

# Ecclesiastes or, the Preacher



# Contents



# Ecclesiastes or, the Preacher

<sup>1</sup>The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity. <sup>3</sup> What profit hath a man by all his labor with which he wearieth himself under the sun? <sup>4</sup>

One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; while the earth abideth for ever. <sup>5</sup> The sun riseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteneth to the place whence it arose. <sup>6</sup> The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about to the north; round and round goeth the wind, and returneth to its circuits. <sup>7</sup> All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; to the place whence the rivers come, thither they return. <sup>8</sup> All words become weary; man cannot express it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. <sup>9</sup> The thing that hath been is that which shall be, and that which hath been done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun. <sup>10</sup> Is there any thing of which one may say, "Behold, this is new"? It was long ago, in the times which were before us. <sup>11</sup>

There is no remembrance of former things, and of things that are to come there shall be no remembrance to those who live afterwards. <sup>12</sup> I, the Preacher, was king over Israel at Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> And I gave my mind to seek and to search out with wisdom concerning all things which are done under heaven; an evil business, which God hath given to the sons of men, in which to employ themselves. <sup>14</sup> I saw all the things which are done under the sun; and, behold, it was all vanity, and striving after wind. <sup>15</sup> That which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. <sup>16</sup> I communed with my heart, saying, "Behold, I have gained more and greater wisdom than all who have been before me at Jerusalem; yea, my mind hath seen much wisdom and knowledge." <sup>17</sup> And I gave my mind to know wisdom, and to know senselessness and folly; I perceived that this also is striving after wind. <sup>18</sup> For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

<sup>21</sup>I said in my heart, "Come, now, I will try thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure!" But, lo! this also was vanity. <sup>2</sup> I said of laughter, "It is mad;" and of mirth, "What availeth it?" <sup>3</sup> I thought in my heart to strengthen my body with wine, and, while my heart cleaved to wisdom, to lay hold on folly, till I should see what was good for the sons of men, which they should do under heaven all the days of their life. <sup>4</sup> I made me great works. I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards. <sup>5</sup> I made me gardens and parks, and planted in them fruit-trees of every kind. <sup>6</sup> I made me pools of water, with which to water the grove shooting up trees. <sup>7</sup> I got me men-servants and maid-servants, and had servants born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than all who were in Jerusalem before me. <sup>8</sup> I heaped me up also silver and gold, and the wealth of kings and of provinces. I got me men-singers and women-singers, and the delight of the

sons of men, a chosen woman and chosen women. <sup>9</sup> So I became greater than all that were before me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also remained with me. <sup>10</sup> And whatever mine eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy. For my heart rejoiced by means of all my labor, and this was my portion from all my labor. <sup>11</sup> Then I looked upon all the works which my hands had wrought, and upon all the labor which I had toiled in performing; and, behold, it was all vanity, and striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun. <sup>12</sup> Then I turned myself to behold wisdom and senselessness and folly. For what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done. <sup>13</sup> I saw, indeed, that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness. <sup>14</sup> The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walketh in darkness; yet I perceived also that one event happeneth to them all. <sup>15</sup> Then I said in my heart, "As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth to me. Why, then, became I wiser than others?"

Then I said in my heart, "This also is vanity." <sup>16</sup> For there is no remembrance of the wise man more than of the fool for ever; for in the days to come shall all have long been forgotten; and, alas! the wise man dieth, as well as the fool. <sup>17</sup> Therefore I hated life, because what is done under the sun appeared evil to me. For all is vanity, and striving after wind. <sup>18</sup> Yea, I hated all my labor which I had performed under the sun, because I must leave it to the man that shall be after me. <sup>19</sup> And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? Yet shall he be lord of all the labor with which I have wearied myself, and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity. <sup>20</sup> Therefore I turned to give up my heart to despair in regard to all the labor with which I had wearied myself under the sun. <sup>21</sup> For there is a man whose labor has been with wisdom and knowledge and skill; yet to a man who hath not labored for it must he leave it as his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil. <sup>22</sup> For what hath man of all his labor, and the striving of his spirit, with which he wearieth himself under the sun? <sup>23</sup> For all his days are grief, and his occupation trouble; even in the night his heart taketh no rest. This also is vanity. <sup>24</sup> There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink, and let his soul enjoy good in his labor. But this, as I have seen, cometh from the hand of God. <sup>25</sup> For who can eat, or hasten thereunto more than I? <sup>26</sup> For to a man who is good in his sight God giveth wisdom and knowledge and joy; but to the sinner he giveth the wearisome business of gathering and heaping up, to give it to him who is good before God. This also is vanity, and striving after wind.

3For every thing there is a fixed period, and an appointed time to every thing under heaven:— <sup>2</sup> A time to be born, and a time to die. A time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted. <sup>3</sup> A time to kill, and a time to heal. A time to breaking down, and a time to build up. <sup>4</sup> A time to weep, and a time to laugh. A time to mourn, and a time to dance. <sup>5</sup> A time to cast stones asunder, and a time to gather stones together. A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing. <sup>6</sup> A time to seek, and a time to lose. A

time to keep, and a time to cast away. <sup>7</sup> A time to rend, and a time to sew. A time to keep silence, and a time to speak. <sup>8</sup> A time to love, and a time to hate. A time of war, and a time of peace.— <sup>9</sup> What profit hath he who laboreth from that with which he wearieth himself? <sup>10</sup> I have seen the business which God hath given to the sons of men to exercise themselves therewith. <sup>11</sup> God maketh every thing good in its time; but he hath put the world into the heart of man, so that he understandeth not the work which God doeth, from the beginning to the end. <sup>12</sup> I know that there is nothing better for a man than that he should rejoice and enjoy good his life long. <sup>13</sup> But when a man eateth and drinketh, and enjoyeth good through all his labor, this is the gift of God. <sup>14</sup> I know that whatever God doeth, that shall be for ever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it; and God doeth it that men may fear before him. <sup>15</sup> That which is, was long ago; and that which is to be, hath already been; and God recalleth that which is past. <sup>16</sup> Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice there was iniquity; and in the place of righteousness, iniquity. <sup>17</sup> Then said I in my heart, “God will judge the righteous and the wicked.” For there shall be a time for every matter and for every work. <sup>18</sup> I said in my heart concerning the sons of men, that God will prove them, in order that they may see that they are like the beasts. <sup>19</sup> For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts: one lot befalleth both. As the one dieth, so dieth the other. Yea, there is one spirit in them, and a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast; for all is vanity. <sup>20</sup> All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. <sup>21</sup> Who knoweth the spirit of man, whether it goeth upward, and the spirit of a beast, whether it goeth downward to the earth? <sup>22</sup> And so I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his labors; for that is his portion. For who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?

<sup>4</sup>Then I turned and saw all the oppressions which take place under the sun; and, behold, there were the tears of the oppressed, and they had no comforter; and from the hand of their oppressors there was violence, and they had no comforter. <sup>2</sup> Therefore I praised the dead, who have been long ago dead, more than the living, who are yet alive. <sup>3</sup> Yea, better than both of them is he who hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work which is done under the sun. <sup>4</sup> And I saw all labor, and all success in work, that for this a man is envied by his neighbor. This also is vanity, and striving after wind. <sup>5</sup> The fool foldeth his hands together and eateth his own flesh. <sup>6</sup> Better is a hand full of quietness, than both hands full of weariness and striving after wind. <sup>7</sup> Then I turned and saw other vanity under the sun. <sup>8</sup> There is one who is alone, and no one with him; yea, he hath neither son nor brother; yet is there no end to all his labor, and his eye is not satisfied with riches. “For whom, then [[saith he]], do I labor and deprive myself of good?” This also is vanity; yea, it is an evil thing! <sup>9</sup> Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. <sup>10</sup> For if they fall, the one will lift his fellow up; but woe to him who is alone when he falleth, and hath

not another to help him up! <sup>11</sup> Again, if two lie together, then they have heat; but how can one be warm alone? <sup>12</sup> And if an enemy prevail against one, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken. <sup>13</sup> Better is a child poor but wise, than a king old and foolish, who will no more be admonished. <sup>14</sup> For out of prison cometh forth such a one to reign; for in his own kingdom he was born a poor man. <sup>15</sup> I saw that all the living, who walk under the sun, were with the child who stood up in his stead. <sup>16</sup> There was no end to all the people before whom he went forth; yet they that come afterwards shall not rejoice in him. This also is vanity, and striving after wind.

5 Look well to thy feet, when thou goest to the house of God, and draw nigh to hear, rather than to offer sacrifice as fools. For they consider not that they do evil. <sup>2</sup> Be not hasty with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be swift to utter any thing before God. For God is in heaven, and thou upon earth. Therefore let thy words be few. <sup>3</sup> For a dream cometh with much bustle, and a fool's voice with a multitude of words. <sup>4</sup> When thou vowest a vow to God, delay not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools. Pay that which thou hast vowed. <sup>5</sup> Better is it that thou shouldst not vow than that thou shouldst vow and not pay. <sup>6</sup> Suffer not thy mouth to bring punishment on thy flesh, and say not before the angel, "It was a mistake." Wherefore should God be angry on account of thy voice, and destroy the work of thy hands? <sup>7</sup> For in a multitude of dreams is a multitude of vanities; so also in a multitude of words; but fear thou God! <sup>8</sup> If thou seest oppression of the poor, and justice and equity perverted in a province, be not alarmed at the matter. For over the high there is a higher, who watcheth, and there is one higher than they all. <sup>9</sup> An advantage to a land in all respects is a king over cultivated ground. <sup>10</sup> He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; and he that loveth riches shall have no profit from them. This also is vanity. <sup>11</sup> When goods increase, they are increased that eat them; and what advantage hath the owner thereof, save the beholding of them with his eyes? <sup>12</sup> Sweet is the sleep of a laboring man, whether he have eaten little or much; but the repletion of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. <sup>13</sup> There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, — riches kept by the owner thereof to his hurt. <sup>14</sup> For those riches perish by some calamity, and, if he have a son, there is nothing in his hand. <sup>15</sup> As he came forth from his mother's womb naked, so shall he go away again, as he came, and shall take away nothing of his labor which he may carry in his hand. <sup>16</sup> This is also a sore evil, that, in all points as he came, so shall he go. And what profit is there to him who toileth for wind? <sup>17</sup> Also all his days he ate in darkness, and had much grief and anxiety and vexation. <sup>18</sup> Behold, what I have seen is, that it is good and proper for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor which he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him; for it is his portion. <sup>19</sup> To whatever man also God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him to enjoy them, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his



labor; this is the gift of God. <sup>20</sup> For he will not much remember the days of his life; for God answereth him with the joy of his heart.

<sup>6</sup> There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it lieth heavy upon men; <sup>2</sup> a man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honor, and nothing is wanting to him of all which he desireth, yet God giveth him not to taste thereof; but a stranger enjoyeth it. This is vanity, yea, a grievous evil. <sup>3</sup> Though a man have a hundred children, and live many years, and though the days of his years be many, if his soul be not satisfied with good, and he have no burial, I say that an untimely birth is better than he. <sup>4</sup> This, indeed, cometh in nothingness, and goeth down into darkness, and its name is covered with darkness; <sup>5</sup> it hath not seen the sun, nor known it; yet hath it rest rather than the other. <sup>6</sup> Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, and see no good, — do not all go to one place? <sup>7</sup> All the labor of man is for his mouth, and yet his desires are not satisfied. <sup>8</sup> For what advantage hath the wise man over the fool? What advantage hath the poor, who knoweth how to walk before the living? <sup>9</sup> Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire. This also is vanity, and striving after wind. <sup>10</sup> That which is was long ago called by name; and it was known that he is a man, and that he cannot contend with Him who is mightier than he. <sup>11</sup> Seeing there are many things which increase vanity, what advantage hath man [[from them]]? <sup>12</sup> For who knoweth what is good for man in life, in all the days of his vain life, which he spendeth as a shadow? For who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?

<sup>7</sup> A good name is better than precious perfume, and the day of one's death than the day of his birth. <sup>2</sup> It is 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 lay it to heart. <sup>3</sup> Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. <sup>4</sup> The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth. <sup>5</sup> It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools. <sup>6</sup> For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool. This also is vanity. <sup>7</sup> Surely the gain of oppression maketh a wise man foolish, and a gift corrupteth the understanding. <sup>8</sup> Better is the end of a thing than its beginning. Better is the patient in spirit than the proud in spirit. <sup>9</sup> Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; for anger resteth in the bosom of fools. <sup>10</sup> Say not, "What is the cause that the former days were better than these?" For thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this. <sup>11</sup> Wisdom is as good as an estate? yea, it hath an advantage over it for them that see the sun. <sup>12</sup> For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence. But knowledge hath the advantage. For wisdom giveth life to them that have it. <sup>13</sup> Consider the work of God! Who can make straight that which he hath made crooked? <sup>14</sup> In the day of prosperity be joyful; but look for a day of adversity! for this also, as well as the other, hath God appointed, to the end that a man should

not find out any thing which shall be after him. <sup>15</sup> All this have I seen in my days of vanity. There are righteous men who perish in their righteousness, and there are wicked men who live long in their wickedness. <sup>16</sup> Be not righteous overmuch; neither make thyself over-wise! Why shouldst thou destroy thyself? <sup>17</sup> Be not overmuch wicked; neither be thou a fool! Why shouldst thou die before thy time? <sup>18</sup> It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this; yea, also, from that withdraw not thy hand. For he that feareth God shall escape all those things. <sup>19</sup> Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men who are in the city. <sup>20</sup> Truly there is not a righteous man upon the earth who doeth good and sinneth not. <sup>21</sup> Give no heed to all the words which are spoken, lest thou hear thy servant curse thee! <sup>22</sup> For many times thine own heart knoweth also that even thou thyself hast cursed others. <sup>23</sup> All this have I tried by wisdom. I said, "I will be wise;" but it was far from me. <sup>24</sup> That which is far off and exceeding deep, who can find it out? <sup>25</sup> I applied my mind earnestly to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom and intelligence, and to know wickedness and folly, yea, foolishness and madness. <sup>26</sup> And I found more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands bands. He that pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be caught by her. <sup>27</sup> Behold, this have I found, saith the Preacher, putting one thing to another to find knowledge. <sup>28</sup> That which my soul hath hitherto sought, and I have not found, is this: a man among a thousand I have found, but a woman among a thousand have I not found. <sup>29</sup> Lo, this only have I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many devices.

<sup>8</sup> Who is like the wise man, and who knoweth the explanation of a thing? A man's wisdom brighteneth his countenance, and the harshness of his face is changed. <sup>2</sup> I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment, and that on account of the oath of God. <sup>3</sup> Be not in haste to depart from his presence; persist not in an evil thing; for whatever pleaseth him, that he doeth. <sup>4</sup> For the word of the king is powerful; and who can say to him, "What doest thou?" <sup>5</sup> He that keepeth the commandment shall experience no evil; and the heart of the wise man hath regard to time and judgment. <sup>6</sup> For to every thing there is a time and judgment. For the misery of man is great upon him. <sup>7</sup> For no one knoweth what shall be; for who can tell him how it shall be? <sup>8</sup> No man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, and no man hath power over the day of death; and there is no discharge in that war; and wickedness shall not deliver those that are guilty of it. <sup>9</sup> All this have I seen, and I have given heed to all things that are done under the sun. There is a time when man ruleth over man to his hurt. <sup>10</sup> And so I saw the wicked buried, while the righteous came and went from the holy place, and were forgotten in the city. This also is vanity. <sup>11</sup> Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore doth the heart of the sons of men become bold within them to do evil. <sup>12</sup> But though a sinner do evil a hundred times, and have his days prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be

well with them that fear God, that fear before him. <sup>13</sup> But it shall not be well with the wicked: he shall be like a shadow, and shall not prolong his days, because he feareth not before God. <sup>14</sup> There is a vanity which taketh place upon the earth, that there are righteous men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked, and that there are wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous. I said, "This also is vanity!" <sup>15</sup> Then I commended joy; because nothing is good for a man under the sun, except to eat and to drink and to be joyful; for it is this that abideth with him for his labor during the days of his life which God giveth him under the sun. <sup>16</sup> When I applied my mind to know wisdom, and to see the business which is done upon the earth,—that one seeth no sleep with his eyes by day or by night,— <sup>17</sup> then I saw the whole work of God, that a man cannot comprehend that which is done under the sun; how much soever he labor to search it out, yet shall he not comprehend it; yea, though a wise man resolve to know it, yet shall he not be able to comprehend it.

<sup>9</sup>For I gave my mind to all this, even to search out all this, that the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God, and yet neither his love nor hatred doth any man know. All is before them. <sup>2</sup> All [[cometh to them]] as to all. There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good, to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not; as is the good, so is the sinner; he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath. <sup>3</sup> This is an evil among all things which take place under the sun, that there is one event to all; therefore also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and afterward they go down to the dead. <sup>4</sup> For who is there that is excepted? With all the living there is hope; for a living dog is better than a dead lion. <sup>5</sup> For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not any thing, and there is no more to them any advantage, for their memory is forgotten. <sup>6</sup> Their love also, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they a portion any more for ever in any thing which taketh place under the sun. <sup>7</sup> Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a cheerful heart; for long since hath God been pleased with thy works. <sup>8</sup> Let thy garments be always white, and let not fragrant oil be wanting upon thy head. <sup>9</sup> Enjoy life with the wife whom thou lovest, all the days of thy vain life which he hath given thee under the sun, all thy vain days. For this is thy portion in life, and in thy labor with which thou weariest thyself under the sun. <sup>10</sup> Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might! For there is no work nor device nor knowledge nor wisdom in the under-world, whither thou goest. <sup>11</sup> I turned and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor yet bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to men of knowledge; but time and chance happen to them all. <sup>12</sup> For man knoweth not his time. As fishes that are taken in a destructive net, and as birds that are caught in a snare, so are the sons of men snared in a time of distress, when it falleth

suddenly upon them. <sup>13</sup> This also have I seen; even wisdom under the sun, and it seemed great to me. <sup>14</sup> There was a little city, and few men within it; and a great king came against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it. <sup>15</sup> Now there was found within it a wise poor man; and he, by his wisdom, delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. <sup>16</sup> Then said I, "Wisdom is better than strength;" and yet the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard. <sup>17</sup> The quiet words of the wise are sooner heard than the shouting of a foolish ruler. <sup>18</sup> Wisdom is better than weapons of war. But one offender destroyeth much good.

<sup>10</sup> Dead flies make the oil of the perfumer loathsome and corrupt; thus doth a little folly weigh down wisdom and honor. <sup>2</sup> A wise man's mind is at his right hand; but a fool's mind is at his left. <sup>3</sup> Yea, even when the fool walketh in the way, his understanding faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool. <sup>4</sup> If the anger of a ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place! for gentleness pacifieth great offences. <sup>5</sup> There is an evil which I have seen under the sun; an error which proceedeth from a ruler. <sup>6</sup> Folly is set in many high stations, and the noble sit in a low place. <sup>7</sup> I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants on foot. <sup>8</sup> He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh down a wall, a serpent shall bite him. <sup>9</sup> Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith, and he that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby. <sup>10</sup> If the iron be blunt, and one do not whet the edge, then must he put forth more strength; but an advantage for giving success hath wisdom. <sup>11</sup> If a serpent bite before he is charmed, then there is no advantage to the charmer. <sup>12</sup> The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool are his destruction. <sup>13</sup> The beginning of the words of his mouth is folly, and the end of his talk is mischievous madness. <sup>14</sup> A fool also multiplieth words, though no man knoweth what shall be; and who can tell him what shall be after him? <sup>15</sup> The labor of the foolish man wearieth him, because he knoweth not how to go to the city. <sup>16</sup> Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes feast in the morning! <sup>17</sup> Happy thou, O land, when thy king is a noble, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness! <sup>18</sup> By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and by the slackness of the hands the house leaketh. <sup>19</sup> A feast is made for laughter, and wine makes merry; but money answereth all things. <sup>20</sup> Curse not the king; no, not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber! for a bird of the air shall carry the voice; and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.

<sup>11</sup> Cast thy bread upon the waters; for after many days thou shalt find it. <sup>2</sup> Give a portion to seven, yea, to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth. <sup>3</sup> When the clouds are full of rain, they empty upon the earth; and when a tree falleth to the south or the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be. <sup>4</sup> He that watcheth the wind will not sow, and he that gazeth upon the clouds will not reap. <sup>5</sup> As thou knowest not the