/Qal

infin.constr. matsa find]).

ANALYSIS: VERSES 10-17

1. The shift here is from human government to how God governs the world.
2. The focus is on the relationship between the righteous and the wicked (vv. 10-15).
3. Just as human government uses power in an arbitrary fashion, does it follow that God rules similarly?
4. He is bringing into question God's rule since the fate of the righteous and the wicked does not always match up with what is expected.
5. Qohelet begins his observations in verse 10 with a personal observation of the wicked living in his city.
6. He starts with the burial (end) of the wicked, who he describes as regular worshippers in "the holy place."

7. In other words, these types were allowed (by God) “to go in and out from the holy place” while practicing evil with impunity.
8. The wicked not only get away with their wickedness while they were alive, but they are viewed favorably.
9. For the wicked to have been “forgotten” would be a positive thing (Ps. 9:6 “The enemy has come to an end in perpetual ruins. And You have uprooted cities. The very memory of them has perished.” 34:16 “The face of the LORD is against evildoers. To cut off the memory of them from the earth.”; Ps. 109).
10. But is that enough?
11. Is Q. suggesting that they escaped temporal judgment?
12. The most that can be said for these types is that they end up dead, buried and forgotten.
13. Is the point here to show, that it is a waste of time to live a wicked life, because in the long run they are forgotten?
14. Hence, the *hebel* clause in verse 10.
15. Or, to is it to show the senselessness of the relationship between the fate of the wicked and the righteous?
16. In verse 11 Q. sets forth the reason why wickedness flourishes and is praised.
17. Whenever there is a delay of justice as per “the sentence of an evil deed is not carried out quickly” people conclude that the pursuit of evil is worth the risk (therefore the heart of the sons of man among them (e.g. the wicked) are given fully to do evil.”).
18. Wickedness escalates when evildoers are not dealt with in a timely manner.
19. The word translated “sentence” (*pithgam*) occurs here and in Esther 1:10 for the edict of the king.
20. Although it is possible that a human sentence of a king or judge is in view here, the context supports a reference to a divine sentence.
21. Swift action shows people that ‘crime doesn’t pay’, but when justice is delayed the door is open to encourage people to engage in wickedness.
22. Q. offers an example of the flourishing of evil in the life of an individual in verse 12a, which he interrupts in verses 12b-13 to state the opposite point of view, but in verse 14 he affirms what was stated in verse 12a.
23. In verse 12 he illustrates what he stated in verse 11, that wickedness flourishes when it is not quickly stopped: “for a sinner does evil a hundred times and his days are long.”
24. Long life should be the blessing for the righteous and the wise, not for the wicked.
25. But then in the middle of his thought he breaks off and affirms wellbeing for the righteous: “still I know that it will be well for those who fear God, who fear Him openly.”
26. Then in verse 13 he states the opposite for the wicked: “But it will not be well for the evil man and he will not lengthen his days like a shadow, because he does not fear God.”
27. The tension can be seen by a comparison of 8:12a and 8:13b.
28. What is the best way to resolve this tension?
29. Qohelet offers an example of the prospering of the wicked in verse 12a to support the statement in verse 11.
30. Midway through his statement that “a sinner does evil a hundred times and his day are long,” he breaks off the statement to acknowledge the standard, traditional view of deed-consequence relationship in verses 12b-13.
31. The traditional view is that it will “be well for those who fear God,” but “it will not be well for the wicked” whose “days” are “not long because they do not fear God.”

32. In verse 14 Q. goes on to show that the traditional view of verses 12b-13 do not always explain how life works.
33. He offers an example of the “futility/senselessness that is done on the earth” where “righteous people are treated according to the deeds of the wicked” and “wicked people are treated according to the deeds of the righteous.”
34. In other words, the wicked do not get what their wickedness deserves, but they receive the blessings the righteous should receive, and the righteous do not receive the blessings of their righteousness, but they experience the negative consequences that should come to the wicked.
35. Q. sets forth inexplicable exceptions to the traditional view.
36. In verse 14 he begins and ends the verse with the term “futility” or “senseless.”
37. In the face of this breakdown of the deed-consequence relationship, Q. offers another call to enjoyment in verse 15.
38. This is a strong recommendation for humanity at large as the per: “I commended pleasure” (piel perf. *shabach* ‘to praise’ w/noun *shimchah* pleasure).
39. This recommendation is followed by the standard: “there is nothing better/good for a man under the sun except to eat and drink and to be merry.”
40. Similar advice occurs in 2:24-26; 3:12; 3:22, and 5:15.
41. This is his only advice in a world where negative volition reigns supreme.
42. If evil people prosper, and if good people are denied the good things, then eat, drink and be merry, if at all possible.
43. He adds that pleasure “will stand by him in his toils the days of his life which God has given to him.”
44. The verb “will stand by” (or “accompany”) is should be translated “should” as there is no guarantee, that pleasure will accompany labor as illustrated in 5:18-6:6.
45. But Qohelet hopes that people will be able to enjoy the benefits that come from honest labor.
46. He brings his discussion to a close in verses 16-17, with a summarizing closing statement.
47. His argument begins with an ‘if’ or ‘when’ clause (protasis) in verse 16 and ends with a ‘then’ clause in verse 17 (apodosis).
48. In verse 16 he reviews the goal and intensity of his search, which he had laid out and introduced in 1:13-18.
49. There are concepts that these two passages have in common.
50. “To know wisdom” parallels “to seek and explore by wisdom concerning all that has been done under heaven” in 1:13.
51. The term “task” (*inyan* from *ana* to be busied with) is the same word as in 1:13, where Qohelet sets out the goal of his search, and then comments, “It’s a grievous task which God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with.”
52. Regarding the intensity of his search he says, “I set my mind” or literally, “I gave my heart,” which means, “I devoted myself”—this phrase occurs at 1:13 and 1:17.
53. The amount of effort Q. devoted to his search is emphasized in the phrase “even though one sees no sleep day or night.”
54. After stating the goal and intensity of his search in verse 17, Q. gives his conclusion concerning his observation of “all the work of God.”
55. This brings to mind 3:11, which states that people are not able to find out what God has done from the beginning to end.

56. His conclusion here is the same: “that a man cannot discover the work which has been done under the sun.”
57. It does not matter how much effort a person may put into the search.
58. Although a “man should seek laboriously, he will not discover it.”
59. The conclusion asserts that humans are not able to make sense of the events that take place on earth.
60. God’s rule over the world is inexplicable because in part because it appears to be arbitrary, as demonstrated in how the wicked and the righteous are dealt with (8:12-14).
61. At the end of verse 17 he takes his conclusion one step further when he asserts: “and though the wise man should say, ‘I know,’ he cannot discover it.”
62. The conclusion in 8:17 answers the question raised in 8:1: “who knows the explanation of a matter?”
63. Q.’s answer: no one knows, not even the wise man.
64. Verse 17 answers the question raised in 6:12: “who knows what is good for a man during the few years of his futile life?”
65. Again, his reply is that no one knows how to define what is good for people during their life on earth.
66. The resolution to Qohelet’s negativity is to be discovered in the wisdom found in the WOG.
67. There we find answers to the questions related to how God rules the world, and what is good for people during their brief lives.
68. Only by learning and applying divine truth can we turn futility into that which is meaningful for time and eternity.
69. We also can get a handle on the question posed at the end of 6:12: “For who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun?”
70. This information is to be found in the study of the prophetic word of God.
71. Apart from this information we do not need, nor should we want to know what tomorrow may bring.
72. Solomon, the renowned man of wisdom, became jaded and confused as a result of his violations against that which he knew was the truth.
73. That is not to say that all he has to say up to this book is false.
74. He just got caught up in the wrong approach.
75. What he says about mankind in general is true.
76. They live their lives in futility and striving after the wind as they are not connected to the wisdom that can deliver them from their futile existence.

END: Ecclesiastes Chapter Eight
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