

Study Questions:
“The Curse and the Cubicle” Part 7
Ecclesiastes 9:1-10

KEY POINTS

- People wonder if their efforts will make any difference in the end
 - Struggling with meaning is not limited to people of our day.
 - An incorrect understanding of God may open the door to wrong living.
 - There is surely a good reason to live with enjoyment now but also to live with expectation for the future.
 - Work with all your heart knowing it makes a difference to the Lord.
 - Persistence and faithfulness at work is your calling.
 - We can't get around Jesus.
- 1) It was stated that in 1943 Thomas Watson of IBM predicted there would eventually be a market for only five computers. Alfred Velpeau also predicted there would always be pain during surgery before someone created anesthesia in 1846. What leads people to make such predictions? **READ** Ecclesiastes 9:1-2. What statement does Qoheleth¹ seem to make in this portion of Scripture? **READ** Ecclesiastes 9:3. Does Qoheleth seem to have an optimistic or pessimistic outlook towards life after death? Given what you know about Scripture does this view seem to be a bit strange to you? **EXPLAIN**. What is the “sense” you get from people you know concerning life after death if you have ever entered into that conversation?
- 2) Have you ever heard someone say they don't think the efforts they make in life makes any difference? Why do you think they mention this in the first place? Is this a struggle with meaning in life? Is this issue of purpose and meaning only relegated to the young or the old? Why do we exist?² **READ** Ecclesiastes 1:1-11. Does Qoheleth seem to begin with an end in mind? **READ** Ecclesiastes 2:11-14. Is he struggling with trying to make sense of it all? (All of life?) One statement Qoheleth makes with clarity is “... **and their deeds are in the hand of God...**” (Ecc 9:1). What does this mean? **READ**

¹ Qoheleth. Writer of Ecclesiastes also identified as King Solomon.

² Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 4:3-4a; Exodus 20:2-7; Matthew 4:10; Mark 12:29-31; Romans 14:11; Revelation 4:10; Revelation 14:7.

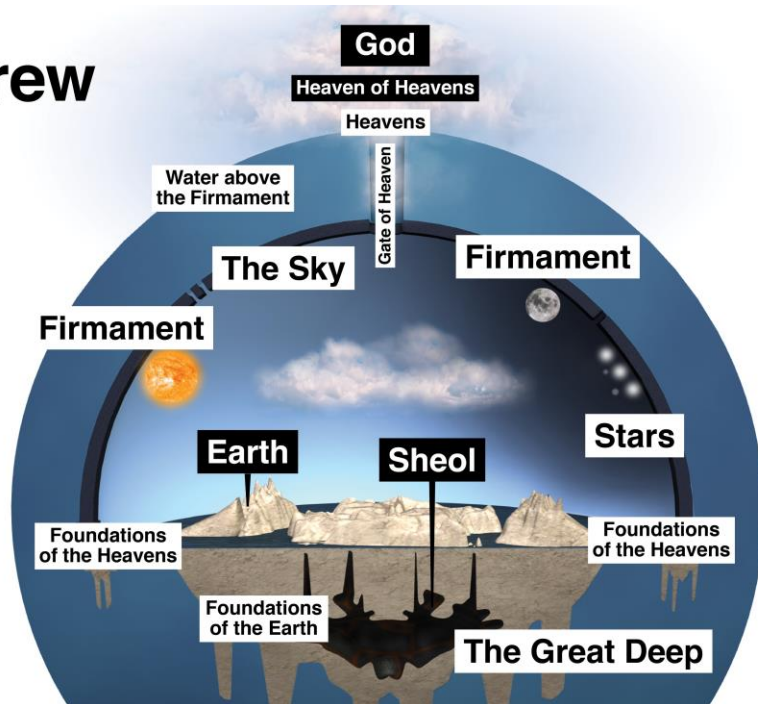
Ecclesiastes 12:13-14. These are the last two verses of this book. Do you read anything in those two verses about the future? Is Qoheleth only concerned with the here and now?

- 3) **READ** Ecclesiastes 9:4-6. **EXPLAIN** verse 4 concerning the living dog and the dead lion. How is the term “hope” defined in that context?³ In the original language the term for “hope” only occurs in 2 Kings 18:19 and Isaiah 36:4. Which word do you think is used to translate “hope” in those passages? How can those words in those verses shed light on verse 4 in our passage?
- 4) **READ** Ecclesiastes 9:9. There is a connection between faith and work in that we should work with as much passion as we can muster up. In enjoying life we should also enjoy work. Work may be hard but it still can be enjoyable and fulfilling. With 1 being the least enjoyable and 10 being the most enjoyable, *how would you rate your work on a scale of 1 - 10 in terms of enjoyment?*
- 5) Sheol⁴ is the place for the dead according to Hebrew thought. Qoheleth again forces us to consider his thinking on what happens to work, thought, knowledge and wisdom there (Ecc 9:10). Yet it is not Qoheleth that gets the final word but Jesus Christ. **READ** Hebrews 1:1-2. What is the connection between Jesus speaking with the final word over and against what Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 9:10? What makes Jesus’ words so final? How do we then respond to Colossians 3:23?
- 6) Will there be work in heaven? Consider Revelation 21:1 in your answer. If there will be work, what type of work will be necessary and what type of work will not exist?

³ This word for “hope” (יִתְקַבֵּל) only occurs three times in the Old Testament (cf. 2 Kings 18:19 and Isaiah 36:4).

⁴ “The word *sheol*, which occurs 66 times in the OT, is often used to describe the literal, physical grave in which the dead are buried (Psa 18:4–5; 89:48; 2 Sam 22:5–6; Hos 13:14) and decompose (Job 17:13–16). Since no person escapes death, no one escapes *sheol*. Both the righteous (Gen 37:35; 42:38; 2 Sam 22:6) and the wicked (Job 21:13–16) are destined for *sheol*. Old Testament writers often portray the dead as going “down” to *sheol*, (see Num 16:30; Job 7:9; Isa 57:9), which may simply refer to the physical grave. However, Israelites, Canaanites, and Mesopotamian peoples believed that *sheol* was the vast cosmic abode of the dead under the earth. It is difficult to discern in each case precisely which “downward” destination the writer intended: the literal grave or the cosmic underworld.” (FSB)

Ancient Hebrew Conception of the Universe



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