

## Ecclesiastes Resumed (Part Fifteen)

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Before giving my previous sermon on Ecclesiastes, the sixth chapter, I fully expected that I would finish chapter 6 that very day, but chapters 4 through 6 have impacted on my thinking to an extent that I never dreamed would occur. I believe that much of the impact is because of my age, so I have come to appreciate this book's wisdom as never before.

Previously, Ecclesiastes has been mystifying to me. I could not grasp its purpose, but it has much to tell us, and now I see it as one of the most bluntly practical writings in the entire Bible. It is not, though, elementary in any way. Its thoughts are brief, blunt, but complex, and sometimes very difficult.

To me, the primary lesson these chapters are teaching us is how much I need a relationship with God. Not since becoming converted have I ever thought that I did not *need* the relationship, but since beginning this series on Ecclesiastes, I now see it as an urgent necessity.

I want you to turn with me to Psalm 139. We are just going to look at verses 13 and 14. David is the author here, and he says:

**Psalm 139:13-14** For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well.

There is a somewhat elementary, and I might even call it a true illustration that clearly pictures to me why the relationship with God is absolutely necessary. This illustration begins by admitting, like David did here, that we did not create ourselves and give ourselves life. David was talking about things physical, so this illustration begins by admitting that even physically we did not create ourselves and give ourselves life. David admits here that he was made by somebody else. We know that was God.

Now like David, we did not determine we would physically be in God's image, did we? The Creator made that determination. The One who made us made that determination. Can you picture God kneeling down in the dirt, placing Adam's every part where *He* wanted it?

When Richard was going through this portion of Genesis, he said that word “created” actually means “made.” We were *made*. If you can break this down into its simplest parts, begin to imagine God kneeling down in the dirt, making a liver and deciding He was going to put it here, making a heart, deciding He was going to put it there, making a stomach, digestive tract, and whatever. Maybe that is simplistic, but we have got to get this idea in our mind that we were made according to a pattern that the One who made us created. He also determined how every part would function with every other system within the body so that everything is coordinated, and we are a complete whole.

Let us go back into the New Testament to II Corinthians 5. This is a scripture that everybody ought to have in their memory bank.

**II Corinthians 5:17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

This is a creation apart from the creation in Genesis 1 and 2, and apart from the creation we were just talking about in relation to Psalm 139.

When Paul used this *newness* expression, he had his choice of two Greek words that he could have used. The one word expresses newness in the sense of renovation; however, Paul used the second term which suggests newness in terms of *brand* new—something apart from what already existed. He indicates a person as a new individual with a new family, a new set of values, new motivations, and new possessions. Brethren, nothing new in this sense creates itself. Now just transfer the thought of God creating Adam and Eve physically. We are a *new* creation, and following the pattern of Adam and Eve, Someone is creating us—creating something that did not exist before.

Even a new baby in a womb does not make itself. The baby has absolutely no idea what it is in the process of becoming. Let us ask an obvious question. Are we making ourselves spiritually? Do we really need this relationship? Was there a relationship established between God and Adam and Eve because He made them? Absolutely! He made every part of both Adam and Eve.

Are you beginning to understand why we need a relationship with our Creator? He is making every part of us, as it were, but this time it is not physical, it is spiritual. It is a *new* creation. We are not making ourselves spiritually, and as a new creation in Christ Jesus we are not making ourselves spiritually anymore than we did physically. This creation is

far more difficult and important, because we are on the scene and mess things up if we do not cooperate with the Potter who is forming every part of what *He* wants us to be.

Are you beginning to understand more clearly than ever before what Jesus meant when He said, “Without Me, you can do nothing”? How much did Adam suggest to God’s creation of him physically? Brethren, in a sense, this relationship with God is *everything*. Without it, we would have no hope of being in the Kingdom of God, because it takes somebody who knows where He is headed. It takes somebody who has the power to give us what we need in order for us to fit into what He is making.

So what do we know about where the Creator is headed? To say it bluntly, without the relationship, there is no possibility whatever of salvation. Do we know how to give ourselves everlasting life? Do we know where we are going to fit into the Creator’s plan? Therefore it is our responsibility always to do whatever is necessary to seek Him, to glorify Him, thus helping to keep the relationship going. Without the relationship He invited us into, there is no possibility of ever accomplishing the end He is headed toward. It is as though He has opened the door to allow us back into the Garden of Eden, right into the very location that is the source of every good and perfect gift that will enable us to glorify Him by fulfilling our responsibility with Him, saying as we go past Him through the gate, “Now there, let’s begin all over again.”

Part of the conclusion that one can reach from the examples that are given in Ecclesiastes 4 through 6, is that somehow people never learn that enjoyment and satisfaction in life is generated from within, and enabled by the gifts God gives from within a relationship with Him; and thus they never reach the state of contentment necessary for true satisfaction, because they continuously grasp for it by other means.

Do you understand that we can avoid this pitfall by avoiding reaching for satisfaction that those living “under the sun” might attempt? In a relationship with God, we have the comfort of knowing creative development is taking place, and a purpose *is* being worked out, and it is this that provides balance and satisfaction to life even though we do not have complete answers either. It is God, within the relationship, that provides hope in the face of life’s trials. It is He, our Creator, who has deemed that we must face hardship, with Him involved. Did not Israel face hardship under God in the wilderness? They certainly did, and we can learn from their example that hardship can come from many different directions.

One element we must grow in understanding of is that very much of mankind’s restlessness and dissatisfaction in life is because his carnal nature is never satisfied. It always wants more. Its desires, its cravings, its appetites, like those of our stomach

which Solomon uses as an illustration, are briefly satisfied for a period, only to return to hungering as though it had never been full. Rich or poor, wise or foolish, male or female, young or old, all have this same basic issue to deal with. Everybody has unfulfilled longings to deal with.

One commentator compared our desires as being like a tramp. That is a word that is not used much today, but a word that was used very frequently during the Great Depression of the 1930s. A tramp is a person who wanders aimlessly about, who never settles down in one place to hold a job, to put down roots, and prosper. A tramp is a person who is never content to stay at home, and thus personifies desire, loves to window-shop—always eager to find something new. It is as though our desires are always travelling, but never arriving, and that is why Solomon mentions the “wandering of desire” in Ecclesiastes 6:9.

Another commentator gave an interesting illustration of how quickly a desire can latch onto one’s attention even in the face of grave danger. This is very interesting. He told of something that involved the famous eruption of Mount Vesuvius just outside Pompey, Italy in 1879. The gases and the lava flows moved so rapidly that they caught people in the very act of doing things, and entombed them right in that act as though these people were sculptured.

Now the commentator’s illustration involved a woman who apparently was fleeing the eruption. Interestingly, her feet were pointed in one direction—apparently in the direction of escape from the dangers of the eruption—but her head and one arm were pointed behind her. The thought is, that as she fled for her very life, something caught her attention, and she reached back to grab it, and at that very instant she died, and was covered, and she never even fell. Was she reaching back for a beautiful piece of jewelry she did not want to leave behind? Nobody knows, but the desire was never fulfilled.

That is really an interesting illustration. How quickly our mind can be captured by something, and it becomes so important we will risk life and limb to have it.

What God is gradually showing through these illustrations without directly saying it is that all the time God, within the relationship, is giving His gifts that add life to us. He is the One who has the power to gift us with what really *makes* for life. Solomon is getting at something that is keenly important here.

Most of us live in an area where we can watch birds that seem to spend all their waking hours looking for food to eat. Their activity illustrates something helpful for us to understand. These birds are alive, but they are not really living as we should understand

living. All animals have the same characteristic, not just birds. It is other animals as well, and that is, without a spirit they merely exist, and yet, at the same time they are fulfilling a purpose for which God created them. The birds even sing about it, tweeting beautiful songs that our ears like to hear.

Solomon is not suggesting at all that it is wrong to either work or eat, and neither is it a sin to desire. Both eating and having desires can be quite enjoyable and profitable, but if that is all that one does, one is merely existing at an animal level. Something positive and purposeful and conformed to God's purpose must be done with our life, or we are going to waste our life without achieving anything worthwhile. We will not be fulfilling anything more than that bird.

We have got to choose to yield to God, and we are part of God's spiritual creation, and for someone being spiritually created in the image of God, we must choose to live for something far higher than merely an animal existence.

Now Solomon was not belittling anybody. He was simply teaching a truth—a reality that material things of themselves cannot make life richly satisfying. It takes a spiritual Being in our life for that to be fulfilled, and that spiritual being is God, and we yield to Him in order to begin to enjoy life in the way God intends. One's life must be rightly balanced toward one's relationship with God. We must make efforts to follow God by striving to live as a human in the same loving manner as He did as a human, and as He continues to do eternally.

Let us look at verse 9 again in Ecclesiastes 6.

**Ecclesiastes 6:9** Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire.  
This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.

Verse 9 is Solomon's version of the cliché of "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." He is essentially saying, "It's better to have little and really enjoy it, than to dream about much and never attain it."

A problem with dreams is that all too often they never become a reality. Again, Solomon is not saying that it is wrong to have a dream on which we spend our ambition. But again, our ambition must be motivated by the glory of God and not the praise of men, and that includes ourselves as well. If we think that material achievements will automatically produce satisfaction, we are wrong, and this is his theme through this section of the book.

Just do not ever accept the concept that material things will bring satisfaction. It is not that they do not bring *some* satisfaction, they cannot bring us *sustained* satisfaction in life. Only a spiritual God can do that. True satisfaction comes when we do the will of God from the heart for His glory. That is not easy for us to adjust to, but then we get to share in the satisfaction that He gives us.

I want us to go back to the New Testament to John 4. The speaker here is Jesus. Remember that He was in Samaria when He said this.

**John 4:34** Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.

The key word here is “food.” We normally associate food with giving us a sense of fulfillment. We feel good about eating, and it also gives us a great deal of energy to do the things that we want to accomplish. What Jesus is saying here is, “My food, which energizes Me and fills My life with satisfaction, is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish *His* work.”

This is a major scene regarding satisfaction and fulfillment in life, that our life has to be turned in the direction of God, and we are looking for, seeking ways in which we can please Him in obedience, yielding to Him, and whatever.

We are going to add to this something that is helpful to understand. It is in the Psalms.

**Psalms 16:11** You will show me the path of life; . . .

Is that not what we all want? This is something that God can give us in our relationship with Him. And then he adds the following:

**Psalms 16:11** . . . In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

As we read this, there is a tendency for us to want to project that all the way forward into the Kingdom of God, and that is not wrong to do. But what David wants us to know is that we can have this joy he is talking about here in a relationship with God right now. We do not have to wait until then. We will not get it in its fullness, but we will nonetheless be able to share in that if God is in a relationship with us, and He is gifting

us with things only He can give. This, brethren, is real satisfaction in life, and it comes from a spiritual relationship. It does not come from material things.

Material things are okay. There is nothing wrong with material things. I just want us to see what Solomon is feeding us here, instructing us to understand that we cannot look for anything material to give us a sustained sense of satisfaction in life. The satisfaction is always temporary.

I think we can pretty much put a cap on what this section regarding materialism and satisfaction in life is about, and a summary of this then would be that true happiness and satisfaction in life does not automatically result from, let us say, making a good living; rather, it is a very blessed by-product of making a good life *with* God as a partner in a relationship. If one devotes his life to doing God's will, one will produce satisfaction and happiness, because God is working within it.

**Ecclesiastes 6:10-12** Whatever one is, he has been named already, for it is known that he is man; and he cannot contend with Him who is mightier than he. Since there are many things that increase vanity, how is man the better? For who knows what is good for man in life, all the days of his vain life which he passes like a shadow? Who can tell a man what will happen after him under the sun?

What we are looking at here are three pretty mystifying verses—mystifying as to their meaning. One commentator suggested a title for these three verses, and that suggested title was “Questions Without Answers.” However, this does not mean that one should ignore God and His way. Now why? Because God *does* have the answers, and He reveals them individually within the relationship. They must be understood at least somewhat against the background of the context of the chapter itself in which he is showing the root of true satisfaction lies with God gifting within a relationship.

A second factor though is evaluating the overall theme of the entire book of Ecclesiastes in which Solomon is urging us to live, keeping God's commandments, and living an “above the sun” life.

A third factor is bringing Solomon himself into this, and how much Solomon shows of himself.

What we have here is a series of professing statements that he gives no clear answer to right here. But recall the overall subject of the chapter is in regard to finding satisfaction

in life, and he uses the examples he gave to illustrate circumstances as to why life is puzzling and dissatisfying.

Let us begin this analysis by considering Solomon himself. Did he know the answers?

Well, first I think he did know the overall answer to satisfaction in life, but he did not necessarily experience it because he did not apply it well. It is one thing to have an intellectual knowledge of something, and know that it is true because you trust the person who tells you or shows you, but you never yourself take advantage of doing it, and have experience in doing it.

There is no doubt that Solomon had a high IQ, so I think that he knew the overall answer, and what was the overall answer? It was taking part in the creation that God is working with us. I mean, really *participating* in the relationship. He could understand that intellectually. Some of the reason that I base this on is that I do not see how having a father like David, and the experiences that Solomon himself had with God early in his manhood, that he *did not* know the overall answer.

When God appeared to him in a dream and asked him what he wanted, he asked for understanding. That shows me that his intellect led him that far, and he wanted the understanding so that he could rightly judge God's people. He knew that the relationship that he had with God was going to have to be powered by God if it was going to be successful. He knew that intellectually.

Now judge this yourself in your own life. There are things that we know about God, but do we fully participate *with* God in our life in this area? Probably all of us have areas that we are pretty weak in, so I do not see how having a father like David and the experiences that Solomon had with God early in his manhood that he did not know the overall answer. But did he truly believe it, and did he live it? I think the answer to that question—"Did he live it?"—is that God had not answered that in absolute terms like He does regarding David.

We have no doubt whatever that David will be in God's Kingdom. Why? Because God lets us know. The answer regarding Solomon, based on what is in the Bible, is that Solomon apparently fell short. Is he lost? I do not know. I do know, from the book of Ecclesiastes, he knew a great deal. There is no doubt about his knowledge. He knew intellectually what the missing link is.

The answer to satisfaction in life hinges on whether one knows overall what God's purpose for our life is. Do we then, by faith, believe that purpose is true and make the



effort to seek God and live as God commands? I hope you got that.

We are back again to verse 10 of Ecclesiastes 6 ["Whatever one is, he has been named already, for it is known that he is man; and he cannot contend with Him who is mightier than he."] He is essentially saying that God is sovereign, and some things cannot be changed.

Verse 10 says, "Whatever one is, he has been named already." Naming something physically is an indication that something so named is set. It is established, and this is why, brethren, that John 4:34 and Psalm 16:11 are so important to the converted. Jesus got His energy for living life from the Father. "My food is to do the will of God," and when He got it from the Father, He did it, and He was energized by it, and given further strength, if I can put it that way. And then He confirmed that in Psalm 16:11, that "In God's presence there is fullness of joy," and other gifts besides.

These two verses are extremely important to the converted if we want to yield to God within the relationship He has given to us. We have to understand He is the source of everything good that we look forward to. So these statements by Jesus and David give assurance that satisfaction in life lies within the combination of properly blending the knowledge of God's purpose, and deliberately choosing to live according to that purpose within a relationship with our very Creator. That is what the door has opened to.

I mentioned earlier about the Garden of Eden being opened to us, because He is the source of everything good. This combination is what makes everything in life matter in a positive way, thus producing satisfaction in life. In this three-verse section here—10, 11, and 12—Solomon addresses four situations regarding not getting much in the way of satisfaction from life because people do not give of themselves to make the relationship work. Each verse, rather than answering, produces questions which, with a brief explanation, I think are helpful. If one does not get the answers, one can then accept this satisfaction is always at the surface of one's mind.

My personal belief regarding these verses and the questions that are here is that I perceive that the questions that arise in these verses are expressions of justification that a converted person might give himself for not zealously throwing himself into the relationship with God, and they are, for the most part, expressions of doubt that linger on in the converted person's mind. The person is giving himself excuses for not really participating in the relationship.

Now Solomon touches on five questions in these three verses. Number one is based in verse 10. I have reshaped the question, and the question is this: "Since what is going to

be is going to be, why bother to make decisions? Isn't it all predestined anyway?" That is easy for a converted person to conclude. This is the reason why people will not really cooperate with God in a relationship.

Martin Luther gave this old German proverb. It did not start with Martin. He just repeated it, and somebody was there ready to write down whatever Martin said and attributed it to him, but it really did not come from him. "As things have been, so they still are, and as things are, so shall they be." It is a simple thing. "What goes around, comes around." That is what it says. When we apply that though to the questions here in verse 10, and just change the wording a bit, in other words, "Things are so far from our control, why make the effort?" It is easy to excuse ourselves on that basis.

In this verse 10 the "mightier One" is God. Who can top Him? That can be an excuse. It must be understood by us that God indeed can accomplish His purposes without our cooperation. He does not need us. He gives Himself to us because He loves us, but we must know that the world that we live in, as it is designed by God, is not a prison. It is a prison for the angels that sinned. It is not a prison for us. Our choices matter. ***Everything matters!*** Our choices matter.

Now God indeed has predetermined overall what He will accomplish, but He has also given us free moral agency, and we are free to evaluate, and then choose what our personal world will be, but there is one thing we have always got to remember and never forget, we are not free to change what the consequences of our actions will be. Let me give you a clear example.

Let us say that we go to the top of a ten-story building, up on the roof, and at that point in time it is our choice to step off. If you committed yourself to step off, you cannot change the consequence. It is straight down to the street. Are you beginning to understand why everything matters? Everything does not matter to the same degree, but God has created us to be able to think, to evaluate the course we are going to take, and He *wants* us to choose, but He also wants us to listen to Him, to listen to His Word, to look to it for direction.

If we are in a position where we would know that *this* way is sin, and not know for sure what this way is really going to produce, and know that this other way is *not* sin, it is probably a great deal safer choosing the way that is not sin than the one you would choose that you *know* would be sin. You see, that gives God a chance to work with the result of the choice that we make. Where we choose what appears to be most right in our eyes, and we reject the one that we absolutely know is wrong, that pleases God, and He responds to that. That is why He gave us a spirit to be able to think and to make

choices.

Let me give you another example. We are going to go to the book of Job, chapter 42. You know that going through the book of Job that Job and his friends were arguing all the way through there, and then finally around chapters 37 and 38 God entered the fray, and God spoke.

Now, all through the book Job was making all kinds of statements, all kinds of choices, and he was doing that within a relationship with God. He did not see everything that was going on, but once God began to speak, then the fog began to lift from Job's mind. He did not sin in doing these things, and so God was free to work with Job to work this thing out. I just want you to see the end result here. Job is speaking, and he is speaking to God.

**Job 42:3** You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?' [Job was saying a lot of things that were really childish.] Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,

Apply that to ourselves in *our* relationship with God. There is so much we do not understand, and this is why we need Him.

**Job 42:6** "Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

You know at least most of the story regarding Job, and the reality that is there for us is that our choices do make a great deal of difference in our relationship with God, and so, like everything in life, they matter. God did not find fault with Job. He quickly forgave him, and began blessing him, even though he had some things he was talking about that he did not have the slightest idea. But he did not sin in what he was doing. He always took the safe road, if I can put it that way, and allowed God then to deal with the conversation that God had with him, and Job repented. It shows a fine approach to God by him.

Question Number 2. This question too is based on verse 10, and basically it is this. Again, remember where he said, "Whatever one is, he has been named already, for it is known that he is man; and he cannot contend with Him who is mightier than he." The One who is mightier was speaking with him. So, the question is this: Why disagree with God? We can't oppose Him and win, can we?" That is the question.

This question gives the impression that God's will is difficult, painful to accomplish, and should be avoided at all costs. Again, compare this with what Jesus said. He said that doing God's will nourishes and energizes one. There we have somebody who went the same way we do. He walked the same basic path that we do. He always did what God wanted Him to do, and He came out of that relationship with God saying that God's way nourished Him and strengthened Him.

So why disagree with God? Jesus never did. He did not disagree with God, and He did not oppose Him, and that is the way we need to go. But we are not Jesus, and we get thoughts of not tagging along with God. We want to argue with Him, and we do this through justifications. "Well, He wouldn't expect me to obey Him under this circumstance." There are a lot of people who do not tithe because they think they should not do that, that God would not expect it.

Jesus said that going or doing God's will nourishes and energizes one. Let me ask a question. Why would anyone making a fair analysis comparing *God's way* with his *own way*, seeing what mankind has produced in this world, and still choose to have his own way rather than God's? You know what I am saying here? Solomon is directing us to ask a question. Why would we choose God's way rather than our own way when God's way is available to do? We think it is too hard. Well, this answer makes no sense whatever, and this person, I think, does not know God very well.

If God wanted to make life truly difficult, then He would give man absolute freedom, and that, brethren, is exactly where the world is heading at this time. It is really satisfying, is it not? If we are making a fair analysis of what is going on in this world, and a person chooses *that way* rather than God's way, something is the matter with that person's mind.

We, like Job, must know, and know that we know, what our limits are, and one of our limits is that we do not have the wisdom to out-think and out-talk God. Job found that out. It must come to be fully known by us that the more we talk the emptier our words become. That is exactly what happened with Job, and finally he had to give up.

This leads to the fact that it must be accepted by man that God, as Sovereign Creator, is free to act as He sees fit in every situation. That is what happened with Job. Job was arguing with God because he did not understand that God had every right to do with Job as He saw fit.

Job thought he was being punished. No. Job was being tested. He put up all kinds of arguments, and finally got to the place—"God is right. He has every right to do with me

as He sees fit.” That is when he repented. Acceptance of this will produce the satisfaction that mankind yearns for.

Question Number 3: This question appears to be drawn on Solomon’s many words in writing this book, in addition to all the words that we might hear in sermons, in Bible studies, read in booklets, or whatever. The question is this: What do we accomplish with all these words? Does talking about it solve the problems?

The NIV [New International Version] translates verse 11 in this way: “The more words, the less meaning, and how does that profit anyone?”

Now let us ask: Are we not getting an overwhelming education in this when we hear all of the convoluted political and economic arguments going on these days; argue back and forth, Republicans, Democrats, Libertarians, this, that, and the other thing, and we keep going deeper and deeper into the slavery that the government is putting us into, and we are helping the government to put us there? But here comes the big difference. All of these things that we hear today are the words of men. The Word of God is exactly what is needed because it is truth.

Satisfaction is the fruit of truth accepted and used. Jesus said that truth makes one free, and one must listen to the Word of God and use it for satisfaction in life. All of the words themselves do not change anything unless the person accepts them and uses them. That is the key. Look how patient God was with Job, and all the words that came out of God in order to get Job straightened out, and we have to give Job credit. He listened, and he repented.

The words did not really change him. That came later, but at least he accepted them. He analyzed, came to the place where he knew he was wrong, and then chose God’s way, and the first thing he had to do was repent. What did he fall back on? All of those words that God said. Job then accepted them and began to put them into practice. The words are needed, but they have to be the Word of God for the very best end to be accomplished.

Question Number 4. This arises from verse 12, and it basically is this: Who knows what is good for us? Again, remember these five questions here I believe are justifications that are coming from a person who is in a relationship with God, but is resisting that relationship, and that seems to be a converted person who has the knowledge, but he is finding that the way of God is not as easy as he thought it was going to be, and so, like Job, he is arguing with God.

One of the questions is: Who knows what is good for us? This question then is directly linked to Question Number 3, and the answer to that is: "God knows what is good for us." Without the knowledge of God's truth, life remains vanity, meaningless. So God's Word says, "He who does the will of God abides forever, and abides in satisfaction forever."

Question Number 5 also arises from verse 12. The question is: Does anybody know what is coming next? Again, this question must be understood within the context of the entire book. It is not talking about small issues, but rather huge ones that pertain to the purpose being worked out on earth. The answer here is of course, "Nobody knows, except God. Everybody else is guessing." God gives us enough information to keep us looking ahead and encouraging us to be patient and to make the best of the time that He gives us to get prepared, because all of this time is valuable to our well-being.

Brethren, we would want very much for what is coming on this country to be over in a moment, in the blink of an eye, but God is the Master Creator, and I want us to understand that it is He who is designing and bringing about these things through His agents [who] might be Satan and his demons, or whatever, people in positions of power. He is using them to create the kind of circumstance that is going to test us to the ends that He wants us to have to face. So let us not find an issue with God, for ultimately He is the One that is creating these things even if He is just allowing Satan and others to create circumstances.

The very fact that He allows it, permits it, shows that He is behind it. "Yes, this will be good. It fits right in here." If we begin to find fault with the times we are living with in the wrong way, we are actually putting ourselves into a position where we are calling God to answer to us. Let us not do that. We may not like what we are going through, but our Boss has said, "I want it for you right now. Work your way through it."

Again, we can see this in simple issues that the Israelites were going through in the wilderness. God was there in the Cloud and He was in the Pillar of Fire, so you might say that He was right at hand. He did not stop things from occurring that He wished to bring upon these people, whether it was a lack of water, a lack of food, enemies, whatever, and God is going to test us too, because our loyalty is on the line.

Not every issue we go through is a life-and-death issue. Please understand that. But He wants to see how we are going to react to what He designs for us, and if He designed it for us, you know what it says in I Corinthians 13:10—He will not allow us to go through something that is greater than we can deal with. And so between the relationship and Him being with us, it can be dealt with, and it can be worked with, and we will gain from

it.

So, does anyone know what is coming next? Of course. Our God does, and it is all within His purpose.

The proper answer to all of these questions for us lies in the use of our faith in God that He has given us, to be used within the relationship He has opened to us. Life is God's gift. He desires that we spend it involved with Him, using our faith in preparation for an eternal relationship with Him in His Family Kingdom, and it is this that will produce the enjoyable satisfaction in life that He desires we have. Involving Him is an "above the sun" life.

Now if there is no Kingdom of God and there is no purpose being worked out, then nothing matters except for what is going on at the moment. This is the mindset that the intellectual and ruling elite of this nation are rapidly sliding into. The mindset is titled as "humanism" or "secularism." The fruit of that mindset is the moral and ethical depravity of a Sodom and Gomorrah, and to these people there is nothing glorious for them to prepare for, so why deny oneself any pleasure, any excitement the mind and body desires at the moment, and that leads then to the overall subject of the next two chapters, and that subject is wisdom.

To the modern mind, wisdom seems to have evolved into nothing more than a philosophical abstraction, and thus it is very hard to nail down as something concrete and useful to everyday life. However, the Bible seems to make strong efforts to show us that as the ancient Israelites perceived wisdom, they perceived it as a practical mental quality strongly associated with skill, and thus most strongly associated with skill in living.

If you want to know what the bottom line is regarding wisdom in the Bible, it is "skill in living." That definition does not fit every circumstance in which the word "wisdom" appears, but as an overview it is about as good of a definition you are going to come to regarding wisdom. Is this not what God has us involved in about life and how it should be lived? Yes it is, and so what is the highest value we need to have? It is skill in living this way of life. That is wisdom.

In the Bible, wisdom—skill in living—appears to be a fruit of knowledge and understanding, and then worked into a highly-honed skill. In order to achieve the highest level of this skill, one must be working with the truth, and this is exactly where the Word of God becomes exceedingly important.

Ecclesiastes Resumed (Part Fifteen) by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

We will stop there, and God willing, we will begin with Proverbs 1:1-7 and continue on through achieving, working toward understanding the wisdom that Solomon is going to be talking about in the next two chapters.