

Study of Ecclesiastes: Chapter 8
Questions for Discussion

1. What effect can wisdom have on a man? What does “shine” mean? What does “hardness” mean? (vv. 1; Ex 34:29-30; Deut 28:50; Acts 6:15)

2. Relationship with the king (vv. 2-8; 10:16, 20; Rom 13:1-7)
 - a. Who is the king? Why should one obey the king? (v. 2)
 - b. What happens if one displeases the king? (v. 3)
 - c. What can one not say to the king? Why? (v. 4)
 - d. How will the wise heart handle service to the king? (v. 5)
 - e. How should one handle the difficulties and the unknown nature of life? (vv. 6-8)
 - f. What will not release us from those difficulties? (v. 8)

3. What had the Koheleth observed about the rule of men? Whose hurt is he describing, the ruler’s or the subject’s? (v. 9)

4. What did he observe about the wicked who had come and gone from the place of holiness? Why is this significant? (v. 10; 4:16; 9:15)

5. Why were the hearts of some men set to do evil? (v. 11)

6. What did the Koheleth conclude about a sinner whose days are prolonged? (vv. 12-13; 3:17; 12:14)

7. What does the Koheleth again describe as a vanity that occurs on the earth? (v. 14)

8. In view of such vanity, what does the Koheleth again say is good for man to do? (vv. 15; 2:24; 3:12–13, 22; 5:18–20; 9:7–9; 11:8–9)

9. What did the Koheleth conclude after diligently observing the business that is done on the earth? (vv. 16-17; 3:11; Job 5:9; Ro 11:33)

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Notes & Answers

- 1. What effect can wisdom have on a man? What does shine mean? What does hardness mean?
(vv. 1; Ex 34:29-30; Deut 28:50; Acts 6:15)**

Shine = Sunny Disposition

Hardness = Stubborn

Ecclesiastes 8:1 (ESV)

¹ Who is like the wise?

And who knows the interpretation of a thing?

A man's wisdom makes his face shine,
and the hardness of his face is changed.

Exodus 34:29–30 (ESV)

²⁹ When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. ³⁰ Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him.

Deuteronomy 28:50 (ESV)

⁵⁰ a hard-faced nation who shall not respect the old or show mercy to the young.

Acts 6:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

- 2. Relationship with the king (vv. 2-8; 10:16, 20; Rom 13:1-7)**

Ecclesiastes 8:2–8 (ESV)

² I say: Keep the king's command, because of God's oath to him. ³ Be not hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand in an evil cause, for he does whatever he pleases. ⁴ For the word of the king is supreme, and who may say to him, "What are you doing?" ⁵ Whoever keeps a command will know no evil thing, and the wise heart will know the proper time and the just way. ⁶ For there is a time and a way for everything, although man's trouble lies heavy on him. ⁷ For he does not know what is to be, for who can tell him how it will be? ⁸ No man has power to retain the spirit, or power over the day of death. There is no discharge from war, nor will wickedness deliver those who are given to it.

Ecclesiastes 10:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child,
and your princes feast in the morning!

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Ecclesiastes 10:20 (ESV)

²⁰ Even in your thoughts, do not curse the king,
nor in your bedroom curse the rich,
for a bird of the air will carry your voice,
or some winged creature tell the matter.

Romans 13:1–7 (ESV)

¹ Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, ⁴ for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. ⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷ Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

a. Who is the king? Why should one obey the king? (v. 2)

Some argue it is God, but my opinion is it is an earthly king, but meant to be a metaphor for our relationship with God.

b. What happens if one displeases the king? (v. 3)

The king will do whatever he pleases

c. What can one not say to the king? Why? (v. 4)

No one can question him, because he is sovereign

d. How will the wise heart handle service to the king? (v. 5)

Will work diligently to know the proper time and just way

e. How should one handle the difficulties and the unknown nature of life? (vv. 6-8)

Must live proper and just in all situations (put faith in things that don't change)

f. What will not release us from those difficulties? (v. 8)

Wickedness – following selfish desires

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- 3. What had the Koheleth observed about the rule of men? Whose hurt is he describing, the ruler's or the subject's? (v. 9)**

Ecclesiastes 8:9 (ESV)

⁹ All this I observed while applying my heart to all that is done under the sun, when man had power over man to his hurt.

I believe he means the ruler's hurt, but could be either.

- 4. What did he observe about the wicked who had come and gone from the place of holiness? Why is this significant? (v. 10; 4:16; 9:15)**

He received a proper burial....this was a big deal in OT culture. A wicked man is honored.

Ecclesiastes 8:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ Then I saw the wicked buried. They used to go in and out of the holy place and were praised in the city where they had done such things. This also is vanity.

Ecclesiastes 4:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ There was no end of all the people, all of whom he led. Yet those who come later will not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and a striving after wind.

Ecclesiastes 9:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ But there was found in it a poor, wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that poor man.

- 5. Why were the hearts of some men set to do evil? (v. 11)**

Because justice is not immediate

Ecclesiastes 8:11 (ESV)

¹¹ Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil.

- 6. What did the Koheleth conclude about a sinner whose days are prolonged? (vv. 12-13; 3:17; 12:14)**

It will be well with those who fear God rather than those who are even whose days are prolonged.

Ecclesiastes 8:12-13 (ESV)

¹² Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him. ¹³ But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God.

Ecclesiastes 3:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every work.

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Ecclesiastes 12:13–14 (ESV)

¹³ The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. ¹⁴ For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

7. What does the Koheleth again describe as a vanity that occurs on the earth? (v. 14)

Things appear to happen in the opposite way of what is deserved

Ecclesiastes 8:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity.

8. In view of such vanity, what does the Koheleth again say is good for man to do? (vv. 15; 2:24; 3:12–13, 22; 5:18–20; 9:7–9; 11:8–9)

Ecclesiastes 8:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ And I commend joy, for man has nothing better under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 2:24 (ESV)

²⁴ There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God,

Ecclesiastes 3:12–13 (ESV)

¹² I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; ¹³ also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God’s gift to man.

Ecclesiastes 3:22 (ESV)

²² So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work, for that is his lot. Who can bring him to see what will be after him?

Ecclesiastes 5:18–20 (ESV)

¹⁸ Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot. ¹⁹ Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God. ²⁰ For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.

Ecclesiastes 9:7–9 (ESV)

⁷ Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.

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⁸ Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head.

⁹ Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 11:8–9 (ESV)

⁸ So if a person lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.

⁹ 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 the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.

9. What did the Koheleth conclude after diligently observing the business that is done on the earth? (vv. 16-17; 3:11; Job 5:9; Ro 11:33)

Ecclesiastes 8:16–17 (ESV)

¹⁶ When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how neither day nor night do one's eyes see sleep, ¹⁷ then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 (ESV)

¹¹ He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.

Job 5:9 (ESV)

⁹ who does great things and unsearchable,
marvelous things without number:

Romans 11:33 (ESV)

³³ Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!