

# Life Above the Sun: Authority & Injustice

*Ecclesiastes 8*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. ***Creative interest meeting: May 10, 6:30.***
2. ***Pray for the Honduras Missions team (picture on screen)***
3. ***men's retreat - campsites full rv hookups. Hotel deadline today.***

## BIBLE PASSAGE

### Ecclesiastes 8:1-17 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>1</sup> Who is like a wise man? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom makes his face shine, And the sternness of his face is changed.

<sup>2</sup> I say, "Keep the king's commandment for the sake of your oath to God.

<sup>3</sup> Do not be hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand for an evil thing, for he does whatever pleases him."

<sup>4</sup> Where the word of a king is, there is power; And who may say to him, "What are you doing?"

<sup>5</sup> He who keeps his command will experience nothing harmful; And a wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment,

<sup>6</sup> Because for every matter there is a time and judgment, Though the misery of man increases greatly.

<sup>7</sup> For he does not know what will happen; So who can tell him when it will occur?

<sup>8</sup> No one has power over the spirit to retain the spirit, And no one has power in the day of death. There is no release from that war, And wickedness will not deliver those who are given to it.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> Then I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of holiness, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done. This also is vanity.

<sup>11</sup> Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

<sup>12</sup> Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him.

<sup>13</sup> But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he does not fear before God.

<sup>14</sup> There is a vanity which occurs on earth, that there are just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked; again, there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity.

<sup>15</sup> So I commended enjoyment, because a man has nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry; for this will remain with him in his labor all the days of his life which God gives him under the sun.

<sup>16</sup> When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on earth, even though one sees no sleep day or night,

<sup>17</sup> then I saw all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. For though a man labors to discover it, yet he will not find it; moreover, though a wise man attempts to know it, he will not be able to find it.

## INTRO

As we approach chapters 8-9, Solomon continues with the theme of human wickedness and crookedness and the benefit of wisdom. Perhaps it's because he looked in the mirror at the end of his life, and had a moment of recognition that even he, in all his wisdom, sought wicked schemes in his own heart that lacked the recognition of fear of God.

Solomon preached a good truth, but for many times in his life, failed to find the strength and resolve to live them out.

**[1Ki 11:1-8 NKJV] [1] But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites-- [2] from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. [3] And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. [4] For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. [5] For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. [6] Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as did his father David. [7] Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. [8] And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.**

Solomon understood the human tendency to wander, and in Ecclesiastes, he writes his observations and advice. Regarding the human inclination toward pride and wickedness, Solomon recognizes the benefit that wisdom has in life.

**[Ecc 8:1 NKJV] [1] Who is like a wise man? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom makes his face shine, and the sternness of his face is changed.**

Gaining wisdom can affect one's attitude. One can go from angry, depressed, or hopeless to joyful, kind, and encouraged.

#### QUOTE

**“ Without wisdom from God, one will always fall short of grasping life's greater purpose and significance.**

## APPLICATION

Wisdom can transform one's outlook on the difficulties of life, relationships, and circumstances.

- The fool will walk according to his own wisdom and understanding to try and change their problematic issues, but ultimately they prove God right: there is a way that seems right to a man, and the end is death.

# 1 Wisdom in Dealing with Authority

## APPLICATION

He turns his observation to how people deal with God-given authority. In his first example, he illustrates the authority of a king and the response of his subjects or the members of his court.

- However, the principles apply to how we deal with God-given authority in our lives.

## BIBLE PASSAGE

**[Ecc 8:2-5 NKJV] 2 I say, "Keep the king's commandment for the sake of your oath to God. 3 "Do not be hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand for an evil thing, for he does whatever pleases him." 4 Where the word of a king is, there is power; And who may say to him, "What are you doing?" 5 He who keeps his command will experience nothing harmful; And a wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment,**

## A. RECOGNIZE AUTHORITY EXISTS

We are all in authority and under authority at the same time.

***The man or woman who has found wisdom knows how and when to properly submit to authority in the fear of God.***

- ***Ultimately, every person is under the authority of Jesus Christ and His Word, but we also have God-given human authority.***
  - ***In the wilderness, Jesus sent Satan fleeing by quoting Deuteronomy 6:13 - you shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve. That is ultimate authority. Yet the very 10 commandments that ordain "You shall have no other god's before me" also established human authority and submission under God: Honor your father and Mother that it may go well with you and you may have long life.***
- ***Paul affirms that God establishes human authority in several spheres:***
  - Societies have their governments, children have their parents, wives have their husbands, churches have their pastors, and employees have their employers, so on and so forth...

**Recognizing those authorities is important because if you fail to do so, you become your own authority, which can be an unsafe place to live.**

- It's interesting to me that both Peter and Jude attribute a very revealing characteristic to imposters who walk according to the flesh: **(2 Peter 2:10, Jude 1:8) They despise and reject authority, be it heavenly or human...** ultimately, they disregard God's authority, but it trickles down into every other area of life.
- Interestingly, in Romans 1 and 2 Timothy 3, when describing the characteristics of people in the last days, Paul tells us that many will be **"disobedient to parents."** This, again, is none other than a despising of God-given authority.
- ***And should it be any wonder to us that the nature of rebellion is to despise god-given authority since it all began with the ultimate rebel, Satan, who despised authority because of His desire to be the ultimate authority?***

For many Christians, it's not a question of whether or not God-given authority exists but how we interact with that authority appropriately and wisely.

## B. RESPECT AUTHORITY IN YOUR LIFE

### Keep the king's commandment for the sake of your oath to God.

- Perhaps this was one of Solomon's servants who swore to the king before God that he would serve him, but he had second thoughts because he didn't agree with the king. Regardless, this teaches us an important lesson about our allegiances and respect for authority.
- **Honoring God-Given authority is really about honoring God first.**

Regarding governing and societal authority, Romans tells us:

**[Rom 13:1 NKJV] 1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.**

Regarding familial authority, the Bible says:

**[Eph 5:22 NKJV] [22] Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.**

To servants under the authority of their masters, Paul writes:

**[Eph 6:7 NKJV] [7] ...doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men...**

To children, Paul writes:

**[Eph 6:1 NKJV] [1] Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.**

To those who are under the spiritual leadership of elders and pastors in a church, Paul exhorts:

**[Heb 13:17 NKJV] [17] Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.**

Each of these passages indicates that the ultimate authority always belongs to God. Government will answer to God, husbands will answer to God, pastors will answer to God, and we will all answer to God... **which is why I believe it's important to state that every authority that we are called to submit to is always in light of our submission to God first. This happens in two ways, two sides of the coin:**

1. **Because I believe that God establishes authority, I can submit myself to authority knowing that it has been established by God because I'm submitted to God.**

## 2. **Because I'm submitted to God first, I cannot and should not willfully agree with lies and unrighteousness simply because they come from a person of authority.**

1. Saphira shouldn't have submitted to her husband Ananias's suggestion that they lie to the church about selling their land. God's authority should have stopped her.
2. In Acts 5, when Peter and the disciples were commanded to cease preaching the gospel, they responded, "We ought to obey God rather than man." **God's authority always trumps human authority.**

1. **1 Peter 2:17 (NKJV) - Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.**

3. But on the other side, think of how Paul respected authority even when he righteously disagreed: **[Act 23:3-5 NKJV] [3] Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?" [4] And those who stood by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" [5] Then Paul said, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.' "**
4. **right after that, Paul planted a seed within the political environment by prompting a heated debate on the resurrection, which ultimately won some to his side.**

**We must choose our battles wisely. Foolishness only lends itself to making us enemies of authority instead of influencers of authority.**

### C. RESIST RASHNESS

**"Do not be hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand for an evil thing, for he does whatever pleases him." 5 He who keeps his command will experience nothing harmful; And a wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment,**

When you have a problem with authority, it's wisdom that trumps all:

- Don't be hasty to emotionally react to something you don't like (go from his presence. Turn in your resignation, or stomp out too quickly on your principles). Think, pray, and seek wise counsel.
- Take your stand for an evil thing: Don't be involved in an evil coup-de-ta behind the scenes, for the king will do whatever he pleases once he finds out what's going on.

***And IF you must take your stand against authority, ensure that you're on the side of righteousness before you do it!***

- ***A wise heart discerns both time and judgment:***
  - ***To everything, there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven. (Ecc. 3)***

In other words, there is a ***right time*** and a ***wise way*** to deal with authority, even when in disagreement, that will yield results that both keep you safe and influence the authority.

- Esther was masterful in this sense. She didn't rashly and emotionally react to the situation of Haman's plot against the Jews. She understood the urgency. She was deeply concerned. Yet, she knew the way to the heart of the king. Yes, it took boldness. Yes, it took courage. Yes, it was a risk. But she strategized well, acted honorably, created and executed a brilliant plan, and ultimately had the victory.

#### QUOTE

**“ Always remember there is a time for OUTcry and a time for INfluence. The wise person seeks to discern when each one is appropriate.**

#### APPLICATION

Like Jesus, there might be a time when flipping over tables and creating whips is appropriate. Like John the Baptist, there might be a time to prophetically and boldly call out the sin of a national leader.

There are other times when it's appropriate to say things like, ***"Give to Caesar that which is Caesar's and to God that which is God's."***

***[Mat 13:33 NKJV] [33] Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."***

***[Mat 13:31-32 NKJV] [31] Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, [32] "which***



***indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."***

I am hesitant to broach this subject, but it's an election year, and providentially speaking, this passage comes at an opportune time. In today's politically charged climate, there are Christians who are unwisely on both ends of this spectrum:

- **Some people are ONLY outcry people.** They stand and die on their hills before ever having the opportunity to make any positive changes. I can say this because I've been that person far too many times in my life. This person has their convictions but is typically unwilling to have a long game, patience for a process, and humility to engage other perspectives with a goal in mind. But they are good at getting things riled up.
- **Others are ONLY influencers.** They will engage with all the people at the table. They will get themselves into the right circles and make the right friends. The problem? They never end up voicing their convictions or successfully navigating toward the truth because they don't want to lose their prominence or position. This ultimately makes them weak.
  - **They criticize those dying on the hills but have never taken a substantial stand themselves. They say they are trying to be salt and light, but their salt shaker is clogged, and their batteries are dead.**

In my opinion, Donald Trump and Kari Lake were foolish recently to choose pragmatism over principle on the issue of abortion. If ever there was an issue in our society that deserves both influence and outcry, it's the murder of innocent babies. But to sacrifice true and unchanging moral principles in the name of electability borders on cowardice. Some might be offended that I would say that, but may I remind us all that we are Christians first? Now, between two compromised options, I still say that a republican government is far better than a democratic-run government, which both will look like a joke when there is a Jesus-run kingdom on this earth!

- I don't say that because I'm Republican; I say that because the Republican Ticket and many of the people who operate behind the scenes run on a stronger moral high ground, biblically speaking. However, it still falls tremendously short of the truth, which is why our ultimate hope is in Christ, not the institutions of men.

America has no King. God has ordained a constitutional structure in our nation that gives the people both the right and obligation to replace and institute a government that will be of the people, for the people, and by the people.

## QUOTE

**“Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”**

John Adams

## QUOTE

**“Never compromise truth in the name of influence, and never compromise wisdom in the name of outcry.”**

Pastor Josh

## APPLICATION

But ultimately, we must remember that a place of submission to authority is a reflection of one who is submitted to God.

- Yes, our submission is bounded by our loyalty to God, but we also recognize that it's a rebellious spirit that has to always be the one in charge or always be the one who is right.
- ***Respecting authority is not always dependent on the respectability of the people in charge but on our fear of God and trust in Him.***

## BIBLE PASSAGE

**[1Pe 3:1-2 NKJV] [1] Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, [2] when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.**

**APPLICATION**

Timing is everything. There is always a wise judgment and the right timing to communicate with leaders your concerns and thoughts.

- One who communicates rashly and foolishly will just earn the disrespect of the one in authority.
- TIMING & JUDGMENT - Those who exercise timing and wisdom will find favor and always have the ear of the one in authority.

#### **4 Where the word of a king is, there is power; And who may say to him, "What are you doing?"**

I don't believe the Bible suggests that authority can't be questioned. It certainly can, and at times certainly should be. However, when someone has final authority, they aren't necessarily going to have their course of action just because you questioned it.

- Next time you get pulled over by a cop, and he comes to your window, the first thing that comes out of your mouth probably shouldn't be, "What on earth do you think you're doing?"

• Perhaps the influence over control

9:49



## **2 Wisdom in Dealing with Uncertainty**

**BIBLE PASSAGE**

**[Ecc 8:6-8 NKJV] 6 Because for every matter there is a time and judgment, though the misery of man increases greatly. 7 For he does not know what will happen; So who can tell him when it will occur? 8 No one has power over the spirit to retain the spirit, and no one has power in the day of death. There is no release from that war, and wickedness will not deliver those who are given to it.**

## APPLICATION

It's difficult to track Solomon's thought process in bridging these two subjects, but here is one possibility. Just as Solomon observes that a King has ultimate authority over his subjects and that the best people can do is get along with the king's program, so God has ultimate control and authority over life and death and everything that happens in between, and it is a futility of man to try and figure it all out or fight against Him.

Solomon describes our lack of "power" over our lives and deaths as an internal war that we will never be free from. We want to fight for control; we want to be invincible. We want to define and order the events of our lives, and we want to live forever... only to find that the power to accomplish those things is out of our reach.

**There is no release from that war, and wickedness will not deliver those who are given to it.**

Depending on your translation, this could mean two different things, both of which are true:

1. The fight to control life and death is one that people want release from, yet the wicked will not find release from death even though they employ many tactics to try and avoid it.

**1. *Although wicked men, who most fear death, use all possible means, whether good or bad, to free themselves from this deadly blow, yet they shall not escape it.* -Matthew Poole, M. (1853).**

**2. *NIV - As no one is discharged in time of war, so wickedness will not release those who practice it.***

- In other words, wickedness holds one captive to death, like a soldier who will not be released in a time of war.

There are those who might look at the inevitability of death and think, "what's the point? I might as well live the way I want to!" That's a foolish attitude to have toward life and God.

### 3 Wisdom in Dealing with injustices

#### BIBLE PASSAGE

**[Ecc 8:9-14 NKJV] 9 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.**

#### APPLICATION

To rule to one's own hurt:

- This may be a reference to the beginning thoughts about kings and servants. It's a blessing to rule over loyal and faithful people but harmful to rule over a deceitful usurper or rebel.
- More than likely, Solomon recorded the outcome of tyrannical leadership.
  - When people in authority govern poorly, it will hurt those they are leading and eventually end in their own destruction.
  - Rulers can govern in a way that ends up hurting others. Pastors can lead in a way that harms the flock and destroys themselves. Husbands can husband in a way that when hurts their wives and, in turn, hurts themselves.
- Ultimately, God will hold all those in authority accountable in this life or the next, and their unrighteous leadership will incur some form of wrath or discipline.

**But this also reminds us that even though God ordains authority, that doesn't ensure that human authority will lead well. And it doesn't mean he won't hold them accountable for their godless leadership.**

**BIBLE PASSAGE**

**10 Then I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of holiness, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done. This also is vanity.**

---

**APPLICATION**

Most commentators agree that Solomon is still referring to people in places of authority. When it says "come and gone," that was a phrase for people of high authority in the court or temple. They would come and go from the Holy City, Jerusalem. They would come and go to and from the palace. They would come and go from holy gatherings, courts, and worship... but the entire time they were doing their **"holy business"** in **"holy places,"** they were living **"unholy lives"** behind the scenes.

- When they died, the people seemed to forget how wicked and hypocritical they were. It seemed like they got away with their wickedness while being praised for their perceived goodness. Likewise, there are those who do good their entire lives and die without recognition of the things they've done. Solomon sees this as a vanity in life.

Solomon also knows that everything will eventually be considered by God, but if we're honest, sometimes we don't want to wait until God deals with it.

---

**APPLICATION**

**In verses 11-14, he seems to elaborate on this by contrasting what he knows to be true about God with what he seems to observe on the earth, under the sun.**

---

**BIBLE PASSAGE**

**11 Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.**

---

## APPLICATION

Solomon seems convinced that one of the things that feeds wicked intentions and actions among people is a lack of speedy justice against evil works.

- In the United States, the average amount of time a convicted felon spends on death row is 23 years. I'm not here to argue the fact that people meet Jesus in prison and change and that in every system of justice, there are problems, but Solomon is on to a very basic fact of human nature:
  - If people learn they can get away with something wrong, they will justify it and persist in their ways.
  - There is a time for mercy when it is appropriately applied, but when justice is needed, it should be swift and decisive.
- **[Rom 13:3-5 NKJV] [3] For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. [4] For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. [5] Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.**

## APPLICATION

These mini Gaza camps on our college universities could use some swift justice!

---

## BIBLE PASSAGE

**12** Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. **13** But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he does not fear before God. **14** There is a vanity which occurs on earth, that there are just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked; again, there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity.

---

## APPLICATION

On Earth: It seems like a conundrum that people seem to bypass justice in their lifetime on Earth when they practice wickedness.

- But Solomon says, "I know": It will be well with those who fear God, even if they seem to die unjustly, and it will not go well with those who don't fear God, even if they seem to live forever.

**[Mat 10:26-28 NKJV] [26] "Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. [27] "Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. [28] "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**

---

## QUOTE

“Christians are indistinguishable from other men either by nationality, language or customs. They do not inhabit separate cities of their own, or speak a strange dialect, or follow some outlandish way of life. Their teaching is not based upon reveries inspired by the curiosity of men. Unlike some other people, they champion no purely human doctrine. With regard to dress, food and manner of life in general, they follow the customs of whatever city they happen to be living in, whether it is Greek or foreign.

And yet there is something extraordinary about their lives. They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through. They play their full role as citizens, but labor under all the disabilities of aliens. Any country can be their homeland, but for them their homeland, wherever it may be, is a foreign country. Like others, they marry



and have children, but they do not expose them. They share their meals, but not their wives.

They live in the flesh, but they are not governed by the desires of the flesh. They pass their days upon earth, but they are citizens of heaven. Obedient to the laws, they yet live on a level that transcends the law. Christians love all men, but all men persecute them.

Unknown, Letter to Diognetus (2nd - 3rd century)

## CALL TO SALVATION

Life in a sinful world is unfair, it catches both the righteous and unrighteous off-guard. People are wicked and contaminate every system that God gave for good. The person looking at the world through a lens of wisdom will, at times, feel like ripping their hair out because things are so obviously wrong, but it seems just out of our reach to do anything about it.

**[Rom 2:4-6 NKJV] [4] Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? [5] But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, [6] who "will render to each one according to his deeds":**

But the knowledge that there is an eternity in which everything will be known, and neither righteousness or unrighteousness will be forgotten, does bring about another perspective that one would be wise to consider while they are alive.

- Are you living for eternity?
- Are you prepared to stand before your creator with everything known, nothing hidden, and an account required of your life?
- Have you recognized and embraced the fact that Jesus came not only to show us a better way to live but to reveal to humanity that God, the Holy Creator, and righteous judge, desires to reconcile broken, wayward people back to himself, wash away their sin and guilt and give them eternal hope that changes everything about life here and now?

