

Ecclesiastes 7:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart.

Analysis

The Preacher offers counterintuitive wisdom: 'It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart.' The 'house of mourning' (beth evel, בֵּית אֶבֶל) refers to a funeral or home where death is being grieved. The 'house of feasting' (beth mishteh, בֵּית מִשְׁתֵּה) is a celebration or banquet. Mourning confronts mortality—'the end of all men'—prompting sober reflection ('the living will lay it to his heart'). Feasting may bring pleasure but doesn't produce wisdom. Funerals force confrontation with life's brevity and meaning; parties distract from ultimate realities. This isn't condemning celebration but recognizing that sober reflection on mortality produces wisdom that frivolous pleasure cannot. The verse anticipates Jesus's beatitude: 'Blessed are they that mourn' (Matthew 5:4).

Historical Context

Ancient Israelite funerals involved public mourning—weeping, lamenting, sometimes professional mourners (Jeremiah 9:17-18). Feasts marked celebrations—weddings, harvests, festivals. Both were communal events. Yet the Preacher insists that attending funerals benefits the soul more than attending parties. This wisdom challenged cultural assumptions then and now—people naturally prefer pleasure to grief. Yet Scripture repeatedly affirms that suffering and mortality teach lessons prosperity obscures. Job learned through suffering; the Psalmist's troubles drove him to God (Psalm 119:71). The early church valued martyrs'

testimonies and saints' deaths as instructive. The Puritans practiced 'mortification'—meditating on death to prioritize eternal values. Modern death-denying culture particularly needs this wisdom.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How have experiences of loss and mourning taught you wisdom that success and celebration could not?
2. What would it mean to 'lay to heart' the reality of mortality—letting death's certainty shape your priorities?

Interlinear Text

אֲלֹת	מִלְכָת	אֲלֹת	לְלִכְתָּה	אֲלֹת	בַּיִת	אֲלֹת	בַּיִת	אֲלֹת	מִלְכָת	אֲלֹת
It is better	H1980	H413	to the house	H1004	of mourning	H60		H1980	H413	
H2896										
בַּיִת	סְמִינָה	כָּל	בַּיִת	סְמִינָה	כָּל	בַּיִת	סְמִינָה	כָּל	בַּיִת	סְמִינָה
to the house	of feasting	for	the end	that is the end	of all men	the end	that is the end	of all men	the end	that is the end
H1004	H4960	H834	H1931	H5490	H3605	H1004	H4960	H834	H1931	H5490
וְלֹבֶן	אֲלֹת	אֲלֹת	וְלֹבֶן	אֲלֹת	וְלֹבֶן	אֲלֹת	וְלֹבֶן	אֲלֹת	וְלֹבֶן	אֲלֹת
and the living	will lay	H413	it to his heart	H3820		and the living	will lay	H413	it to his heart	H3820
H2416	H5414					H2416	H5414	H413	H3820	

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 90:12 (Parallel theme): So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Deuteronomy 32:46 (Parallel theme): And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.

Deuteronomy 32:29 (Parallel theme): O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

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