



LIVING LIFE BACKWARD

How Ecclesiastes Teaches Us to Live Life in Light of the End



REVIEW

- What has most stood out to you from Ecclesiastes?
- As we review, think “Where do I need to be changed?”

REVIEW

- Chapter 1: “Vanity [breath] of vanities...” (Eccl 1:1)
 - Life is a breath
 - Your life comes and goes, and no one will remember you
 - Only by preparing to die will we know how to live
- Chapter 2: “all was vanity [breath] and a striving after wind...” (Eccl 2:11)
 - Nothing Satisfies (Wisdom, Pleasure, Work, Wealth)
 - All result in death
 - Don't expect satisfaction in fleeting things, just enjoy them as a gift from God

REVIEW

- Chapter 3: “For everything there is a season...” (Eccl 3:1)
 - There is a wisdom and beauty in the rhythms of life, even if we can't see it
 - God's eternal nature provides comfort against the darkness
 - Enjoy today as a gift, but it will change
- Chapter 4: “...the dead who are already dead are more fortunate than the living...Two are better than one” (Eccl 4:2,9)
 - There is terrible oppression in the world
 - Oppression also hurts the oppressor
 - Not lazy, not overly busy
 - Happiness is found in a “we” mentality, serving one another

REVIEW

- Chapter 5: “Guard your steps when you go to the house of God...” (Eccl 5:1)
 - God wants undivided, authentic worshippers (Deut 6:4-9)
 - Come to listen, not to put on an empty show
 - Fear God!
- Chapter 6: (BONUS) God is the giver of all gifts (life, wealth, honor) and He alone satisfies and knows their purpose.
- Chapter 7: “...I turned my heart to know and to search out and to seek wisdom” (Eccl 7:25)
 - Wisdom is good (pursue it!)
 - Wisdom is limited
 - So trust God (peace and joy) and fear him

REVIEW

- Chapter 9: “This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all.” (Eccl 9:3)
 - Every man dies. Not every man really lives.
 - “Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.” (Eccl 9:7)
 - “Whatever you do, do your work heartily...” (Col 3:23)
 - Hold onto life with open hands
 - Life is uncertain; Trust in God alone (James 4:13-15)

REVIEW

- Chapter 11:1-6 “Cast your bread upon the waters...” (Eccl 11:1)
 - Life is uncertain
 - Be Generous
 - Don't get hung up on success or failure
 - Live wisely
- Chapter 11:7-12:8 “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth...”
 - When old, you want to look back on a life well-lived
 - When young, live well
 - Rejoice
 - Remove Vexation
 - Remember God

THEME FREQUENCY

- Joy/Enjoy/Delight/Rejoice (23)
- Pain/Vexation (5)
- Good (16)
- Evil (20)
- Wise/Wisdom (53)
- Fool/Foolish/Foolishness (23)
- Vanity/Wind/Vain (48)
- Command (3 – only one of God)
- Fear (7)
- Life/Live/Alive/Living (28)
- Dead/Death/Die (14)
- Know/knowledge (34)
- God (40)

EXPECTED SUMMARY

- Your life is temporary, so don't waste it pursuing vanity
- Instead, live life before God to the fullest and enjoy it as a gift
- Live wisely, but trust in God

Now...how the Preacher summarizes the book...

ECCLESIASTES 12:9-14

- ⁹ “Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care. ¹⁰ The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.
- ¹¹ The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. ¹² My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.
- ¹³ The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. ¹⁴ For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.”

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WORDS

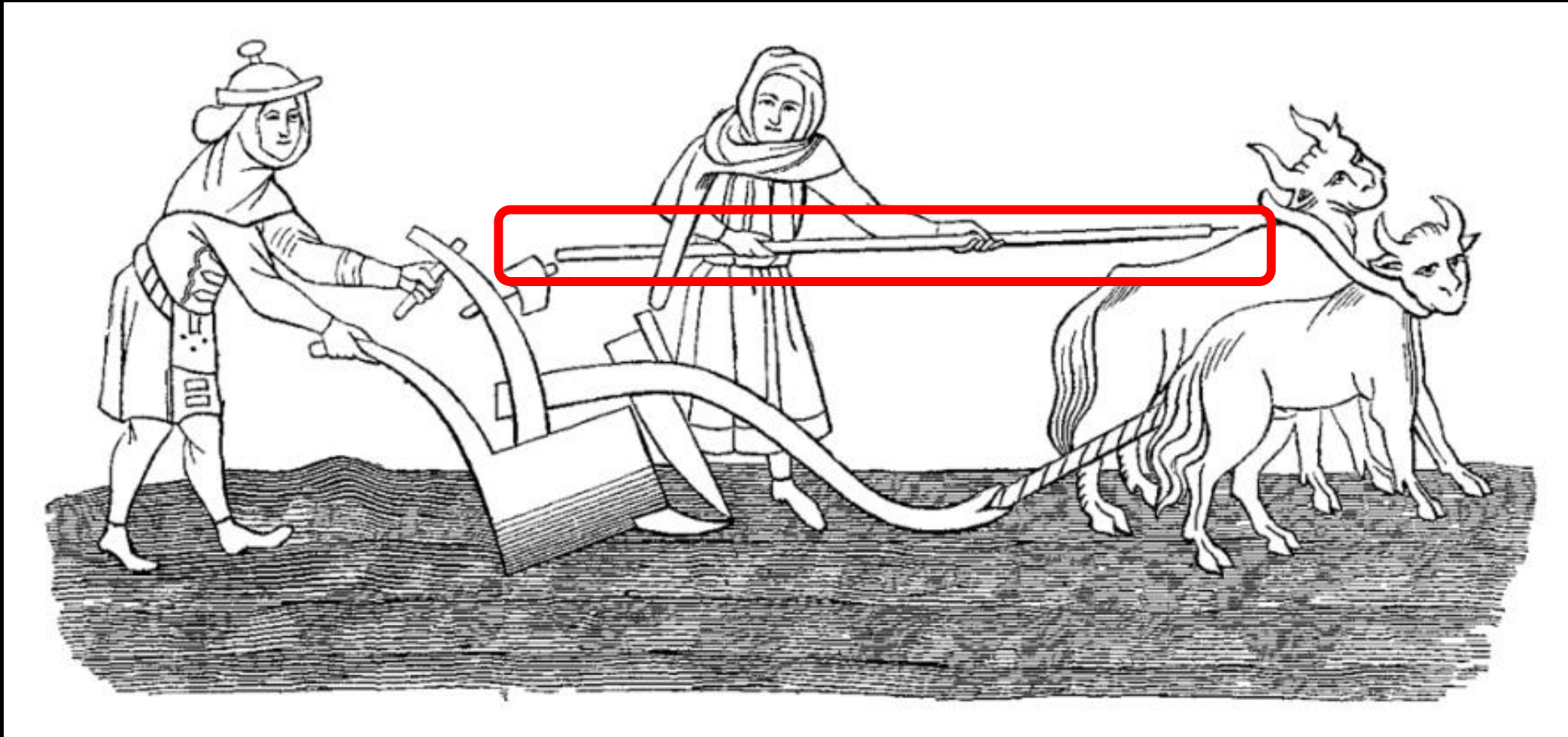
- Words have power
- God reveals himself in words (Scripture, John 1:1)
- Preacher's words:
 - Words of delight and truth
 - Words of wise (like goads)



WORDS OF DELIGHT AND TRUTH

- Ecclesiastes not gloomy
- God is a God of delight
- Truth and Delight go hand-in-hand

WORDS OF THE WISE



WORDS OF THE WISE

- Goad
 - We are foolish, like dumb sheep!
 - We go astray
 - We need help to go the right way!
- The truth can hurt (and that's a good thing!)
- “These are sharp words from a loving Shepherd”
 - So “Remember your Creator” by letting his truth confront your folly.
 - Embrace the truth, even when it hurts!
- What are some examples of painful truth in Ecclesiastes?

A WISDOM TEST

- Do you delight in God's word? (Psalm 19:7-10)
- When was the last time you embraced something painful in Scripture?
 - Truth
 - Difficult command

THE END OF THE MATTER

“Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”

- All of life: Primarily God-oriented
- Proverbs 9:10 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...”
- Live life wisely with regards to your Creator
 - Who am I?
 - Creature
 - Sinful
 - Who is God?
 - Creator
 - Father
 - Judge

PREPARATION

- Prepare for what is coming
 - Death
 - Judgment
 - God will put all the wrongs right (Isaiah 5:20)
 - We should prepare to meet Him
 - These need not be feared by the believer
- The opposite
 - Avoid the hard truth
 - Pretend God doesn't exist
 - Pretend you will not be judged
 - Pretend that you are "good enough"



PREPARATION

- “To live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Phil 1:21)
- “Your death and the judgment to follow – the great fixed points of your life – are the very things that can reach back from the future into today and transform the life God has given you to live.”

APPLICATIONS

- Have you found Ecclesiastes to be gloomy or delightful? Why?
- How should your life look different from the world?
- For personal reflection:
 - Are you avoiding any hard truths?
 - What vanities are you most tempted to pursue?
 - What is most worth pursuing?