

Ecclesiastes 2:12-16  
Wisdom, Foolishness, and the Certainty of Death  
Embrace God's plan of man's inability—1:1-2:26 (part 4)

- 1) His deliberate pursuit—2:12-14 <sup>12</sup> *Then I turned to consider ...* (away from the pursuit of joy in 2:1-11)
  - a) The subject matter
    - i) *wisdom*,—skillful living, of which Spirit-enabled awe of God is the beginning (cf. Job 28:28; Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10; Isaiah 11:2)
    - ii) *insanity*,—irrational madness, delusional thinking (cf. 1:17; 7:25; 9:3; 10:13)
    - iii) *and foolishness*;—lacking moral or spiritual sense, often acting rashly out of fear rather than acting wisely out of trust in God (cf. 1:17; 2:3; 7:25; 10:1, 13)
  - b) Why? *because what will the man do who comes after the king except what has already been done?*
    - i) Perhaps a reference to his son Rehoboam (cf. 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 11:43)?
    - ii) Perhaps a reference to his servant Jeroboam (cf. 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 12:20)?
  - c) Proverbs—2:13-14
    - i) Wisdom is relatively advantageous—<sup>13</sup> *Then I myself* (emphatic) *saw that there is advantage to wisdom over foolishness, as the advantage of the light over the darkness.*
      - (1) Advantage (cf. 1:3; 2:11; 3:9; 5:8, 15; 7:12; 10:10-11)
    - ii) But only temporarily—<sup>14</sup> *The wise man has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in the darkness, and yet I perceived that one event happens to all of them.*
      - (1) The wise **can** see where they are going (further ahead and in many directions) by comparison, but wisdom does not insulate us from death.
      - (2) Death may be the great equalizer (seeming to erase all distinctions), but it is not one's final destiny. It is simply an event, not a permanent status.
- 2) His inner conversations—2:15-16
  - a) Two statements—2:15
    - i) No exceptions—<sup>15</sup> *So I said in my heart, "As the event of the fool, so also it will happen to me. Then why have I been exceedingly wise?"*
      - (1) It is far better to prepare for eternity than for advantage only in this life.
    - ii) Nothing permanent—*And I said in my heart, "This also is illusory."*
  - b) Why this conclusion?
    - i) Memories—<sup>16</sup> *For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise as of the fool, seeing that in the coming days all will have been forgotten.*
      - (1) In reality, people begin to forget us before we are even dead!
      - (2) This is one reason why tombstones are made of stone instead of cardboard: we want people to remember us, even in death. Consider the pyramids. Name the Pharaohs who had them built.
    - ii) Death—*And how the wise dies like the fool!*
      - (1) But remember Daniel 12:3