

Eccles 7:1-20 COMPARISONS + ASSORTED DISCOVERIES

PRELIMS. Sol is extolling the value of a **life** itself, and **making** the **most** of all our **privileges** and **opportunities!** In this passage, Sol is being **very realistic!** One of the special **features** of Ecclesiastes!

CONTRASTS/COMPARISONS

*Throughout life we are constantly having to **make choices!** Even what we **do** in our **leisure** time. Whether to work at home, or go to see a movie, visit a friend, or whatever - we have to make decisions! Sol here tells us what **are** the **best** choices! At least 4 x 'Better to...'s He says some **very surprising** things - things which appear to be the **opposite** of what seems natural and obvious to humanity.

When Sol says something "...is **better** than..."", he is **nor saying** that that thing is **more enjoyable!** He is not talking about the present **experience** but the **long term benefit!** 'In the long run of life, it is better to...' whatever. He is saying that 'After a while, you will see the benefit of what I am saying. We must remember that Sol is here talking of **wisdom!** He is not talking about the **opinions** or the verdict or **judgment** of men! He is '**inspired**' by God. He has seen God's hand in life - and **remembered** it and **recorded** it!

Sol is telling us that, in what some of us have discovered but **have not practiced**, there are **hidden benefits** in some decisions which will not be **realised** until a long time has elapsed! And such benefits are really very well worth **waiting** for!!

Now he gives us a **warning!** There are, in **all** proverbs and principles **exceptions** and **limitations!** When he wrote *Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings* [Pro 22:29] he was not suggesting that **every single skillful man** will receive an MBE!! He was only stating that such people will be honoured and have standing in the community. Such people are **respected!** So.....

The **Ephemeral** or the **Endurable?** Thats a **choice** we have to make very often! Oh, its not **presented** in these terms, but these elements are imbedded in the choice. *A good name is better than precious*

ointment [1]! **Does the fleeting whiff of Channel 19** on a beautiful girl, **influence** your choice **more** than the sound reputation of a diligent and reliable woman? Does good **looks** and **image** impress you more than stability/honestly/wisdom/godliness? Sol says 'Be **careful!** A good **reputation** (background) is **better** than good looks!

Which do you prefer - **Birthdays** or **Deathbeds?** Sol says the day of death is better than the day of our birth [1b]! We celebrate birthdays yet *Man is **born to trouble** as the sparks fly upwards* [Job 5:7] If a soul has gone to heaven then surely there **ought** to be **joy!** If we truly loved that person who has died, we ought to **rejoice** for that person. **In a sense**, any grief can be said to be **self-pity!!** However, we must be very careful in saying that, for in the death of a Xn, we, and the world, have lost some 'salt' and some 'light' in the world!

Parties or Funerals? *It is **better** to go to the house of **mourning** than to go to the house of **feasting!!***[2] What does he mean? It is **not fun** going to a **wake** or a home bereavement! Just as I said, Sol is **not** saying it is **more enjoyable** but more **profitable!** Poem: 'I walked mile with pleasure; she chatted all the way; but left me none the wiser, for all she had to say! I walked a mile with sorrow; and not a word said she; but oh the lesson that I learned, when sorrow walked with me'! The Psalmist said *It was **good** for me that was **afflicted** !!*

We might **not feel** we are benefitting, nor might we **think** we **will** benefit but Sol says *It **IS better** to go to the house of mourning* We read of old Jacob: *All these things are against me* but he was so **wrong** - they were all **for him** - and his **family** - in the long run!!

When we go to a funeral we are **forced** to **contemplate** for a few moments at least, serious thoughts! We are so busy with the hustle and bustle of life that we **simply just do not meditate** on the serious side of life - **and** the serious side of death! I remember someone saying to me after a funeral service 'I hate these funerals, waiting inside a church in silence'! I said, 'I think it is an excellent time to pray and have serious thoughts - for we do not do that at other times!

It is **madness** to **ignore** what we must eventually face - life beyond

the grave! And very likely to consider it when we are in **poor health!** If old, we will very likely have **poor memories** and **poor judgment.** I recall a dying man being asked ‘How are you?’. Reply: ‘So glad I did not leave the matter of my salvation until now - I am so busy ‘grappling with death’! *prepare to meet your God* [Amos 4:12]!

A Good Laugh or a Good Cry? Which do **you** prefer? I prefer a laugh! Well Sol would **disagree** with me! He says *Sorry is better than laughter for by sadness of face the heart is made better* [3]! We have a record in Biblical history of what he means by *the crackling of thorns under a pot so is the laughter of the fools* [6]! We read in [Dan 5:30] *that very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed!*

What night? The night he made a *great feast...*and they brought in *the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple...that his wives and concubines drank from them. They praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone.* Then a hand appeared and wrote on the wall so *the king's colour changed...his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together...you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting* [Dan 5:1cf] There was laughing that night I am certain! When you **reflect**, that laughing **was like** the crackling of thorns under pots that night! Nero **fiddled** as Rome was burning! Some try and **forget** their **problems** and **drown** them in drink or whatever. But **afterwards**, the problems are **still there** and you are in a less fit state to deal with them! madness!

Weeping **releases** tension! David, **after weeping** was able to cope with the death of his child! The **mind** is **filled** when weeping - it is **empty** when laughing! *Remember, Sol is **no kill-joy!** Elsewhere he wrote *A merry heart is good medicine* [Pro 17:22] He is being **realistic.** We **do learn** more from suffering than from laughter.

Do you refer **Congratulations** or **Rebuke?** *It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools* [5]! To be able to **graciously warn** a friend about his **faults** is worth more than gold! David Chilton's father ‘You **must learn** the folly of your **choices**’ and David did! **Home-truths** are a great blessing - but I fear that our generation is so **culturally conditioned** that when there is

the **opportunity** to give home-truths, people have a **fear** because of **political correctness!** [Read the Mail!] Many politicians recently have had to **resign** or be **rebuked** because they told the **truth** - which was unpalatable to **some** sections of our society! But the Bible says *Faithful are the wounds of a friend* [Pro 27:6] We have gone **soft** on rebuke! We are **wimpish/cowardly** rather than kind/helpful!

Do not be Quick to Make Judgments! *Do not be quick in your spirit to become angry* [9] Re **Tommy Sheridan** ‘No doubt he’s guilty - don’t need to hear more!’ Then heard other side! ‘Don’t know!’ That is why Sol says, be **patient in spirit**[8]

Admiring Past Ages! *Say not ‘Why were the former days better than these?’* [10] A veneration of bygone days of glory is a **MYTH!** They were **not** as glorious as you **imagine!** *it is not from wisdom that you ask this* Do you know what **makes** people ask this? **ESCAPISM** from **duties/problems/responsibilities** of **today’s** world! It usually comes from those who do **not want to face** present day issues, and want to **blame** the present generation for today’s ills! It takes 30/40 years for a generation to reap what it sows! Our problems from **60’s!**

Wisdom is Necessary for Handling Money & Property! *Wisdom is good with an inheritance* [11] but money and property is **not good** without the wisdom to go along with it! You need wisdom to **handle** money and property. There’s a **protection** of money/property when you have wisdom with it *wisdom preserves the life of him who has it* [12] [Bertie was ‘protected’ from himself!] Sol wrote earlier *riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle* [Pr23:5]

In this World of Evil and Injustice, Don’t be Wiser than God! *I have seen everything. There is a righteous man who perishes...there is a wicked man who prolongs his life...Be not overly righteous....Be not overly wicked* [15-18] Man in his wisdom has a **tendency** and **inclination** to be ‘holier’ than God! The Phars were **far stricter** than God! **Ascetism** is a **pagan** ideology. Man makes rules to ‘play safe’ or ‘just in case’, but God warns *There is not a righteous man...who... never sins* [20] The **answer:** *the one who fears God shall come out from both of them* [18] Keep God’s Word!