EDIFIED EDITION

Ecclesiastes

A modern rendering of the Holy Scriptures

12	222	Old	21
chapters	verses	Testament	book of 66

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Edified Edition (EDE): a modern rendering of the Holy Scriptures from the original Hebrew and Greek, in everyday British English. www.edifiededition.com

Numbered notes follow each chapter.

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Chapter 1

Ecclesiastes 1 introduces the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem, and his theme: everything is fleeting. People toil under the sun, but generations come and go while the sun, the wind and the streams go round and round. Nothing is new, and nothing is remembered. As king, the Teacher set his mind to explore all that is done under heaven, and found it a chasing after the wind; the more wisdom, the more grief.

[1]The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem.[1]

[2]“Fleeting, utterly fleeting,” says the Teacher, “utterly fleeting! Everything is fleeting.”[2]

[3]What does a person gain from all his toil at which he toils under the sun?

[4]A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains for ever.

[5]The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to the place where it rises.

[6]The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, and on its rounds the wind returns.

[7]All the streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full; to the place the streams come from, there they return to flow again.

[8]All things are wearisome, more than one can say; the eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

[9]What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; nothing under the sun is new.

[10]Is there anything of which one can say, “Look, this is new”? It already existed in the ages before us.

11 No one remembers those who came before, and those yet to come will not be remembered by those who come after them.

12 I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

13 I set my mind to seek out and explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is a grievous task that God has given the children of man to keep them busy.

14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and see, all of it is fleeting, a chasing after the wind.

15 What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted.

16 I said to myself, “I have grown great and increased in wisdom beyond all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my mind has seen much wisdom and knowledge.”

17 So I set my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I came to know that this too is a chasing after the wind.

18 For with much wisdom comes much grief, and whoever increases knowledge increases sorrow.

1 Hebrew ‘Qoheleth’, one who gathers an assembly to speak to it; the Greek is ‘Ecclesiastes’.

2 The Hebrew word, used 38 times in this book, means ‘breath’ or ‘vapour’: something that passes and cannot be grasped. Older versions have ‘vanity’.

Chapter 2

Ecclesiastes 2 tells how the Teacher tested pleasure: wine, great building works, gardens, servants, flocks, silver and gold, singers and concubines. He denied himself nothing, yet when he looked at it all, it was fleeting, with nothing gained under the sun. Wisdom is better than folly as light is better than darkness, yet the wise and the fool share one fate and are both forgotten. So he hated his toil, which he must leave to another. The best a person can do is eat, drink and enjoy his work, and this too comes from the hand of God.

1 I said to myself, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy what is good.” But that too was fleeting.

2 Of laughter I said, “It is madness,” and of pleasure, “What does it achieve?”

3 I explored in my mind how to cheer my body with wine, while my mind still guided me with wisdom, and how to lay hold of folly, until I could see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life.

4 I undertook great works: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards.

5 I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.

6 I made pools of water to irrigate a forest of growing trees.

7 I bought male and female servants and had servants born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me.

8 I gathered silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired male and female singers, and the delights of men, many concubines.[1]

9 So I became great and surpassed all who were in Jerusalem before me; my wisdom also stayed with me.

10 Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not deny my heart any pleasure, for my heart took pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil.

11 Then I looked at all the works my hands had done and the toil I had spent in doing them, and see, all of it was fleeting, a chasing after the wind; there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

12 Then I turned to consider wisdom, madness and folly. For what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done.

13 I saw that wisdom is better than folly, as light is better than darkness.

14 The wise man has eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I also came to know that one fate befalls them both.

15 So I said to myself, “What happens to the fool will happen to me too. Why then have I been so very wise?” And I said to myself that this too was fleeting.

16 For the wise man, like the fool, will not be remembered for long, since in the days to come both will be forgotten. How the wise man dies, just like the fool!

17 So I hated life, for the work that is done under
the sun was grievous to me; all of it is fleeting, a
chasing after the wind.

18 I hated all my toil at which I toiled under the
sun, because I must leave it to the one who comes
after me.

19 And who knows whether he will be wise or a
fool? Yet he will be master of all the work at which
I toiled and showed my wisdom under the sun.
This too is fleeting.

20 So my heart began to despair over all the toil at
which I had toiled under the sun.

21 For a man may toil with wisdom, knowledge and
skill, and then must leave all he owns to someone
who has not toiled for it. This too is fleeting and a
great evil.

22 For what does a man get for all his toil and the
striving of his heart with which he toils under the
sun?

23 All his days are pain, and his work is grief; even
at night his mind does not rest. This too is
fleeting.

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

25 For apart from Him who can eat or who can find
enjoyment?[2]

26 God gives wisdom, knowledge and joy to the one
who pleases Him; to the sinner He gives the work
of gathering and heaping up, only to hand it on to
the one who pleases God. This too is fleeting, a
chasing after the wind.

1 The meaning of the last Hebrew words is uncertain.

2 So some Hebrew manuscripts, the Greek and the Syriac; most Hebrew manuscripts have ‘apart from me’.

Chapter 3

Ecclesiastes 3 begins with a poem: there is a time for everything, for birth and death, weeping and laughing, war and peace. God has made everything fitting in its time and put eternity into human hearts, yet no one can fathom His work. What God does endures for ever, so that people will fear Him. The Teacher sees wickedness in the place of justice, but God will judge. People and animals share one fate and return to the dust, so the best is to rejoice in one’s work.

1 Everything has its season, a time for every
matter under heaven:

2 a time for being born and a time for dying, a time
for planting and a time for uprooting what was
planted;

3 a time for killing and a time for healing, a time
for tearing down and a time for building up;

4 a time for weeping and a time for laughing, a
time for mourning and a time for dancing;

5 a time for scattering stones and a time for
gathering them, a time for embracing and a time
for holding back from embracing;

6 a time for searching and a time for giving up as
lost, a time for keeping and a time for throwing
away;

7 a time for tearing and a time for sewing, a time
for keeping silent and a time for speaking;

8 a time for loving and a time for hating, a time for
war and a time for peace.

9 What does the worker gain from his toil?

10 I have seen the task God has given the children
of man to keep them busy.

11 He has made everything fitting in its own time.
He has also put eternity into human hearts, yet no
one can discover the whole of what God has done,
from start to finish.[1]

12 I am sure that people can do nothing better than
be glad and do good throughout their lives,

13 and also that everyone should eat and drink and
find enjoyment in all his toil; this is the gift of God.

14 I know that whatever God does endures for ever;
nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from
it. God has done it so that people will fear Him.

15 What is has already been, and what will be has
already been; and God seeks out what has passed
by.[2]

16 I saw something else under the sun: in the place
of justice there was wickedness, and in the place
of righteousness there was wickedness.

17 I said to myself, “God will judge the righteous
and the wicked, for there is a time for every
matter and for every deed.”

18 I said to myself concerning the children of man,
“God tests them to show them that they are but

beasts.”

19 For the fate of people and the fate of animals is
the same: as one dies, so dies the other. They all
have the same breath, and people have no
advantage over animals, for everything is fleeting.

20 All go to one place; all come from the dust, and
all return to the dust.

21 Who knows whether the spirit of man rises
upward and the spirit of the animal goes down
into the earth?

22 So I saw that there is nothing better than for a
person to rejoice in his work, for that is his lot.
For who can bring him to see what will happen
after him?

1 Or ‘a sense of the ages’.

2 The meaning of the Hebrew of the last line is uncertain.

Chapter 4

Ecclesiastes 4 sees the tears of the oppressed, who have no one to comfort them, and counts the dead more fortunate than the living. Much toil springs from envy. A man alone works without end and never asks for whom. Two are better than one, for they can lift each other up and keep each other warm, and a threefold cord is not quickly broken. A poor but wise youth is better than an old and foolish king, yet even the youth’s success is fleeting.

1 Again I saw all the oppression that is done under
the sun. I saw the tears of the oppressed, and they
had no one to comfort them; power was on the
side of their oppressors, and they had no one to
comfort them.

2 So I counted the dead, who have already died,
more fortunate than the living, who are still alive.

3 Yet better off than either is the one not yet born,
who has never seen the evil done under the sun.

4 Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come
from one person’s envy of another. This too is
fleeting, a chasing after the wind.

5 The fool folds his hands and devours his own
flesh.

6 Better one handful with quiet than two handfuls
with toil and chasing after the wind.

7 Again I saw something fleeting under the sun:

8 a man all alone, with no son or brother. There is
no end to all his toil, yet his eyes are never
satisfied with riches. “For whom am I toiling,” he
asks, “and depriving myself of good things?” This
too is fleeting, a grievous business.

9 Two are better off than one, for together they get
a good return for their work.

10 For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.
But woe to the one who is alone when he falls and
has no one to lift him up!

11 Also, if two lie down together, they keep warm;
but how can one keep warm alone?

12 And though one may be overpowered, two can
stand against him; a threefold cord is not quickly
broken.

13 Better a poor but wise youth than an old but
foolish king who no longer knows how to take
advice.

14 For the youth came out of prison to become
king, though he was born poor in his kingdom.[1]

15 I saw all the living who walk under the sun
following the youth, the second one, who was to
stand in the king’s place.

16 There was no end to all the people, all those he
led; yet those who come later will not rejoice in
him. This too is fleeting, a chasing after the wind.

1 The meaning of verses 14–16 is uncertain; the story may be a parable.

Chapter 5

Ecclesiastes 5 counsels reverence before God: listen rather than offer the sacrifice of fools, let your words be few, and keep the vows you make. Oppression in the provinces should not surprise anyone. Whoever loves money never has enough; the labourer sleeps sweetly, but the rich man’s abundance keeps him awake. Riches can be lost, and everyone leaves the world as naked as he came. So the Teacher sees it as good to eat, drink and enjoy one’s toil, for the power to enjoy it is the gift of God.

1 Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing wrong.[1]

2 Do not be quick with your mouth, and do not let your heart be hasty to speak before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth; so let your words be few.

3 For a dream comes with much business, and a fool's voice with many words.

4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay in keeping it, for He takes no pleasure in fools. Fulfil what you vow.

5 It is better not to vow than to vow and not fulfil it.

6 Do not let your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your words and destroy the work of your hands?[2]

7 For with many dreams come futility and many words. But fear God.

8 If you see the poor oppressed in a province and justice and righteousness denied, do not be astonished at the matter, for one official is watched by a higher one, and there are others higher still over them.

9 But the profit of the land is for all; a king is served by the field.[3]

10 Whoever loves money never has enough money, and whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is fleeting.

11 When goods increase, so do those who consume them. What does their owner gain, except to watch them with his eyes?

12 The sleep of a labourer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of the rich lets him not sleep.

13 There is a grievous evil I have seen under the sun: riches hoarded by their owner to his harm,

14 and those riches lost in a bad venture, so that when he fathers a son, he has nothing left in his hand.

15 As he came from his mother's womb, so he will go again, naked as he came; he will take nothing from his toil that he can carry in his hand.

16 This too is a grievous evil: exactly as he came, so he will go. What does he gain, since he toils for the wind?

17 All his days he eats in darkness, with much vexation, sickness and anger.

18 This is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil at which one toils under the sun during the few days of life God has given him, for this is his lot.

19 Moreover, when God gives anyone riches and possessions and the power to enjoy them, to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil, this is the gift of God.

20 For he will not dwell much on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with the joy of his heart.

1 In Hebrew this verse is 4:17, and 5:2–20 are 5:1–19.

2 Probably the priest; compare Malachi 2:7.

3 The meaning of the Hebrew of this verse is uncertain.

Chapter 6

Ecclesiastes 6 describes a grievous evil: a man to whom God gives riches and honour but not the power to enjoy them, so that a stranger enjoys them instead. Even if he has a hundred children and lives two thousand years without enjoying good, a stillborn child is better off. All toil is for the mouth, yet the appetite is never satisfied. No one can contend with one stronger, and no one knows what is good in life or what will come after.

1 There is an evil I have seen under the sun, and it weighs heavily on mankind:

2 God gives a man riches, possessions and honour, so that he lacks nothing he desires, yet God does not give him the power to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them. This is fleeting and a grievous affliction.

3 A man may father a hundred children and live many years, but however many his days, if his soul is not satisfied with good things and he has no proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he.

4 For it comes in futility and goes in darkness, and in darkness its name is covered.

5 Though it has never seen the sun or known anything, it has more rest than he.

6 Even if he lived a thousand years twice over yet enjoyed no good, do not all go to the same place?

7 All a man's toil is for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied.

8 What advantage has the wise over the fool? What does the poor man gain by knowing how to conduct himself before the living?

9 Better what the eyes see than the wandering of desire. This too is fleeting, a chasing after the wind.

10 Whatever has come to be has already been named, and it is known what man is; he cannot contend with one stronger than he.[1]

11 The more words there are, the more fleeting they are, and what does anyone gain?

12 For who knows what is good for a person in life, during the few fleeting days he passes through like a shadow? Who can tell him what will happen under the sun after he is gone?

1 Or 'with Him who is stronger', that is, God.

Chapter 7

Ecclesiastes 7 gathers sayings about what is better: a good name than perfume, the house of mourning than the house of feasting, a wise rebuke than the song of fools, the end of a matter than its beginning, and patience than pride. Wisdom preserves life, and God has made both good days and bad. The Teacher has seen the righteous perish and the wicked live long, and warns against extremes, for no one on earth is righteous and never sins. Searching for wisdom, he found it far off; he found only that God made mankind upright, but they have sought out many schemes.

1 A good reputation is worth more than precious ointment, and the day one dies more than the day one is born.

2 It is better to go to a house of mourning than to a house of feasting, for death is the end of every person, and the living should take it to heart.

3 Sorrow is better than laughter, for a sad face may make the heart better.

4 The wise set their hearts on the house of grief; fools set theirs on the house of merriment.

5 Better to listen to a wise man's reproof than to listen to fools singing.

6 The laughter of a fool is like thorns crackling under a pot; this too is fleeting.[1]

7 Oppression makes a wise man foolish, and a bribe corrupts the heart.

8 The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride.

9 Do not be quick in spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the lap of fools.

10 Do not say, "Why were the former days better than these?" For it is not from wisdom that you ask this.

11 Wisdom is good with an inheritance, and a benefit to those who see the sun.

12 For wisdom is a shelter as money is a shelter, but the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of its owner.

13 Consider the work of God: who can straighten what He has made crooked?

14 In the day of prosperity be glad, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that no one can find out anything that will come after him.

15 In my fleeting days I have seen everything: a righteous man perishing in his righteousness, and a wicked man living long in his wickedness.

16 Do not be overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise. Why destroy yourself?

17 Do not be overly wicked, and do not be a fool. Why die before your time?

18 It is good to take hold of the one and not let go of the other, for whoever fears God will come through it all.

19 Wisdom makes the wise man stronger than ten rulers in a city.

20 Indeed, no one on earth is so righteous that he always does good and never sins.[2]

21 Do not take to heart everything people say, or you may hear your servant cursing you,

22 for you know in your heart that you too have often cursed others.

23 I put all this to the test of wisdom. "I will be wise," I said, but wisdom stayed beyond my reach.

24 What exists is far off and very deep; who can
find it out?
25 I turned my mind to know, to search out and to
seek wisdom and the sum of things, and to know
the wickedness of folly and the foolishness that is
madness.
26 And I found something more bitter than death:
the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose
hands are chains. The one who pleases God will
escape her, but the sinner will be caught by her.
27 "See, this is what I found," says the Teacher,
"adding one thing to another to find the sum,
28 which my soul still seeks but has not found: one
man among a thousand I found, but a woman
among all these I did not find.
29 Only this have I found: that God made mankind
upright, but they have sought out many schemes."

1 In Hebrew 'thorns' and 'pot' sound alike.
2 Compare Romans 3:10.

Chapter 8

Ecclesiastes 8 commends wisdom, which makes the face shine, and counsels obedience to the king, whose word is supreme. No one knows what is to come, and no one has power over the day of his death. Because punishment is slow, people set their hearts on evil; yet it will go well with those who fear God. The righteous sometimes get what the wicked deserve, and the reverse, so the Teacher commends joy. However much anyone toils, no one can find out the work of God.

1 Who can compare with the wise? Who
understands what things mean? Wisdom lights up
a person's face and softens its hard look.
2 I say, keep the king's command, because of the
oath you swore before God.
3 Do not be in a hurry to leave his presence. Do not
stand up for a bad cause, for he does whatever he
pleases.
4 The king's word carries authority; who can
question him, "What are you doing?"
5 Whoever keeps the command will come to no
harm, and a wise heart knows the proper time and
procedure.
6 For there is a proper time and procedure for
every matter, though a person's trouble lies heavy
on him.
7 Since no one knows what is to come, who can tell
him how it will happen?
8 No one has power over the wind to restrain it,
and no one has power over the day of his death.
There is no discharge in time of war, and
wickedness will not rescue those who practise it.[1]
9 All this I saw as I applied my mind to everything
that is done under the sun, while one man rules
over another to his harm.
10 Then I saw the wicked buried; they used to
come and go from the holy place, and they were
praised in the city where they had done such
things. This too is fleeting.[2]
11 Because the sentence against an evil deed is not
carried out quickly, people's hearts are fully set on
doing evil.
12 Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and
lives long, yet I know that it will go well with those
who fear God, who fear before Him.
13 But it will not go well with the wicked, nor will
he prolong his days like a shadow, because he
does not fear before God.
14 There is something fleeting that happens on
earth: there are righteous people who get what
the wicked deserve, and wicked people who get
what the righteous deserve. I said that this too is
fleeting.
15 So I commend joy, for there is nothing better for
a person under the sun than to eat and drink and
be glad. This will go with him in his toil through
the days of life God gives him under the sun.
16 When I set my mind to know wisdom and to see
the business that is done on earth, though one's
eyes see no sleep day or night,
17 then I saw all the work of God, that no one can
find out the work that is done under the sun.
However much a person toils to seek it out, he will
not find it; even if a wise man claims to know, he
cannot find it out.

1 Or ‘over the spirit, to keep it’.

2 So some Hebrew manuscripts and the Greek; most Hebrew manuscripts have ‘forgotten’.

Chapter 9

Ecclesiastes 9 observes that the righteous and the wise are in God’s hand, yet one fate comes to all, good and bad alike. A living dog is better than a dead lion, for the dead know nothing. So the Teacher urges: eat your bread with joy, enjoy life with the wife you love, and do with all your strength whatever your hand finds to do, for there is no work in Sheol. The swift do not always win the race, and time and chance overtake all. A poor wise man saved a city, yet no one remembered him; wisdom is better than weapons, but one sinner destroys much good.

1 I took all this to heart and examined it all: the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God. Whether love or hate awaits, no one knows; everything lies ahead of them.

2 It is the same for all: one fate comes to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the clean and the unclean, to the one who sacrifices and the one who does not. As it is with the good, so with the sinner; as with the one who swears an oath, so with the one who fears to swear.

3 This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: one fate comes to all. The hearts of people are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and afterwards they go to the dead.

4 But whoever is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.[1]

5 For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten.

6 Their love, their hatred and their envy have already perished, and never again will they have a share in all that is done under the sun.

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

8 Let your clothes always be white, and do not let your head lack oil.

9 Enjoy life with the wife you love, all the days of your fleeting life that He has given you under the sun, all your fleeting days, for that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.

10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your strength, for there is no work or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, where you are going.

11 I saw something else under the sun: the swift do not always win the race, nor the strong the battle; the wise do not always have bread, nor the discerning wealth, nor the skilled favour, for time and chance overtake them all.

12 For no one knows his time. Like fish caught in a cruel net, like birds taken in a snare, so people are trapped by an evil time when it falls on them suddenly.

13 I also saw this example of wisdom under the sun, and it impressed me greatly:

14 There was a small city with few men in it, and a great king came against it, surrounded it and built great siege works against it.

15 Now there lived in it a poor wise man, and he rescued the city by his wisdom. Yet no one remembered that poor man.

16 So I said that wisdom is better than might; yet the poor man’s wisdom is scorned, and no one listens to what he says.

17 The quiet words of the wise are better heeded than the shouting of a ruler among fools.

18 Wisdom is worth more than weapons of war, but a single sinner undoes much good.

1 So the spoken Hebrew; the written text has ‘whoever is chosen’.

Chapter 10

Ecclesiastes 10 shows how a little folly can spoil wisdom, as dead flies spoil perfume. Fools are set in high places while the rich sit low, and slaves ride while princes walk. Every task has its dangers, but wisdom brings success. A wise man's words are gracious, while a fool talks endlessly. A land is blessed whose king is noble and whose princes feast at the proper time, but laziness lets the roof sag. Do not curse the king even in private, for a bird may carry your words.

1 Dead flies make the perfumer's oil stink; so a
little folly outweighs wisdom and honour.
2 The heart of the wise inclines to the right, but
the heart of the fool to the left.
3 Even as the fool walks along the road, he lacks
sense and shows everyone that he is a fool.
4 If the ruler's anger rises against you, do not
leave your post, for calmness can lay great
offences to rest.
5 There is an evil I have seen under the sun, an
error that comes from the ruler:
6 folly is set in many high places, while the rich sit
in low places.
7 I have seen slaves on horseback and princes
walking on foot like slaves.
8 Dig a pit, and you may fall into it; break through
a wall, and a snake may bite you.
9 Whoever quarries stones may be hurt by them,
and whoever splits logs may be endangered by
them.
10 If the axe is blunt and its edge unsharpened,
more strength is needed, but wisdom brings
success.[1]
11 If the snake bites before it is charmed, there is
no gain for the charmer.
12 The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious,
but a fool's lips swallow him up.
13 The beginning of his talk is folly, and the end of
his talk is wicked madness.
14 The fool multiplies words, though no one knows
what is coming; who can tell him what will happen
after him?
15 The toil of fools wearies them; they do not even
know the way to town.
16 Woe to you, land whose king is a youth and
whose princes feast in the morning!
17 Blessed are you, land whose king is of noble
birth and whose princes eat at the proper time, for
strength and not for drunkenness!
18 Through laziness the roof sags, and through idle
hands the house leaks.
19 A feast is made for laughter, and wine gladdens
life, and money answers for everything.
20 Do not curse the king even in your thoughts, or
curse the rich in your bedroom, for a bird of the
air may carry your words, and a winged creature
may report what you say.

1 The meaning of the Hebrew of this verse is uncertain.

Chapter 11

Ecclesiastes 11 urges bold generosity and diligence: send your bread out on the waters, give to many, and sow morning and evening, for no one knows which will succeed or what God will do. Light is sweet, and a person should rejoice in all his years while remembering that dark days will come. The young are told to enjoy their youth and follow their hearts, but to know that God will bring them to judgement.

1 Send your bread out on the waters, for after
many days you will find it again.[1]
2 Give a share to seven, or even to eight, for you do
not know what disaster may come on the land.
3 If the clouds are full, they pour rain on the earth;
whether a tree falls to the south or to the north,
where it falls, there it will lie.
4 Whoever watches the wind will not sow, and
whoever looks at the clouds will not reap.
5 As you do not know the way of the wind, or how
the bones grow in a pregnant woman's womb, so
you do not know the work of God, who makes
everything.
6 Sow your seed in the morning, and in the evening
do not let your hand rest, for you do not know
which will succeed, this or that, or whether both
will do equally well.

7 Light is sweet, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun.

8 However many years a person may live, let him rejoice in them all, but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is fleeting.

9 Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and what your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgement.

10 So banish anxiety from your heart and put away pain from your body, for youth and the prime of life are fleeting.

1 Probably a picture of trade by sea, or of generous giving that brings its return.

Chapter 12

Ecclesiastes 12 calls the young to remember their Creator before the days of trouble come. Old age is pictured as a house falling into ruin: the keepers tremble, the grinders cease, the windows grow dim, desire fails, and at last the silver cord snaps, the dust returns to the earth, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. The Teacher's theme returns: everything is fleeting. An epilogue describes the Teacher's work and warns that there is no end to making books. The conclusion is to fear God and keep His commandments, for God will bring every deed into judgement.

1 Keep your Creator in mind while you are young, before the hard days arrive and the years come when you will say, "They give me no pleasure";

2 before sun and light, moon and stars are darkened, and the clouds come back after the rain;

3 in the day when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look through the windows grow dim;[1]

4 when the doors to the street are shut and the sound of the mill fades; when one rises at the voice of a bird, and all the daughters of song are brought low;

5 when people are afraid of heights and of dangers in the road; when the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along and desire fails; for man goes to his eternal home, and the mourners go about the streets;

6 before the silver cord is snapped and the golden bowl is broken, before the pitcher is shattered at the spring and the wheel broken at the well,

7 and the dust goes back to the earth it came from, and the spirit goes back to God, who gave it.

8 "Fleeting, utterly fleeting," says the Teacher, "everything is fleeting."

9 Besides being wise, the Teacher also taught the people knowledge. He weighed, studied and arranged many proverbs.

10 The Teacher sought to find pleasing words, and he wrote words of truth uprightly.

11 The words of the wise are like goads, and their collected sayings are like firmly fixed nails; they are given by one Shepherd.

12 Beyond these, my son, be warned: of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body.

13 The matter is ended, and all has been heard: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is what every human being is for.[2]

14 For God will bring every deed into judgement, including every hidden thing, whether good or evil.

1 Verses 3–6 picture old age, perhaps the arms, the legs, the teeth and the eyes failing in turn.

2 Hebrew 'for this is all of man'.