

# Day Five

## Ecclesiastes 7-8

“So I commended pleasure, for there is nothing good for a man under the sun except to eat and to drink and to be merry, and this will stand by him in his toils *throughout* the days of his life which God has given him under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 8:15, NASU).

By the time you read the verse above, you might begin to think that the writer of Ecclesiastes is repeating himself. Just refresh your memory with the following verses and also consider an additional one in the next chapter:

“There is nothing better for a man *than* to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God” (Ecclesiastes 2:24, NASU).

“I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime; moreover, that every man who eats and drinks sees good in all his labor—it is the gift of God” (Ecclesiastes 3:12-13, NASU).

“Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun *during* the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward” (Ecclesiastes 5:18, NASU).

“Go *then*, eat your bread in happiness and drink your wine with a cheerful heart; for God has already approved your works” (Ecclesiastes 9:7, NASU).

Of course, the world has taken these verses and adulterated them into the common expression: “Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow

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we die!" But in spite of attempts to encourage riotous and licentious living, this is not what the author was saying to his audience. Instead, he was recommending that while living a life of wisdom, it is beneficial to take the simple things of life, like eating and drinking, and enjoy them along the way. King Solomon recognized that the enjoyment of life is indeed a gift from God.

Solomon understood a tremendous amount about life from the wisdom which had been imparted to him. For a man who was endowed with not only wisdom, but riches, wealth and honor—as a direct result of his request for wisdom—he had all the assets required to do anything he desired during his lifetime:

"God said to Solomon, 'Because you had this in mind, and did not ask for riches, wealth, or honor, or the life of those who hate you, nor have you even asked for long life, but you have asked for yourself wisdom and knowledge that you may rule My people over whom I have made you king, wisdom and knowledge have been granted to you. And I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings who were before you has possessed nor those who will come after you'" (2 Chronicles 1:11-12, NASU).

From the testimony of various Scriptures detailing his activities, we know that Solomon did more in his seventy years than is often conceivable. He was like the multi-billionaire sultan of his day, who not only ran the Kingdom of Israel at its military zenith, but he had the control and allegiance of the religious order of Israel. Remember, Solomon was the king who completed the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem, that his father King David had so desperately wanted to build. Combining the government, military, and clerical powers into one supreme ruler is something which has few historical examples to compare. Perhaps the revered Mao Zedong, who fashioned his own Chinese system based on his little "Red Book" in the past century, approaches *some* of the power base wielded by Solomon. However, Mao pales in comparison to the variety of enterprises which Solomon almost willed into existence during his tenure as king of Israel.

When it came to eating and drinking wine, I am sure that Solomon could have ordered the finest cattle or sheep to be slaughtered for his meals, or could have taken wine from one of his multiple vineyards to wash down whatever delicacies he desired. If he did not have what he

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wanted, then he would simply purchase it, or secure ownership to it through another diplomatic treaty or military conquest.

Considering all of these things, I reflected back upon a time in my secular career in the 1980s when I was making a tremendous amount of money in the commercial real estate business. I was in my early-to-mid thirties and making money was quite easy, because I just happened to be in the right market at the right time, with the right skillset to transact millions of dollars. As a result, I had a great deal of easy-made wealth which allowed me to pay cash for houses, cars, and often whatever else I wanted. I happened to be a young Christian at the time, and I believed in the principle of not being in debt. Writing big checks for big purchases was preferred over borrowing any money. I also discovered that having many assets was something which took a substantial amount of one's time, and being a good steward of those resources was something which was a challenge. Investing in spiritual enterprises was one of the toughest tasks, because when you have money, it is not long before all of your Christian friends, who are in ministry, are calling upon you to support their endeavors.

I also discovered that having these resources did not necessarily lead to happiness. These resources certainly took care of all of the mundane needs of life, but they did not necessarily help with the walk of faith regarding provision. Back then, most of the Christian ministries which were dishing up my spiritual nourishment were talking about the imperative for men to provide for their families. That always sounded good to me, especially when I was in the position to receive the income I was earning. But I did not understand the principle that it is ultimately the Almighty who is to be our Provider. *We are just the workers.*

If you go back to the Garden of Eden, you see that one of the first commandments given to man by the Creator describes humans' role as workers. In the Adamic or Edenic Covenant between God and Adam, people are told, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Genesis 1:28, NASU). The mandate from God was to be fruitful and multiply in order to fill the Earth and subdue it. Humanity was to work and take care of the Creation on His behalf. In administrating the created order, human beings were going to have their days filled with work. And, after the

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Fall of Adam, the toil certainly became much more difficult to endure (Genesis 3:17-19).

The Fourth Commandment, as delivered at Mount Sinai, would make a specified distinction between the six days of working, and the seventh day for rest (Exodus 20:8-10). Perhaps the lack of emphasis on the Fourth Commandment by many Christian expositors has allowed them to primarily focus on the provision that God made for Abraham, when Abraham was commanded to sacrifice his son Isaac. The reality that God is our Provider is often linked to the provision of a ram for the sacrifice, being analogous to the provision of Yeshua as our required sacrifice for sins:

“Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ He said, ‘Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.’ Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind *him* a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, ‘In the mount of the LORD it will be provided.’ Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, ‘By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice” (Genesis 22:10-18, NASU).

Today, I fully realize that He is the Provider—and we are simply the workers. What He provides is up to what He believes is necessary to meet our needs. After all, as servants of the Most High, we are admonished by Yeshua Himself to be anxious for nothing regarding His provision:

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other.

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You cannot serve God and wealth. For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, *as to* what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and *yet* your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a *single* hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is *alive* today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, *will He* not much more *clothe* you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:24-34, NASU).

In this often quoted passage, Yeshua's followers have been admonished to not be anxious, but rather serve God and seek His Kingdom and His righteousness. By faith, the things we need for eating, drinking, clothing, or shelter will be provided for those who earnestly serve Him.

My decision to follow these instructions is one I made years ago when I realized that no matter how much money you had, you could only drive one Cadillac at a time, or eat only one filet mignon per night, or only drink so much wine before falling into a stupor. One might have all the money in the world, a garage full of cars, a freezer full of the finest meats, and a cellar stocked with the most exotic wines, liquors, and delicacies the world can offer—but what does all that necessarily get you in the long run? Little thrills driving a Ferrari or Lamborghini, cholesterol problems with eating exotic food, or hangovers from drinking the finest wines are usually what you get. In too many cases, people who have these things want even more fleshly desires, and it leads them into gross sex and drug abuse. Even in my past experiences as a young and naïve Christian, I had read enough from the Book of

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Ecclesiastes to know that this all was vanity and ultimately meaningless.

Now, life is much simpler living and working by faith. I work six days a week and rest on the Sabbath. I eat normal meals, and when I sit down for supper, I enjoy the time together with my family. Since we have the gift of hospitality and like to entertain, we often have some merriment when we can gather others to our home for a special meal.

Solomon had it right, and perhaps this is why he reiterated it so often in his recollections. He knew and was trying to pass on to others that the simple pleasure of enjoying the daily meal and drink is something which can be enjoyed:

*“Go then, eat your bread in happiness and drink your wine with a cheerful heart; for God has already approved your works”* (Ecclesiastes 9:7, NASU).

Coming from one of the wisest men who ever lived, this is some advice we should all embrace. But in so doing, let us not forget that in order to have our endeavors approved, *we do need to work*. After all, the Apostle Paul spoke to Timothy about regarding, respecting, or providing for one’s own family as being a result of one’s work:

*“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever”* (1 Timothy 5:8, NASU).

Finally, make sure that when you do work, you work heartily as unto the Lord:

*“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Messiah whom you serve. For he who does wrong will receive the consequences of the wrong which he has done, and that without partiality”* (Colossians 3:23-25, NASU).

In so doing, I am confident that you will eat, drink, and be merry—because in the end your inheritance will be from the One you serve!

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You will experience a happiness and satisfaction which only He can provide.