

## “Living While You Live” (Ecclesiastes 9:1-12)

“DEATH!” There I said it—the infamous “d” word. Death is one of those subjects we don’t like to discuss. That’s why it’s a subject of so many euphemisms. Instead of using the word *dead*, we say, “passed away,” “returned home,” “gone to a better place,” “sleeping in Jesus,” or “went to be with the Lord.” At least we use those terms around the church and the funeral home. In less guarded moments, we speak of “taking a dirt nap,” “kicking the bucket,” “buying the farm,” “cashing in the chips,” “biting the dust,” or the ever-popular “croaked.” Whether we lean to the reverent right or the flippant left, we shy away from speaking directly of the ultimate enemy.<sup>1</sup>

It seems that we are hesitant to come to grips with our impending death. We would rather avoid any discussion about it. After all, death is a depressing subject. And who wants to be depressed? Yet, I would argue that we are not prepared to live until we are prepared to die. Solomon tackles the subject of death head-on. Instead of denying death, he discusses its reality and our response. In Eccl 9:1-12, Solomon provides two reminders that will enable us to make the most of our few days on earth.<sup>2</sup>

**1. Death is certain (9:1-6).** In this first section, Solomon explains that death is the “Great Equalizer.” Death plays no favorites and overlooks no one. Regardless of your strength and wealth, you are going to die. In 9:1 Solomon writes, **“For I have taken all this to my heart and explain it that righteous men, wise men, and their deeds<sup>3</sup> are in the hand<sup>4</sup> of God. Man does not know<sup>5</sup> whether it will be love or hatred; anything awaits him.”** After much reflection, Solomon acknowledges that God is sovereign over everything and everyone. Here he states that nothing befalls the children of God that doesn’t first pass through the hands of God. Yet, with this, Solomon reminds us that we may experience “love or hatred.” The terms “love” and “hate” refer respectively to divine favor or disfavor. Solomon’s point is this: There are no guarantees as to what life will bring, but the certainty of life is that God is involved in the lives of those who trust Him. No one by even righteous deeds can gain control over God and coerce blessing from Him. One must acknowledge that all is in God’s hands.<sup>6</sup> I’m reminded of this by the words of Bob Hope, after receiving a major award. He responded, “I don’t deserve this, but then I have arthritis and I don’t deserve that either.” Although I appreciate the humor of this remark, it is bad theology. Like Job, we are to receive both good and bad because both can come from the hand of God.

In 9:2-3, you’re going to find out why Solomon is not coming over for dinner. He writes, **“It is [i.e., death] the same for all. There is one fate<sup>7</sup> for the righteous and for the wicked;<sup>8</sup> for the good, for the clean and for the unclean; for the man who offers a sacrifice and for the one who does not sacrifice. As the good man is, so is the sinner; as the swearer is, so is the one who is afraid to swear. This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one fate<sup>9</sup> for all men. Furthermore, the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives. Afterwards they go to the dead.”** Solomon could summarize verses 2-3 with these words: “Under the sun, you’re done.” If he were living today, he would say, “We’re all going to ‘take a dirt nap.’” Ultimately, every man who has ever lived or will ever live will die. Solomon was right; the same destiny overtakes us all. You and I can work out, take our vitamins, drink bottled water, stay away from McDonalds, and swear off Krispy Kreme, but even with the best of care for this flesh, it is one day going to give out and we will die.

In 9:3, death is labeled “the evil,” not simply a natural phenomenon.<sup>10</sup> Death is an intrusion, it’s an enemy. This means we shouldn’t go to funerals and sing *The Lion King* song, “The Circle of Life.” The most ridiculous and pathetic advice you could give someone is: “Death is just part of life.” No it isn’t, it is death! It’s the wages of our rebellion and sin against God. It’s cosmic treason and it is punished by death.<sup>11</sup> We were created by a living God, to be a living people, who live forever with this living God. The only way to get rid of death is to get rid of sin. That is why Jesus died for our sin, so we could live.<sup>12</sup> Today, will you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin? He offers you eternal and abundant life.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the inequities of life, Solomon argues that life is better than death. In 9:4-6 he explains: **“For whoever is joined with all the living, there is hope; surely a live dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten. Indeed their love, their hate and their zeal have already perished, and they will no longer have a share in all that is done under the sun.”**<sup>14</sup> Solomon is focused on “life under the sun,” he is not talking about “life *in* the Son.” The person who lives “in the Son” can leave a godly legacy and attain eternal rewards. But that is not under discussion here. Instead, Solomon is speaking of life-and-death matters. We won’t get all we should out of these verses until we recognize that in Solomon’s day, dogs were diseased mongrels that ran in packs through city streets, not pampered pets.<sup>15</sup> People feared and loathed them. Nevertheless, Solomon says that a live dog is better than the king of the jungle who’s dead. Why? Because the living know they will die! The living may yet reckon with the reality of death and in so doing embrace the joy life has to offer, but no such possibility exists for those who have already died. Their time has passed. There is no second chance, there is no purgatory, there is no reincarnation, and there is no eternal recurrence of life. You and I are going to die. We’re going to be painted up like a circus clown. We’re going to be filled full of preservatives. We’re going to be shut in a box, thrown into a six-foot hole, and become food for worms. This is painful, but it is true.<sup>16</sup>

This is one of the best passages in the Bible to offer to one who is contemplating suicide. Life may be a terrible drudgery for you right now. Relationships may have soured, finances may be non-existent, and spiritually you may feel far from God, but if you are breathing, there is hope that things may get better. Many people have built success out of the ashes of failure.<sup>17</sup> Relationships can be healed; sickness can be cured; work can improve. It never makes sense to take your life. If you are feeling suicidal today, please tell someone.

Solomon has pulled no punches in his death-dealing exposé. The fact that our days are numbered ought to motivate us to live earnestly for God. In light of the brevity of life, we must live with seriousness, recognizing the importance of a life well invested. Twice a week for the rest of our lives, we ought to begin the day by looking in the mirror and saying, “I am going to die someday—maybe today.” What a difference that would make in our lives. The fact that we will die should affect the way we live.

[Solomon is clear that death is certain. Now he reminds us that...]

**2. Life is uncertain (9:7-12).** In this section, Solomon urges us to make the most of our lives because time and chance can overtake us. In 9:7-10, Solomon unveils five imperatives that advocate living life to the fullest (“go,” “eat,” “drink,” “enjoy,” and “do”). These five imperatives are located in the central part of this chapter and are recorded there to present the central thrust of the chapter: life is short; death is certain; so live in the most meaningful way that you can.<sup>18</sup>

- ***Party while you can* (9:7-8).** In 9:7 Solomon writes, **“Go then, eat your bread in happiness and drink your wine with a cheerful heart; for God has already approved your works.”** Solomon says, “Party on down with family and friends, for life is short and then you die.” Throughout the Scriptures, wine and bread are frequently representative of that which God gives us to comfort and cheer us.<sup>19</sup> Even today they are symbols of the joy of the Lord and His goodness and blessing. Thus, we are to enjoy God’s good gifts and celebrate life with others. So slow down and enjoy a meal with your family and friends. The reason Solomon gives is that “God has already approved your works.” This means such enjoyment is God’s will for us. This encouraging word does not contradict the fact that we are the stewards of all God entrusts to us. However, it should help us realize that it is not sinful to take pleasure in what God has given us—even luxuries. We need to balance gratefulness and generosity, retaining some things and giving away others. This balance is not easy, but it is important.

Solomon continues in 9:8 by saying, **“Let your clothes be white all the time, and let not oil be lacking on your head.”** In the Old Testament, births, weddings, and harvest festivals were special occasions and required one to dress up and be fresh. In Solomon’s day, black clothes and ashes on the head were a sign of mourning. Conversely, white clothes and oil<sup>20</sup> on the head were a sign of rejoicing. “Oil on your head” is the ancient equivalent of deodorant and perfume and cologne, so do yourself and others a favor and use it. Solomon tells us to dress every day as if we’re on the way to a celebration of life.<sup>21</sup> Some would say, “What do I have to rejoice about? I could die any time.” Exactly! That’s a great reason to let every waking moment be a celebration of God’s gift of life. Get dressed. Eat out with a friend. Why? Because you can and because God enjoys your enjoyment.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, *“have a blast while you last.”*<sup>23</sup>

- ***Enjoy your spouse while you can (9:9).*** Solomon writes, **“Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun.”** Solomon had many honeys and many honeymoons—to the demise of his kingdom. He treated himself to hundreds of wives and concubines. Now, at the end of his life, he wishes he had lavished all his love on the wife of his youth. A man who had a thousand women now speaks in the singular rather than the plural. One partner, one heart.<sup>24</sup> Husbands, love your wife with every fiber of your being, for this may be your last day on earth. Listen to her, talk with her, spend time with her, make love to her no matter how many times she resists, tell her she is beautiful. Wives, we know this works both ways. Are you easy to enjoy? I will tell you that if you want your husband to enjoy you, be easy to enjoy. If you want your husband to desire your company, make your company pleasant to be around. You might say, “This is hard, she needs to show me first” or “He needs to demonstrate leadership.” But guess what...you’re going to die! What are you waiting for? Don’t waste your time; enjoy your life. Enjoy it now! *Have a blast while you last.*

Glynn Wolfe died alone in Los Angeles at the age of 88. No one came to claim his body; the city paid to have him buried in an unmarked grave. This is sad, but not unusual. It happens all too often in large cities where people tend to live disenfranchised lives. Glynn’s situation was unique, however, because he was no ordinary man. He held a world record. The Guinness Book listed him as the Most Married Man, with 29 marriages to his credit. This means 29 times he was asked, “Do you take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife...forsaking all others, do you pledge yourself only to her, so long as you both shall live?” Twenty-nine times Glynn Wolf said, “I do,” but it never quite worked out that way. He left behind several children, grand-children, great grand-children, a number of living ex-wives, and innumerable ex-in-laws—and still, he died alone. He spent his entire adult life looking for something he apparently never found—and he died alone.<sup>25</sup>

How different this man’s life and death would have been if he invested all his love and energy into one woman. There is an ancient quote from The Talmud—a commentary on Jewish law—that states, “A man should eat and drink beneath his means, clothe himself within his means, and honor his wife above his means.”<sup>26</sup> This summarizes well the last three verses.

- ***Do your work while you can (9:10).*** Solomon writes, **“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.”**<sup>27</sup> The word “hand” suggests ability, “find” suggests opportunity, and “might” suggests intensity. Solomon wants us to know that we have only one life to make our contribution, “for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.” The Hebrew word *Sheol* refers to the abode of the dead.<sup>28</sup> Solomon is saying: When death overtakes us, our time to plan, be active, and execute wisdom will have come to a screeching halt. Sheol kills earthly work! That is why we must work while we can.<sup>29</sup>

Work is a privilege that we will not have after we die. Probably, toil connected with the curse on nature is in view here. We will be active in service in heaven, for example, but this will not be work as we know it now (Rev 22:3). If you think work is not a blessing, spend some time talking with someone who has been out of work for a long time.<sup>30</sup> Throw yourself into something besides bed! You only get one shot at it. Do something worthwhile. Make a contribution.

I've read that a man or woman of fifty, having worked consistently since school, will have put in 56,000 hours of work. Imagine if you will, 56,000 hours of boredom and resentment. Who would come through such an ordeal with a sound mind? Yet a poor attitude towards one's job creates that environment. Now imagine someone rising in the morning to say, "Thank You, Lord! Another day to use the gifts and the strength and the mind You have given me. What a gift You have given me that I may work and serve." That mind-set will add years to your life and life to your years. It will also bring you success, promotions, and glory for God.<sup>31</sup>

Charles Spurgeon, the prince of preachers, often worked eighteen hours a day. Famous explorer and missionary, David Livingstone, once asked him, "How do you manage to do two men's work in a single day?" Spurgeon replied, "You have forgotten that there are two of us."<sup>32</sup> Surgeon was right. We have the Holy Spirit working in and through us. He can and should make work a pleasure not a pain. *So have a blast while you last.*

Tragically, many Christians live as if it is a sin to enjoy life.<sup>33</sup> Yet, God created man and woman to live in a place called Eden, which means "delight." The Bible teaches that one day we will live on a new earth that will be like Eden once again.<sup>34</sup> So we are to prepare now by living a life of joy. The Hebrews knew joy perhaps better than any culture. In the Old Testament, there are no less than ten different words for "joy."<sup>35</sup> What is the level of joy in your life?

Every year I teach a class called "Eschatology" (i.e., the study of last things) at Ecola Bible School. One of the homework questions I ask my students is, "How would you live today if you knew it would be your last?" Some students give what they think are spiritual responses such as, "I would read my Bible all day and share Jesus with my loved ones." However, many of the students say, "I would have a good meal with my family and friends. I would tell others how much I love them. I would go skydiving." They figure if I haven't read my Bible or shared Christ like I should, why bother doing so in my last day? People and enjoyment are what is meaningful to them. *So have a blast while you last.*

The last two verses of this section could serve as a summary for the entire book of Ecclesiastes. Solomon writes, "**I again saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift and the battle is not to the warriors, and neither is bread to the wise nor wealth to the discerning nor favor to men of ability; for time and chance overtake them all.**" But just in case we are confident in our strengths and gifts to help us make our mark, Solomon lists five desirable assets: the "swift," the "strong," the "wise," the "discerning," and "to men of ability." He then informs us that these talented individuals do not always win and find great success. Wisdom, skill, and hard work can promote but not guarantee success. This is true because "time and chance overtake them all."<sup>36</sup> First, time limits us. This is an echo of the teaching throughout Ecclesiastes that the seasons of our life are in the hand of God. This is a warrant for faith but also a death-blow for self-confidence. Second, chance is the unexpected event which may throw the most accomplished off course, despite the most thoroughly prepared schemes. Time and chance overtakes humankind just like death itself.<sup>37</sup> *So have a blast while you last.*

Solomon concludes in 9:12 with these powerful words: **“Moreover, man does not know his time: like fish caught in a treacherous net and birds trapped in a snare, so the sons of men are ensnared at an evil<sup>38</sup> time when it suddenly falls on them.”** Unfortunately, man does not often recognize this truth. We live as if we are the master of our own fate, the captain of our soul. How foolish we are! Rather than the master of our fate, we are more like little fish. We swim along, minding our own business, and suddenly we are snatched up by a net...and there is absolutely nothing that we can do about it! Time, chance, and death catch one unexpectedly, like a trap, and there is no escape. When the trap has closed, any opportunity to enjoy life is over. Just stop for a moment and think about it: What will we do if our heart or lungs fails us? What can we do if we contract a fatal disease? What can we do if we lose our job or our business? What will we do if a child dies or if a spouse leaves us? Sooner or later, we will all find out that our present existence and future destiny belong to the Lord alone. So *have a blast while you last*.

In a sense, this verse is a microcosm of the whole book of Ecclesiastes. So much of life is enigmatic and fails to conform to the rules we have learned. We’ve been taught that if you want to succeed you have to compete and be aggressive, get up earlier, go to bed later, put in more hours, do unto them before they do unto you. But, says Solomon, it doesn’t always work that way. Nothing is guaranteed. This is how life is, but we shouldn’t despair nor should we quit aiming to be swift, strong, wise, brilliant and learned. We should, however, quit thinking that life owes us anything, or, for that matter, that God owes us anything under the sun. Now if you talk about the long run, that’s a different story. Even Solomon says in 8:12: “Although a wicked man commits a hundred crimes and still lives a long time, I know that it will go better with God-fearing men, who are reverent before God.” But in the meantime, often it will seem that time and chance play a bigger part in our lives than God’s providence.

You play the board game Monopoly. You buy railroads and place hotels on Park Place and Boardwalk. You pass “Go” and collect \$200. Everyone has fun. Then the game ends, and all the hotels, all the colorful tokens, and all the funny money go back into the box. Solomon, who held an empire much less plastic, would tell us that whether you build in plastic or gold it’s all the same. Build the temple, extend a dynasty, even write three God-inspired books—in the end, it all goes back in the box.<sup>39</sup> Likewise, life is short. You and I are going to die. Stop and ask yourself, “What really matters? How do I want to be remembered? What do I want others to say about me?” And then make a commitment to *have a blast while you last*.

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**Scripture References**

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12

Hebrews 9:27

Proverbs 5:28-29; 18:22

1 Timothy 6:17

Colossians 3:17, 23

Romans 9:16

Job 1:21

**Study Questions**

1. Am I prepared for trials, tests, and tragedies (9:1)? What gives me the necessary peace and confidence to prepare for these difficult seasons? How does the reality that my deeds are “in the hand of God” comfort me? In what way will this perspective help me to live my life this week?
2. To what degree am I aware of my imminent death (9:3-4)? Have I been guilty of being in denial of this reality? What will I do to both acknowledge and prepare for my dying day? How can I help others cultivate a healthy outlook on the brevity of their lives?
3. As a spouse, how do I express my love for my life partner (9:9)? How do I prioritize my spouse in the busyness of life? As a husband, how would my wife say that I have invested my few short years in her and our relationship? Would she say to her friends that I cherish and nurture her? Read Ephesians 5:25-33.
4. Do I serve the Lord wholeheartedly through my work (9:10)? What specific steps do I take to ensure that I have a godly work ethic? Read Colossians 3:17 and 23.
5. How am I going to live now that I realize my death day is set by God (9:11-12)? Read Psalms 39:4 and 90:12. How can I keep the sobering realities of these verses always before me? What can I do to remind other believers to live in light of eternity?

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Revised and adapted from David Jeremiah, *Searching for Heaven on Earth* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 225-226.

<sup>2</sup> See Pss 39:4; 90:12; Jas 4:13-17.

<sup>3</sup> This is the only place in the OT where this word, which normally is used of “service God,” is used as a noun.

<sup>4</sup> “Hand” = “power,” cf. Eccl 2:24; Job 19:21; 27:11; Ps 10:12; 17:7.

<sup>5</sup> The subsections that follow begin “no one knows” or the equivalent (Eccl 9:1, 12; 11:2; cf. 9:5; 10:14, 15; 11:5 [twice], 6).

<sup>6</sup> Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs* (NAC; Nashville: Broadman, 1993),

<sup>7</sup> The word translated “fate” (*miqreh*) should be translated “event” instead. Solomon refers only to that which “meets men at the end of their lives, an “event,” a “happening,” or “outcome.”

<sup>8</sup> The “wicked” and “righteous” both refer to covenant people (not people of the world) because this follows the theology of Deut 31:29 and Jdgs 2:19.

<sup>9</sup> The word translated as “fate” (*miqreh*) appears only rarely outside of the Book of Ecclesiastes, one time each in 1 Sam 6:9 (“chance” – NASB), in 1 Sam 20:26 (“accident” – NASB), and in Ruth 2:3 (not translated, but is subsumed by the verb “happened” – NASB). Within the Book of Ecclesiastes, the author consistently (all seven times) uses this word to reference the ultimate end (“under the sun”) of all animate beings – that ultimate end being “death” (Eccl 2:14, 15; 3:19 [3x]; 9:2, 3). Barry C. Davis, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*, Multnomah Biblical Seminary unpublished class notes.

<sup>10</sup> This too is a meditation on the fall; humanity has been cut off from the tree of life (Gen 3:8-24).

<sup>11</sup> Paul writes, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...For the wages of sin is death” (Rom 3:23; 6:23a).

<sup>12</sup> David Fairchild, “Living While Dying” (Eccl 9:1-12).

<sup>13</sup> Jesus Himself said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

<sup>14</sup> Verses 4-6 do not contradict 4:2-3 where Solomon said the dead are better off than the living. A person who is suffering oppression may feel it is preferable to be dead (4:1), but when a person is dead his opportunities for earthly enjoyment are non-existent (9:4-6). Dr. Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Ecclesiastes”; 2007 edition: <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ecclesiastes.pdf>, 24.

<sup>15</sup> See 1 Sam 17:43; 24:14.

<sup>16</sup> Fairchild, “Living While Dying.”

<sup>17</sup> Michael P. Andrus, “Sharp Goads and Hard Nails” (Eccl 7-11): unpublished sermon notes.

<sup>18</sup> Davis, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*.

<sup>19</sup> Eccl 2:24; 3:13; 5:18; 8:15; cf. Gen. 14:18; 1 Sam 16:20; 25:18; Neh 5:15; Lam 2:12.

<sup>20</sup> Putting oil on the face and arms was a sign of gladness (cf. Ps 23:5; 45:7; 104:15; Isa 61:3).

<sup>21</sup> Paul joins the chorus: “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Phil 4:4) And “rejoice always” (1 Thess 5:16).

<sup>22</sup> Jeremiah, *Searching for Heaven on Earth*, 233.

<sup>23</sup> This clever title/slogan comes from Charles R. Swindoll, *Living on the Ragged Edge: Coming to Terms with Reality*, Bible Study Guide (Fullerton, CA: Insight for Living, 1986), 250.

<sup>24</sup> Jeremiah, *Searching for Heaven on Earth*, 234.

<sup>25</sup> Preaching Today citation: Steve May, Sermonnotes.com.

<sup>26</sup> Preaching Today citation: The Talmud; submitted by Aaron Goerner, Utica, NY.

<sup>27</sup> It is quite possible that the Apostle Paul had Eccl 9:10 in mind when he wrote Col 3:23, “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men.” His point is: Life must be lived to the fullest in all that you do. Elsewhere, Paul wrote, “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31). A helpful maxim here is, “Doing a little thing for God makes it a big thing.” The reason being, our God is not a little god...He is a colossal God! Anything that is done for the Lord and His glory is an enormously significant work!

<sup>28</sup> *Sheol* occurs sixty-five times in the OT and is translated “grave” in approximately half of those instances. The word *sheol* encompasses the region of departed spirits who are conscious, either in bliss or torment. Since the writers of the OT believed in an afterlife, *sheol* never means just the grave.

<sup>29</sup> Jesus said, “We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work” (John 9:4).

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<sup>30</sup> Constable, "Notes on Ecclesiastes," 25.

<sup>31</sup> Jeremiah, *Searching for Heaven on Earth*, 234.

<sup>32</sup> Preaching Today citation: "Charles Haddon Spurgeon," *Christian History*, no. 29.

<sup>33</sup> Lest we think that only the ancient Hebrew readers to whom the author of Ecclesiastes was writing are those who should heed Solomon's advice (commands), the authors of the NT concur. See Matt 5:16; 1 Cor 10:31; Eph 5:28, 33; Phil 4:4; Col 3:17, 23; 1 Thess 5:18; 1 Tim 6:17.

<sup>34</sup> See Rev 21-22.

<sup>35</sup> See Neh 8:10; Ps 104:31; Zeph 3:17.

<sup>36</sup> Five accomplishments are listed, none of which guarantees success or prosperity: (1) the swift-footed may find himself a loser (cf. 2 Sam 2:18); (2) military strength is no guarantee of success in battle (cf. Isa 36-37); (3) wisdom similarly is no guarantee of a livelihood (cf. Eccl 9:13-16; 10:1); (4) understanding may be accompanied by poverty (cf. Eccl 9:15); and (5) favor may be delayed for innocent Joseph (Gen 37-41) and not come at all for others (Eccl 9:13-16). Michael A. Eaton, *Ecclesiastes: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 16. The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, ed. by D. J. Wiseman (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1983), 130.

<sup>37</sup> The prophet Jeremiah explained why these apparent "upsets" in the natural order of things happen: "It is not for man to direct his steps" (Jer 10:23). Ultimately God is sovereign and in complete control.

<sup>38</sup> Nowhere in Scripture, here or in its seven other occurrences (Jer 2:27, 28; 11:12; 15:11; Amos 5:13; Mic 2:3; and Ps 37:19)—with the possible exception of Amos 5:13—do the authors of Scripture use the phrase to indicate a condition of sinfulness. Instead, those writers use this phrase to denote a time of disaster, trouble, or calamity. Davis, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*.

<sup>39</sup> Jeremiah, *Searching for Heaven on Earth*, 227.