

The Scheme of Things

Ecclesiastes 7:13 - 8:1

- I. **THE WORK OF GOD** (13-14)—perfect but incomprehensible
 - A. **God's Sovereignty** (Isa 45:7)—God sends what comes to us.
 1. **The Decrees of God** (13)—immutable, established, perfect
 2. **The Extremes of Life** (14)—prosperity and adversity
 - B. **Our Response** (2 Sam 16:11-12)—respond accordingly
 1. **Appropriate**—fitting, suitable to the experience
 2. **Measured**—consider the Source; God has done it
 3. **Humble**—God knows the plan but we don't
- II. **THE STRUGGLE TO UNDERSTAND** (15-28)—what is the order, design, plan, reason things work as they do?
 - A. **The Elusive Pattern** (23-25, 27-28)—bigger, more complex than he can figure
 - B. **Disturbing Discrepancies** (15b, 19)
 1. **Behavior vs. Reward** (15-19; Jn 9:1-3)—what we deserve vs. what we get
 - a. **Righteousness vs. Wickedness** (15, 16)—morality
 - b. **Wisdom vs. Foolishness** (16-19)—practicality, life skills
 2. **Men vs. Women** (26-28; Gen 3:16)—danger and bitter disappointment
 - a. **Consider the genre** (type of literature)—poetry/wisdom literature; observation, not explicit doctrine
 - b. **Consider the context** (surrounding text)—from the vantage point of his own *vain* (empty) life down here *under the sun*.

c. Consider **Jesus** (the answer to Ecclesiastes)

C. **Unhealthy Extremes** (16-18)

1. **Self-Righteous Wisdom** (16)—*legalistic piety; self-destruction*
2. **Wicked Foolishness** (17)—*godless and reckless living; madness*
3. **The Antidote** (18)—the fear of God—keeps from pride and lawlessness

C. **Reality Check** (20-22; Rom 3:23)—***no one is righteous!*** We were created to be righteous; observation and conscience tell us we don't measure up.

III. **THE SCHEMES OF MEN** (29)—our plans and purposes in opposition to God's

A. **God's creation was good.** (Gen 1:31)—evidence remains

1. **The design was perfect.**
2. **The product was perfect.**
3. **The instructions were clear.**

B. **We have turned from His ways.** (Ps 14:1-3; Jud 17:6; 21:25;)

1. **We defy our design.** (Rom 1:21-32)—we are broken
2. **We choose our own way.** (Isa 53:6)—we are lost
3. **We need a savior.** (Isa 44:20)—our idols and our efforts can't save or fulfill us

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