

# **Ecclesiastes 5:1-7**

## **Discourse III: Instruction About the Emptiness of Words**

### **“Words vs. Action”**

Study by Jason Labonte

#### **I. Review**

**A. Theme: Life under the sun is emptiness.**

#### **B. Discourse I**

1. Part A: Wisdom is better than folly, but both are emptiness.
2. Part B: Labor, too, is emptiness, but its profit is the good we find in it in relation to the eternal perspective of God.

**C. Discourse II: A miscellany of disappointments further reveal the emptiness of life under the sun and our proper response to that.**

#### **II. The Instructions (5:1-7)**

**A. “Guard your steps” when you worship God.**

Jesus said something very similar (literally, “Hold to your guard”); read Matthew 6:1-18.

**B. “Listen rather than offer the sacrifice of fools<sup>1</sup>.”**

1. James also speaks strongly on this; read James 1:19-27.
2. See also I Sam 15:22.

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<sup>1</sup> Fool — from לֹסֵף *kisef* “sluggishness or stupidity”; originally meant “fatness”; sometimes means “(over)-confidence”

### **C. Vows**

1. Both Jesus and James also spoke about this; read Matthew 5:33-34, James 5:12.
2. Remember also the anti-example of Jephthah.
3. What does the proverb in verse 3 mean?
  - i. If I have a desire and dream, I should work for it.
  - ii. But I should not make a rash vow or promise to God or anyone that I shall accomplish that dream.<sup>2</sup>
4. The “messenger” in v. 6 most likely refers to a “temple messenger”, a priest, not an angel, which is the same Hebrew word. (See Mal 2:7.)

### **D. “Stand in awe.”**

## **III. Application & Discussion**

- A. Are we “guarding our steps” when we worship in the areas of giving, prayer, and fasting? What are other areas of potential hypocrisy in the modern church?**
- B. What is the sacrifice of the Christian? What is the Law for the Christian, this “perfect law” of James 1:25? Are we “looking after orphans and widows” or doing such similar acts of kindness? Are we keeping ourselves from the pollution of the world (Ja 1:27)?**
- C. Why do we hear so little about vows, oaths, and promises today when James uses the phrase “above all?” Are we overlooking something very important? Or have times changed?**
- D. What does it mean to fear, revere, or stand in awe of God? Is this another thing that has changed with the new covenant? How can we approach the “throne of grace” with both confidence and reverent fear?**

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<sup>2</sup> For the movie buffs: Think of Scarlett’s vow in the middle of “Gone With the Wind”.