

You Are Here, pt. 8b – Ecclesiastes 7

1. When we get to Ecclesiastes 7, a mini-book of Proverbs. It is written as a song or a poem that two things side by side and contrasts them. There IS a consistent theme in this chapter but you really have to be willing to stop what you are doing and park all along the way to really not get lost – for this is a strange roadmap indeed.
2. The style is similar to Proverbs in that almost every verse has a thought all its own that may or may not be connected with the one you just read. I love “read thru the Bible” programs but they often make us miss the incredible goldmine of information found in the Books of Wisdom because they were not meant to be read that way; they were meant to be read for meditation.
3. As we explained when we did the series on Disciplines, Eastern religions have several forms of meditation with one commonality: they want you to empty your mind. Some want it empty of greed, desire, passion, and want while others want it to just go empty so that you can join your consciousness to the universal consciousness – that is where the sound “om” or something like that comes in. (also known as the lost chord).
4. In scripture, meditation means to FILL your mind with one wise thought, one guiding thought. Many of you use Daily Bible books or Thoughts of the Day booklets. They operate much closer to the Biblical idea of meditation. But, enough about the background, let’s look at the material.
5. **Eccl. 7:1-4**. All right, deep breath: everything he just said is debatable. There are some answers and situations each of us could come up with to shoot down each of these. If you’ve ever lost a child, you might even be so offended you can barely think straight when he says that the day of death is better than the day of birth...and I’m right there with you. But the Teacher writing this book is not stupid so...what is he trying to say?
6. We need to step back and ask, “what is the Teacher getting at? Why would he say such things that seem so plainly wrong and easy to

shoot down? Who is his audience? What do THEY hear? What do THEY get out of this?"

7. In verse 1, "a good name is better than fine perfume and the day of death better than the day of birth." When I go to my grands' games or when they have a sleepover at my house, I always treat them as special people who have first call on my life and time. Why? The answer to that is complicated and, frankly, would be too much "all about me" and I don't want to do that. Instead, I will ask: how do you want to be remembered? What kind of name will you be leaving behind?
8. (prayer about a preacher living so long he undid all the good he had done, and how terrified we were that we would do the same) When the day of death comes, if we have lived a noble, good, kind, loving life then we have won (remember Matthew 25). Our journey is over. We can lay our cross down. We have crossed the finish line.
9. A frozen pizza company ran commercials years ago asking "What do you want on your tombstone?" It always reminded me of a cemetery just a block away from our church building in Morgantown, West Virginia. I would walk by it several times a week in good weather and there was one tombstone that just really bothered me. Here it is [pic]. Since I am in the south, I don't think I need to remind you that "plum" is a modifier in mountain and southern speech. "Plum tuckered out" for example. Later, I found out that two families shared that plot and, I guess, decided "Plum Rude" was less baffling than "Rude Plum" which, by the way, would be a great name for a rock group.
10. What do you want as your memorial? I won't have a tombstone; I want my memorial to be the people I poured into, the people I loved. And I have to tell you, I didn't enjoy my childhood and my teenaged years were a slow motion train wreck. The day of my death will be the day I no longer have to echo Paul in **1st Cor. 9:27**, "I beat my body and bring it into submission, for fear that by any means, that after I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected."
11. Do not misunderstand Paul: he isn't saying you might not make it even if you try hard. He is saying that he doesn't want to fail or embarrass or shame his Lord or the church. I pray that same prayer

for, while I am a vessel of the Lord's work on earth (as are you), I am an extremely broken vessel (as are you). To a Christian, death is different. Remember **Revelation 14:13**.

12. Now, let's read **Eccl. 7:1-4** again and see if it changes a bit (not a lot. Instant change is always suspicious and rarely lasting). We are still left with verse 3 which seems a bit out of place, but isn't.

13. Verse 3 reminds us not to coast through life. Remember 4:5 where the Teacher tells us that folding our hands brings ruin. In science, we have the Second Law of Thermodynamics, sometimes called the Law of Entropy. It states that everything is wearing out and breaking down. An old story says a preacher was driving down a country road when he saw a beautiful farm, all laid out, weed free, everything in order. He saw the farmer on a tractor so he stopped to compliment him on his farm. He said, "God has blessed you with a beautiful farm, lovely in every way!" The farmer nodded and then replied, "Yes, He has, but you should've seen it when He had it all to himself!"

14. God expects us to work with the gifts He gives us. If we do not, they fall into disorder. So, if we are frustrated, we are pushing against something that needs to be changed. "**Necessity is the mother of invention**" is truth. Plato said something very like it: "**Our need will be the real creator**" The Oxford Dictionary puts it this way: **When the need for something becomes imperative, you are forced to find ways of getting or achieving it.** The Cambridge Dictionary phrases it thusly: "**If you really need to do something, you will find a way to do it.**"

15. So, let's put it all together again...after we hear from Jesus. **John 9:4**.

16. James, Jesus' brother, warns us that life is a vapor that quickly fades away. So – if there is evil about, let us challenge it now. If someone is hungry or lonely or hurting, let us get to them now. We will not wait until all the conditions are right and all the contingencies sorted: we will work WITH God in His mission to redeem the earth and the people of the earth. We will be their preview of heaven. That way, our memorial will be the words: **Matt. 25:23**. Oh, yes, more is

coming. Earth is our gymnasium, our practice field. Death is not the finish line after all.