

I Intro. (Feb. 1, 2009)

In this section, Solomon speaks frankly once again. He encourages his readers to enjoy life, but to remember that life is only for a while, then the darkness comes (Ecc. 11:7-8). Yes, enjoy life, but also remember that judgment will come for how you lived life (vv. 9-10).

II “Enjoy Live, but There *is* Accountability” (Ecc. 11:7-10)

A. Enjoy life, but it is only for a while (11:7-8)

1. (vs. 7) “The light is pleasant,” means that *life* is pleasant, particularly in the days of one’s youth. “Solomon wrote metaphorically of light and darkness as figures of life (cf. Job 3:20; 33:30) and death (cf. Ecc. 6:4-5; Job 10:20-22; 18:18).”<sup>1</sup> “And” so the expression, “*it is* good for the eyes to see the sun” means that it is good to see life and enjoy life (cf. 6:5; 7:11). There is nothing wrong with observing life and the things of life and investing oneself in it with great vigor (cf. 9:10), as long as it is in keeping with God’s will. Certainly believers of all people who are in the center of God’s will for their lives should be able to say “light” or life “is pleasant,” literally, “sweet.” Yes, believer ought to enjoy life!

2. (vs. 8) “Indeed,” there is the possibility that a man might live a long time and “if a man should live many years,” what should his response be? “Let him rejoice in them all.” After all, it is a great blessing from God that he should have this privilege. But soberly, “let him remember the days of darkness,” that is, let him remember the shortness at best of his duration here, for death symbolized by darkness, is coming. The days of death are to be remembered because of their great duration, “for they shall be many,” “an intentional understatement (12:5 where the grave is called one’s ‘eternal home’; also cf. Job 7:9; 14:10-12).”<sup>2</sup> Death was seen to be final and therefore eternal from the perspective of Solomon in Ecclesiastes. Thus “Everything that is to come *will be* futility,” which can mean “meaningless” or even “enigmatic.”

Confer these notes from Ecc. 1:2:

The Hebrew word *hebel* or *havel* translated “vanity” means “‘vapor’ or ‘breath’”<sup>3</sup> and so here “lit. Elsewhere always...fig. of what is evanescent, unsubstantial, worthless, vanity.”<sup>4</sup> It occurs thirty-eight times in thirty verses in Ecc., and five times in this verse alone (cf. 1:2 [5x], 14; 2:1, 11, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 26; 3:19; 4:4, 7, 8, 16; 5:7, 10; 6:2, 4, 9, 11, 12; 7:6, 15; 8:10, 14; 9:9 [2x]; 11:8, 10; 12:8 [3x])! There is a discrepancy here with TWOT, which says, “The noun appears seventy-one times in the OT. Thirty-six times it is used in Eccl, where it occurs at least once in each of the twelve chapters except chapter ten.”<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the central idea is “‘meaningless.’ As Solomon used this word in Ecclesiastes he meant lacking real substance, value, permanence, or significance.”<sup>6</sup> “Michael V. Fox...thought ‘absurd’ or ‘absurdity’ best translates this word.”<sup>7</sup> He probably had this definition of absurd in mind; “the view that there is no order or value in human life or in the universe.”<sup>8</sup> Hubbard said, “*Hebel* stands more for human inability to grasp the meaning of God’s way than for an ultimate emptiness in life,”<sup>9</sup> but the reason for this emptiness is the failure to bring God’s perspective to the whole of life. Without that, life is indeed ultimately empty...“If this life is all, if death draws a final curtain on human existence, then life is nothing but a vapor—unsubstantial and evanescent,”<sup>10</sup> meaning, “tending to vanish like vapor,”<sup>11</sup> not merely impermanent, but “a quick vanishing and an airy or fragile quality.”<sup>12</sup>

B. Yes, enjoy life, but also remember that judgment will come for how you lived life (vv. 9-10).

1. (vs. 9) There is the reiteration of the readers to enjoy life, to “rejoice,” as he directs the “young man” in the early stages of life, “during your childhood,” and then in the next stage of life as well. “Let your heart be pleasant during the

<sup>3</sup>New Geneva Study Bible. electronic ed. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995. Ec 1:2.

<sup>4</sup>Richard Whitaker, Editor, *The Abridged Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1997.

<sup>5</sup>Harris, R. Laird, Robert Laird Harris, Gleason Leonard Archer and Bruce K. Waltke. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. electronic ed. Chicago: Moody Press, 1999, c1980. 204.

<sup>6</sup>Tom Constable. *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*. Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003. Ec 1:2.

<sup>7</sup>Tom Constable. *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003).

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<sup>9</sup>Tom Constable. *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*. Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003. Ec 1:2.

<sup>10</sup>MacDonald, William and Arthur Farstad. *Believer's Bible Commentary : Old and New Testaments*.

electronic ed. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1995. Ec 1:2.

<sup>11</sup>Merriam-Webster, Inc. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* . electronic ed of the 10th ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 1993; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996.

<sup>12</sup>Merriam-Webster, Inc. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* . electronic ed of the 10th ed. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 1993; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996.

<sup>1</sup>Walvoord, John F., Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985. 1:1003.

<sup>2</sup>John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985). 1:1003.

days of young manhood.” This would include the stage of the peak of one’s strength, when one might find a wife, get married, raise children and work at one’s life calling. During this time Solomon said, “follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes.” “Elsewhere Solomon had said that enjoying life consists of eating and drinking (2:24; 3:13; 8:15; 9:7), wearing nice clothes and pleasant lotions (9:8), enjoying marital bliss (9:9), and finding satisfaction in one’s work (2:24; 3:22; 5:18). Now Solomon encouraged his readers to do whatever their hearts desired.”<sup>13</sup>

Of course, by this advice, Solomon was not advocating reckless abandon. “Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things.” He was probably not so much thinking of a judgment after death, but “emphasized a temporal judgment within a man’s lifetime.”<sup>14</sup> What a man does now has implications for this life, so be careful, is Solomon’s point. Did Solomon know about life and judgment beyond the grave. I think he certainly did, but that is not the perspective that he is giving here, which is the perspective “under the sun” as throughout the rest of the book. As we saw on 1:3, “‘Under the sun’ is a phrase that occurs twenty-nine times in twenty-seven verses in Ecc. (1:3, 9, 14, 2:11, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22; 3:16; 4:1, 3, 7, 15; 5:13, 18; 6:1, 12; 8:9, 15 [bis], 17; 9:3, 6, 9 [bis], 11, 13; 10:5), and ‘simply means “on the earth,” that is, in terms of human existence,’<sup>15</sup> that is, ‘*in this life*, as opposed to the future world.’”<sup>16</sup> We also saw that “This is a critical expression in Ecc. because it really is Solomon’s perspective in the book. He is not giving us *primarily* life as it might look ‘above the sun,’” that is, from God’s perspective or the perspective of eternity.

2. (vs. 10) Finally, Solomon advocated removing “vexation” or grief “from” one’s heart, which had to do with inner emotion, and “pain from” one’s “body,” which had to do with alleviating physical pain and distress. “These imperatives are obviously the opposite side of the

advice to be happy (v. 9) and contrast with the psychological gloom and declining physical vigor depicted in 12:2-5.”<sup>17</sup> One needs to do the best he can in regard to these matters “because” things are going to get worse as “childhood and the prime of life are fleeting.”

### III Conc.

One is to enjoy life, while avoiding sin, especially one’s youth and young manhood because the day will soon come when the capacity to enjoy this life will be greatly diminished. “Yet such passages as Proverbs 5:7-14 and Psalm 39 show that a means of avoiding these effects is a wise lifestyle lived in the fear of the Lord.”<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Walvoord, John F., Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary. The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985. 1:1004.

<sup>14</sup>Walvoord, John F., Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary. The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985. 1:1004.

<sup>15</sup>Tom Constable. Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible. Galaxie Software. 2003; 2003. Ec 1:3.

<sup>16</sup>Jamieson, Robert, A. R. Fausset, A. R. Fausset, David Brown and David Brown. A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997. Ec 1:3.

<sup>17</sup>Walvoord, John F., Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary. The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985. 1:1004.

<sup>18</sup>John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985). 1:1004.