





Ecclesiastes Chapters 6-7

OUTLINE¹

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| 1. 6:1-12: Prosperity is not always, or necessarily, good | 
 | Understanding a person's outward fortunes helps explain apparent inequalities in divine providence |
| 2. 7:1-14: A critique of those who say you should seek sorrow and adversity
a) 1-6: the argument in favor
b) 7-12: the rebuttal
c) 13-14: Qoheleth's conclusions about gloom and doom | | |
| 3. 7:15-24: A critique of those who say you should avoid ethical extremes
a) 16-18: statement of the case
b) 19-22: examples
c) 23-24: conclusions | | |
| 4. 7:25-29: A critique of advice on women | 
 | So does understanding a person's character |

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the point of the parable in 6:1-5? Read Lk 21:16-21, the parable of the rich fool. What point does Jesus' parable make, and how does it differ from Qoheleth's?
2. 7:1-6 is a series of "better than" comparisons.
 - a) What is better than what else in this passage? *Note the alliterations in 7:1 and 7:5-6*
 - b) Why?
 - c) How does this compare with Jesus' statement in the Sermon on the Mount, "blessed are those who mourn" (Mt 5:4)?
3. 7:7-12 is the response to 7:1-6. What "better" comparisons are found here? How does Qoheleth respond to the gloom & doom crowd?
4. Kaiser translates the statement of Qoheleth's critique of ethical extremes in vv. 16-17:

7:16: Do not multiply [your] righteousness and do not play the part of those who are wise [in their own eyes; see Prov 3:7]—why destroy yourself?
7:17: Do not multiply [your] wickedness and do not be a [downright] fool—why die before your time?

The NIV study bible suggests that Qoheleth is advocating a middle road between legalism and libertinism. How does the text support this conclusion? How do you think this meshes with Solomon's life and experiences?
5. How does Qoheleth conclude his critique of ethical extremes in 7:23-24? How are the conclusions supported by 7:15-22—or are they? Read 1 Cor 2:9-16. How does Paul's viewpoint differ from that in Ecclesiastes?
6. Compare the censure of women in 7:25-28 to Lady Wisdom of Prov 9, the wise woman of Prov 31 and the adulteress of Prov 7. How does Qoheleth respond in 7:29 to the view described in 25-28?

¹ Ray Brown et al. (Prentice Hall: Upper Saddle River, NJ) 1990; and references to A. G. Wright therein (p. 490); Walter C. Kaiser, *Ecclesiastes: Total Life* (Moody Press: Chicago) 1979.