

CHAPTER 3:16-4:16

Lesson 6

KEY VERSE(S)—

OUTLINE—

- I. **OBSERVATION:** Inequities of Life (3:16-4:8)
 - A. Injustice (3:16-17)
 - B. Unfairness of Death (3:18-22)
 - C. Oppression (4:1-3)
 - D. Selfishness (4:4-8)
- II. **INSTRUCTION:** Vain and Valuable Things (4:9-5:12)
 - A. Value of Friends (4:9-12)
 - B. Vanity of Popularity and Power (4:13-16)
 - C. Value of Prudence Before God (5:1-7)
 - D. Vanity of Oppression (5:8-12)

KEY WORDS (Themes)—

SUMMARY—

The Preacher observes that life is full of inequity and unfairness. There is injustice in the house of judgment where we expect to find justice and fairness (3:16-17). Even though this wrong will ultimately be righted, it is still unfair. There is death, which takes the lives of all men without partiality—and to those who only have a “this world” view of things, apart from God, it makes us no better than the beast (3:18-22).

There is oppression, as those who have the power to oppress, mistreat those who do not have the power to resist (4:1-3). There is selfishness, which leaves the laborer with nothing he can enjoy or retain, along with the loneliness of his selfishness (4:4-8). He never asks who he is working for—he is never satisfied and he has no one to share his labors with.

Companionship is more profitable than such selfishness (4:9-12). Even the highest places of power and honor that men occupy offer no real assurance or security. Popularity and popular opinion are too fickle (4:13-16). Even the highest pinnacle of success is marred by the knowledge that “this too shall pass away.”

QUESTIONS—

- 1) *Summarize this passage in one sentence.*
- 2) *What consolation do we have in spite of the injustice that prevails (3:17)?*
- 3) *In what sense is man no better than the beasts (3:18-20)? In what sense is man different than the beasts (3:21; cf. 12:7)?*
- 4) *Why does the Preacher praise the dead over the oppressed (4:1-3)?*

5) Which is fuller, one handful with quietness or two hands full—one with toil and the other with wind (4:6)?

6) What are the benefits of having friends and companions?

- verse 9—
- verse 10—
- verse 11—
- verse 12—

ASSIGNMENT—

Locate these other passages in Ecclesiastes which affirm that death comes to all men. *What does he say about death in all of these passages?* Place your answers in the chart next to each passage.

	Death
2:14-16	
3:2	
3:19-20	
6:3-6	
7:1-4	
8:8	
9:2-6	
12:6-7	

READING SCHEDULE—

Read this passage every day before the upcoming class (check the box after each day that you read the passage)

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday