

## **Teach Us, Qohelet (Part 12)**

Ecclesiastes 7:7-14

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In 2 Kings 6:8-17, we encounter the story of Elisha's prophecies benefiting the king of Israel against the Aramean attacks. Angered by his foiled plans, the king of Aram sends his forces to Dothan to seek out Elisha. By morning, Elisha's servant finds the city surrounded by horses and chariots and, in distress, the servant informs Elisha of their predicament with uncertainty of their future's safety. Undaunted and with his confidence fully in the Lord, Elisha expresses no doubt in the power of God, then prays for the Lord's army to be revealed to his servant so that his servant may see that they are truly protected by God. Soon enough, his prayer is answered and the hills are shown to be full of horses and chariots of fire.

Elisha's story offers a great example of how too easily we, like the servant, only see what's in front of us. Time and again, we often wish we could see things from beginning to end while interpreting the matter in front of us as a testament to the current status of our relationship with God. When we encounter a bad event in our lives, we assume it's because we're in bad standing with God; the same goes for good things equating to being in God's favor. But as Qohelet stresses, this is not where our focus should lie; our focus needs to rest on the larger picture from a more eternal perspective.

Previously, Qohelet spoke about the goodness of death. While death in and of itself isn't a good thing, it offers perspective on life by changing the way we think. Qohelet continues with his theme of the importance of an eternal perspective in verses 7-14 where he breaks down characteristics that help to support such an outlook.

In versus 7 and 9, Qohelet touches on traits such as extortion, bribery and a quick temper to illustrate the ease of living in the moment. Things like extortion and bribery are examples of living with a perspective of wanting things now and the willingness to do bad in order to fulfill such desires as soon as possible; and a reactionary short temper being an example of living out your emotions and doing nothing more than to tinge your words with heated words you'll later regret. He offsets these two ideas with his point in verse 8 with patience as a crucial aspect to being able to clearly view the whole picture as it offers an opportunity to look back from a more developed sense of understanding. To have this type of extended outlook is a step in the right direction; but, ultimately, Qohelet says that the longest perspective, the eternal perspective, is best.

For Qohelet, he speaks from acquired wisdom gained through experience and through the faults of others like his own father, David, who we know fell prey to his own desires. In verse 10, he

speaks on the attitude of assumed wisdom through age and addresses the common habit older generations to compare the past with the present. Qohelet teaches that comparing the past with the present, in no way, touches on any wisdom filled sentiment. Instead, it really is only that: comparing the past with the present. A major present day example would be the self-absorption of millennials. Realistically, millennials are no more self-absorbed than any of us were and are of an older generation; the only true difference is that they have a public platform to display such self-absorption. It's really no different then compared to how it is now.

At the end of the day, nothing ever really changes for God has made it as such; so it is best to be happy when the time calls for it and when times are bad, and understand that it is God's will. In verse 13, Qohelet uses this point to circle back to the overarching message of never being able to know the future and it is only when you're able to consider things from a longer, more eternal perspective are you truly able to make better decisions.