



# *The Book of Ecclesiastes*

*(The search for the ultimate maxim to explain the nature of life).*



## *Chapter 9*

FOR MORE PAMPHLETS ON BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE: [www.pamphletstoinspire.com](http://www.pamphletstoinspire.com)

The book of Ecclesiastes occupies a unique position in the Bible due to its prevalent sense of pessimism and absence of God's intervention in our world. In fact, the all-prevailing mood of a God remote from our human condition sets the tone for Ecclesiastes which seems incongruent with the other books of the Old Testament. It contains reflections, more philosophical in nature, rather than a testimony of belief, which we would normally associate with the Hebrew scriptural tradition. For the traditional author, in the Book of Ecclesiastes, God is the inscrutable originator of the world who determines the fate of humankind. Just as the natural is in constant movement minus the presence of real change, so the human expenditure of energy comes to nought, despite the fact that reason leaves us baffled, the author affirms that life is worth living with all its limitations. The following metaphor (literal) interpretation, on the chapters of the Book of Ecclesiastes, are by Saint Gregory Thaumaturgus, an early Father of the Church.

### Chapter 9

Now I thought at that time that all men were judged worthy of the same things. And if any wise man practised righteousness, and withdrew himself from unrighteousness, and as being sagacious avoided hatred with all (which, indeed, is a thing well pleasing to God), this man seemed to me to labour in vain. For there seemed to be one end for the righteous and for the impious, for the good and for the evil, for the pure and for the impure, for him that worshipped God, and for him that worshipped not. For as the unrighteous man and the good, the man who swears a false oath, and the man who avoids swearing altogether, were suspected by me to be driving toward the same end, a certain sinister opinion stole secretly into my mind, that all men come to their end in a similar way. But now I know that these are the reflections of fools, and errors and deceits. And they assert largely, that he who is dead has perished utterly, and that the living is to be preferred to the dead, even though he may lie in darkness, and pass his life-journey after the fashion of a dog, *which is* better at least than a dead lion.

For the living know this at any rate, that they are to die; but the dead know not anything, and there is no reward proposed to them after they have completed their necessary course. Also hatred and love with the dead have their end; for their envy has perished, and their life also is extinguished. And he has a portion in nothing who has once gone hence. Error harping still on such a string, gives also such counsel as this: What do you mean, O man, that you do not enjoy yourself delicately, and gorge yourself with all manner of pleasant food, and fill yourself to the full with wine? Do you not perceive that these things are given us from God for our unrestrained enjoyment? Put on newly washed attire, and anoint your head with myrrh, and see this woman and that, and pass your vain life vainly. For nothing else remains for you but this, neither here nor after death. But avail you yourself of all that chances; for neither shall any one take account of you for these things, nor are the things that are done by men known at all outside the circle of men. And Hades, whatever that may be, whereunto we are said to depart, has neither wisdom nor understanding. These are the things which men of vanity speak. But I know assuredly, that neither shall they who seem the swiftest accomplish that great race; nor shall those who are esteemed mighty and terrible in the judgment of men, overcome in that terrible battle. Neither, again, is prudence proved by abundance of bread, nor is understanding wont to consort with riches. Nor do I congratulate those who think that all shall find the same things befall them. But certainly those who indulge such thoughts seem to me to be asleep, and to fail to consider that, caught suddenly like fishes and birds, they will be consumed with woes, and meet speedily their proper retribution. Also I estimate wisdom at so high a price, that I should deem a small and poorly-peopled city, even though besieged also by a mighty king with his forces, to be indeed great and powerful, if it had but one wise man, however poor, among its citizens. For such a man would be able to deliver his city both from enemies and from entrenchments. And other men, it may be, do not recognise that wise man, poor as he is; but for my part I greatly prefer the power that resides in wisdom, to this might of the mere multitude of the people. Here, however, wisdom, as it dwells with poverty, is held in dishonour. But hereafter it shall be heard speaking with more authoritative voice than princes and despots who seek after things evil. For wisdom is also stronger than iron; while the folly of one individual works danger for many, even though he be an object of contempt to many.