

Laughter Condemned

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Laughter Commended (Eccl. 3:1, 4; 8:15).

Laughter Condemned (Lk. 6:25; Eccl. 7:3-4).

The majority of those who behave decently would agree it is inappropriate to laugh during someone's funeral service. On the other hand, it is not uncommon for people to laugh in the days following if they recall and share a humorous incident involving the deceased. Consequently, there is a time to laugh and a time not to,

Sorrow is better than laughter (depending on the situation), for by a sad countenance the heart (of those around you) is made better (through your sympathy and support). ⁴The heart of the wise (see study: Wisdom a Source of Enjoyment) is in the house of mourning (acting appropriately for the situation), but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth (because they are self-serving and insensitive to the woes of others) (Eccl. 7:3-4; Ed. notes in parentheses; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted).

King Solomon mentioned that laughter is something that needs to be considered carefully. If it is inappropriate for the occasion, it can be hurtful to others,

To everything there is a season (appointed time), a time for every purpose under heaven (Eccl. 3:1; Ed. note in parenthesis).

A time to weep, and a time to laugh; A time to mourn, and a time to dance (Eccl. 3:4).

Jesus Christ mentioned that many people during his earthly ministry were incapable of discerning the serious nature of events that were occurring before their eyes. Instead, they were more inclined to ignore them and laugh at their sad state of affairs,

Then he (Christ) also said to the multitudes, 'When you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, "A shower is coming"; and so it is. ⁵⁵And when you see the south wind blow, you say, "There will be hot weather"; and there is. ⁵⁶Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but **how is it you do not discern this time?** (Lk. 12:54-56; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

So it is in this context that Christ corrected those who were laughing rather than crying at the sad and sinful situation they were in,

...Woe to you who laugh now, for **you shall mourn and weep** (referring to the imminent destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE; cf. Mt. 24:2) (Lk. 6:25b; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

It was inappropriate for Christ to conduct himself in a frivolous manner when he knew the serious nature of his mission, combined with the knowledge that the Jewish religious leaders were going to be responsible for the downfall of the nation (cf. Mt. 23:1-39),

He (Christ) is despised and rejected (forsaken) by men, a man of sorrows (pains) and acquainted with grief. And we (mankind) hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we did not esteem him (Isa. 53:3; cf. Heb. 5:8; Jn. 1:10-11; 1Pet. 2:23; Ed. notes in parentheses).

The next scriptures prove there is nothing wrong with laughter but, as mentioned previously, there are times when it is inappropriate,

A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones (Prov. 17:22).

So I (Solomon) commended enjoyment, because a man has nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry; for this will remain with him in his labor for the days of his life which God gives him under the sun (Eccl. 8:15; Ed. note in parenthesis).

In conclusion, the scriptures in this study do not contradict one another. Instead, when combined, they show that discernment is required in order to laugh at the right things and at the appropriate time.

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor. 11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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