

Ecclesiastes Chapter 10

(In verses 1-20), Solomon draws together assorted examples of the wisdom he has both scrutinized and touted.

Ecclesiastes "10:1 Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor: [so doth] a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom [and] honor."

Folly in this verse, means silliness, or foolishness.

We know that anything dead, has a bad odor.

For the flies to be dead where perfume (apothecary) was, is worse.

When a person expected sweet odor of perfume, they smelled dead flies.

What a disappointment.

It is also, a disappointment to expect wise sayings to come from someone's mouth, and instead, they speak foolishness.

What a disappointment this is.

Just as one would throw out an entire bottle of perfume because of a dead fly in it, so people often reject a prominent man because of one mistake or character flaw.

Ecclesiastes 10:2 "A wise man's heart [is] at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left."

“Right ... left”:

This proverb is based on the fact that, commonly, the right hand is more skillful than the left.

The right side of the body has always symbolized the spiritual side of mankind.

The left hand speaks of his earthly nature.

A wise man will let his spirit control him, and not his flesh.

Two examples: Jesus sits at the right hand of God; Sheep to the right and goats to the left.

Ecclesiastes 10:3 "Yea also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth [him], and he saith to every one [that] he [is] a fool."

When the fool stays at home, no one realizes his foolishness.

But when he goes out into the world, everyone he comes in contact with, knows he is a fool.

A person lacking wisdom will manifest that in daily conduct.

Ecclesiastes 10:4 "If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences."

This is just saying, be wise and do not answer back to the ruler.

Just quietly accept what he says, and it will pass over.

Ecclesiastes 10:5 "There is an evil [which] I have seen under the sun, as an error [which] proceedeth from the ruler:"

Again, we see the expression "under the sun".

We remember that this is speaking of those who are living on the earth.

We will take note here, that Solomon sees that the ruler is not always right.

He makes errors too, as he is human.

It is a great and far-reaching evil when leaders make bad judgments.

Ecclesiastes 10:6 "Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place."

Sometimes, a ruler will choose a foolish person for very high office, and that is a mistake.

Perhaps, the person is a relative, friend, or someone he owes a favor.

None of those reasons are correct for choosing a leader.

In this, the king has acted foolishly.

Life presents some strange ironies and is not, in this world, always fair.

Ecclesiastes 10:7 "I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth."

To ride on a horse in the manner spoken of here, is speaking of the person being honored.

What Solomon could be saying, is there were people being honored, who should not have been, and there were others who should have been honored, who were working as servants.

Ecclesiastes 10:8 "He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh a hedge, a serpent shall bite him."

This is another way of saying, "Whatever you sow, you will reap".

Psalms 7:15-16 "He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch [which] he made." "His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate."

The hedge mentioned above, is possibly, speaking of the hedge the Lord puts around the faithful.

For the hedge to be removed, would bring an attack from that old serpent, the devil.

Ecclesiastes 10:9 "Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith; [and] he that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby."

Working with large stones can be dangerous, if they roll back on you.

Splitting wood can also be very dangerous, to the one who is splitting.

The wood separates violently, sometimes, and can hit those standing there.

Everyday activities may result in disasters that no one can predict.

Ecclesiastes 10:10 "If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength: but wisdom [is] profitable to direct."

This is speaking of a knife, or an axe that needs to be sharpened, to make it cut more easily.

Whetting the edge sharpens the blade.

To cut with a dull axe, or knife, would take much more power, than if it were sharpened.

Wisdom helps us find better ways of doing things.

Wisdom helps in practical living.

It also helps in the spiritual life of man.

A little wisdom will ease the efforts of life.

Even though life's experiences often don't turn out the way one would have hoped.

Wise living usually produces a good outcome.

This is a very important conclusion for Solomon's testing of wisdom.

Ecclesiastes 10:11 "Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment; and a babler is no better."

This is saying, the serpent bites without provocation.

The babbler here, is speaking of someone who uses his tongue to charm people into doing things his way.

The babbler of this kind is just as dangerous as the serpent.

Ecclesiastes 10:12 "The words of a wise man's mouth [are] gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself."

A wise man is careful what he says, and how he says it.

His speech is full of grace.

His tongue is used to build people up, rather than to tear them down.

A fool talks loudly and says things he has not considered.

He destroys others with his speech, and in turn, destroys himself.

Man demonstrates wisdom in words as well as works.

Foolish words yield unfavorable outcomes.

Ecclesiastes 10:13 "The beginning of the words of his mouth [is] foolishness: and the end of his talk [is] mischievous madness."

The more he talks, the worse it gets.

This talk of this foolish person is what they are inside.

Their hearts are filled with mischief, and that mischief comes out in their speech.

The speech gets worse every time he speaks.

Proverbs 15:2 "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness."

Ecclesiastes 10:14 "A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him?"

"Fool", in this verse means a dense, confused thinker.

It is so strange, that a person with confused thoughts, talks continuously.

Solomon says in this, that no one except God truly knows the future.

The answer is: no one can tell him.

It is enough to live each day as it comes.

Proverbs 15:2 "The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness."

James 4:13-14

"Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:"

"Whereas ye know not what [shall be] on the morrow. For what [is] your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

Ecclesiastes 10:15 "The labor of the foolish wearith every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city."

The fool is characterized by incompetent behavior.

The foolish pretends he knows the way to the city, when in fact, he does not.

If he does not know the way to the city, he definitely does not know what is to come.

The following Scriptures are showing the way to everlasting life.

Matthew 11:28-30:

"Come unto me, all [ye] that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

"For my yoke [is] easy, and my burden is light."

A Proverb for ignorance with regard to the most ordinary matters, which extends even to spiritual realities.

If a fool can't find a town, how could he possibly locate God?

Ecclesiastes 10:16 "Woe to thee, O land, when thy king [is] a child, and thy princes eat in the morning!"

The position of king bears with it a great responsibility to rule the people fairly and wisely.

A child is not trained.

The princes that eat in the morning are speaking of those who sleep late.

To be king, you must rise early and rule wisely.

The princes "eating in the morning" could have to do with rising early to start drinking.

Isaiah 5:11 "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, [that] they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, [till] wine inflame them!"

Ecclesiastes 10:17 "Blessed [art] thou, O land, when thy king [is] the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!"

This is saying that the king is a son of people of noble character.

They do not get up early to drink, but to eat for strength.

A king that was drunk could not lead his people properly.

The people are blessed when their king is of noble character, and is not a drunkard.

Proverbs 31:4-5

"[It is] not for kings, O Lemuel, [it is] not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink:"

"Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted."

Ecclesiastes 10:18 "By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through."

All buildings require a certain amount of care.

If they are not cared for, they will fall into ruin and decay.

"Slothfulness" is speaking of laziness.

This is still speaking of kings, or rulers.

It is even worse for them to be lazy.

The king leads the country.

The leader must set an example for others to follow.

This is likely an analogy for the kingdom of a lazy monarch.

Proverbs 10:4 "He becometh poor that dealeth [with] a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich."

Proverbs 12:24 "The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute."

Ecclesiastes 10:19 "A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money answereth all [things]."

The partying king (of verse 18), thinks he can fix all the disasters of his inept reign by raising taxes.

We must remember, once again, that Solomon is speaking of the things the way they are on the earth.

This is speaking of kings, who have neglected their office.

They are spending their time laughing and drinking.

On this earth, there is need for money.

Without money, you cannot pay the rent, or the utilities.

You need money for food, and for Dr. bills.

Having enough money to live on helps in your marriage, as well.

The love of money is sin.

To work and make enough money to provide for your family is honorable.

The king is actually provider for all of his people.

It is doubly important that he stays sober, and provides for his people.

Ecclesiastes 10:20 "Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter."

Careless words have a way of being discovered by those in authority.

Some people curse whoever is in office.

Solomon is saying here, it is dangerous to curse the one who rules over you.

Even if you curse him in privacy, someone might hear, and tell him.

In the days of the kings, this could cost you your head.

It is also wrong to curse the rich.

Someone will tell what you have said, and then, you will be in trouble.

Jesus says it best in the following Scriptures.

Luke 12:2-3

"For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known."

"Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops."

Here is one more Scripture on the matter.

Acts 23:5 "Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people."

Ecclesiastes Chapter 10

1. What does folly in verse 1 mean?
2. What does "apothecary" mean?
3. When they were expecting to smell the sweet odor of perfume, they smelled what?
4. A wise man's heart is at his _____ hand.
5. When a fool stays at _____, no one realizes his foolishness.
6. What is meant by verse 4?
7. What does "under the sun" indicate?
8. Why would a king choose a foolish person for high office?
9. I have seen servants upon _____.
10. What did this usually show?

11. What was Solomon really saying in this?
12. Verse 8 is another way of saying what?
13. If the hedge were removed, what might happen?
14. What dangers are spoken of in verse 9?
15. What is verse 10 speaking of?
16. _____ helps us find better ways of doing things.
17. What is the babbler speaking of in verse 11?
18. How does a wise man speak?
19. How does a fool speak?
20. Why do they speak mischief?
21. Where did Jesus say to come in Matthew 11:28-29.
22. Why is it woe for a child to be king?
23. What is "eating in the morning" speaking of?
24. In verse 17, the princes eat for what?
25. Why is strong drink not for kings and princes?
26. What happens to a building that is neglected?
27. The love of money is _____.
28. Curse not the _____.
29. Thou shalt not speak evil of the _____ of thy people.