

Ecclesiastes 8: 6 and 7; “For Every Matter – A Time and Judgment”,
A Bible Study prepared for the Evening of May 25th, 2011, by
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These verses are set in the context of Solomon’s consideration of whether he himself had ruled his own kingdom wisely, as well as what it means for other kings and judges to rule wisely, and for people to submit to their rule. “He who keeps the king’s command,” Solomon says in verse 5, “will experience nothing harmful; and a wise man’s heart discerns both time and judgment.” Here in verses 6 and 7, we see him bring up the matter of time, once again, in relation to coming to see what is wise in matters of judgment; being wise before it is too late, and you don’t have any more time to be wise. We saw this issue of the importance of time, back in Chapter 3; that there is a time and a season for everything under heaven. That was in terms of the things which God does in His purpose and providence, and also how people react to that providence, and the things that they do with their time. But here, time is mentioned in the context of kings and their subjects; and whether they realize that God, the final judge, is watching over all; and judging all. God gives us time for repentance and to learn His way of new obedience, but even though He is patient, He will not wait forever. Isaiah 55: 8 says, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord.” “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” God has His own purposes and plans; His ways are not our ways, nor are His thoughts our thoughts; therefore we must learn to live to His glory while we can. A wise man discerns both time and judgment. The truth that we want to examine this evening can be put into a question. Why is it important that I be wise now; that I learn the wisdom of God and the Scriptures now? Our text gives us 2 reasons. The 1st is that there is a right time and a right way to go about to do what God expects us to do. The 2nd is because the longer that I wait to do what God commands, the more misery that I will bring to myself and to others.

The 1st is that there is a right time and a right way to go about to do what God expects us to do. (verse 6a)

“Because for every matter there is a time and judgment, though the misery of man increases greatly.” This statement applies to both kings and their subjects. One of the great reasons that there is so much misery in people’s lives is because they do not realize the importance of making their decision to start doing things God’s way when they are young. You remember that Solomon prayed and asked God for wisdom when he was very young, and God gave it to Him. He was given wisdom to govern others, but at a number of very important points he failed to govern himself wisely. He chose to take many wives and concubines; he chose to multiply gold and silver and horses; all of which was against God’s explicit commandments in Deuteronomy 17. Let’s turn back there and look at verse 18. “Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites.” “And it shall be with him,

and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.” What is the object in reading the Bible all the days of your life? It is so that you will learn to fear the Lord. Why is it that your father and mother and all the authorities in your life (both religious and political) try to impress upon you the right time and the right way to go about doing things? It is so that you will learn to fear the Lord. And in fearing the Lord you will prolong your days, you and your children in whatever sphere of authority and influence that you have. Now; the fact that people make mistakes in government, and church, and even in the family, in the way that they rule and decide things; is no reason that we should not have government. It is surely true that they sometimes do. And verse 9, further on down from the text that we are studying tonight is confirmation of that. “All this I have seen, and applied my heart to every work that is done under the sun: There is a time in which one man rules over another to his own hurt.” This is what happened to Solomon. Perhaps it will not have to happen to you. But it will take the grace of God.

One of the great mistakes that any person, or even any Christian might make, in trying to live their life, is found in their not realizing the importance of learning to fear the Lord. To fear the Lord is to have regard for His authority and thereby come to have a regard for all the commandments that He gives you, all the promises of life and strength to do His will through Jesus Christ our Lord, that He gives to you. Proverbs 9: 10 – “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” “For by me your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you.” “If you are wise, you are wise for yourself.” “And if you scoff, you will bear it alone.” If a person does not know the fear of the Lord, they are not able to rule themselves wisely. And since they cannot rule themselves wisely; they are not ready to exercise authority to rule in a righteous way over others; whether it is in their family, their church, or in political matters. “For every matter there is a time and judgment, though the misery of man increases greatly.” Better late, than never, in learning the lessons which God teaches. Best of all, when you learn them when you are young. Each one of us, as believers in Christ, if we would be wise, will have to take the time to learn this fear of the Lord. Psalm 34: 11 – “Come my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” The rule of a blessed life with God is found in Proverbs 4: 20-23. “My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.” “Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the mist of your heart; for they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh.” “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.” In order that we see how Solomon came to speak to his own son this in this way of wisdom, he had to learn it himself in time to be able to teach it to him.

2ndly – Why is it important that I learn the wisdom of God and the Scriptures now? Because the longer that I wait to do what God

commands, the more misery that I will bring to myself and to others.

(Verse 6 and 7)

“For every matter there is a time and judgment, though the misery of man increases greatly.” “For he does not know what will happen; so who can tell him when it will occur?” I want you to turn with me over to 1 Kings 11 to see this truth illustrated in Solomon’s life. Even such a great man as Solomon, who had so much wisdom, had to come to learn these lessons personally. The extent to which we will rule over others wisely is the extent to which we will fear the Lord. And then we will do and keep His commandments when we are young, and when we are beginning to rule in our own family, or when we are beginning our career. The extent to which we will be blessed by God is the extent to which we will guard our heart from sin. You will recall that the first thirteen verses of this chapter tell us of Solomon’s unwise and sinful decision to “love many foreign women”. They also tells us of the consequences which came to Solomon as a result of it. We find that verse 4 says that, “his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as the heart of his father David.” Because of this, the Lord became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from Him to pursue these vain things. (Verse 9) The Lord determined to deal with Solomon in a disciplinary fashion and show him how unwise he was in this. Verse 11 says, “Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, ‘Because you have done this and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant.’” “Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of the hand of your son.” “However I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of my servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.” You can see how merciful God was to Solomon in these statements; how loving and kind He was to show Solomon the consequences of His sin in relation to His righteous judgment. And yet we do not find Solomon falling on his face and crying out, “I have sinned in this matter of my judgment.” But even so, we will find that God did teach Solomon His ways, because Solomon was one of God’s Elect. He had grace coming to help him to understand himself better.

With believers in Christ, God is patient and teaches them His ways. Psalm 25: 8 - “Good and upright is the Lord, therefore He teaches sinners in the way.” “The humble He guides in justice; the humble He teaches His way.” “All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, unto such as keep His covenant and testimonies.” But the Lord had to firmly teach Solomon also, the bitterness of the consequences of his unwise and unholy alliance with foreign women, because obviously Solomon did not repent of these sins for many years. By the time that he wrote this book, he knew the truth about himself. “For every matter there was a time and a judgment. But not when he was first confronted with it. Verse 14 of 1 Kings 11 is proof of this. “Now the Lord raised up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he was a descendant of the king in Edom.” We do not have time to look at all the details of how this man was Solomon’s adversary, but look over at verse 23. “And God raised

up another adversary against him, Rezon the son of Eliadah, who had fled from his lord, Hadadezar king of Zobah.” The reason that we do not need to read all the details of how these men hindered Solomon in his reign is because the point is clear. God saw that Solomon needed these adversaries to bring him to see how unwise and wrong that he had been in relation to taking the wives that he did, and his multiplying the gold and silver and horses that he did. His pride and his sensuality needed this reproof. His lack of wisdom in this area of his sanctification was wreaking havoc with his ability to retain God’s blessings upon the rule of his kingdom. Let us ask ourselves if we understand that there is a time to obey our God, and it is when we know His will. And if we know His will, how blessed are we if we will do it.

I want you to be able to see now, that Solomon’s not fearing the Lord at this point, led him to fight against God’s discipline of him, and it affected the way that he ruled over the people as well. He “increased their misery greatly,” as our text says in Ecclesiastes. After Solomon died, God tore the kingdom away from his son Rehoboam except for one tribe, and gave the other tribes to Jeroboam. 1 Kings 12, verse 1 says, “And Rehoboam (that is Solomon’s son) went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone to Shechem to make him king.” “So it happened when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard it (he was still in Egypt, for he had fled from the presence of King Solomon and had been dwelling in Egypt), that they sent and called him.” “Then Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy; now therefore, lighten the burdensome service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you.’” But king Rehoboam did not listen to them. It goes on to say that he consulted with both the older men who had been his father’s counselors, and the younger men who had grown up with him, and this is what he answered the people after he listened to the counsel of the younger men. Verse 13 – “Then the king answered the people roughly, and rejected the advice which the elders had given him; and he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, ‘My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges.’” (or scorpions, it says in the margin) But it is what verse 15 says that I want you to notice. “So the king did not listen to the people; for the turn of events was from the Lord, that He might fulfill His word which the Lord had spoken by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.” The lesson is clear; there is a right time and a right way to go about to do what God expects us to do. Solomon failed in this, and ended up making his own life and the life of others miserable at some points. But because God was merciful to him as one of His people, He taught him to fear him. He brought Solomon to repentance and to regret that he had not been wise in this area. He will do the same for all those who belong to Him. In closing think of these verses from 1 Peter 4: 17. “For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” “If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?” “Therefore let those who suffer

according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.” Let us learn to suffer as a Christian, rather than as one who has not learned to fear God.