



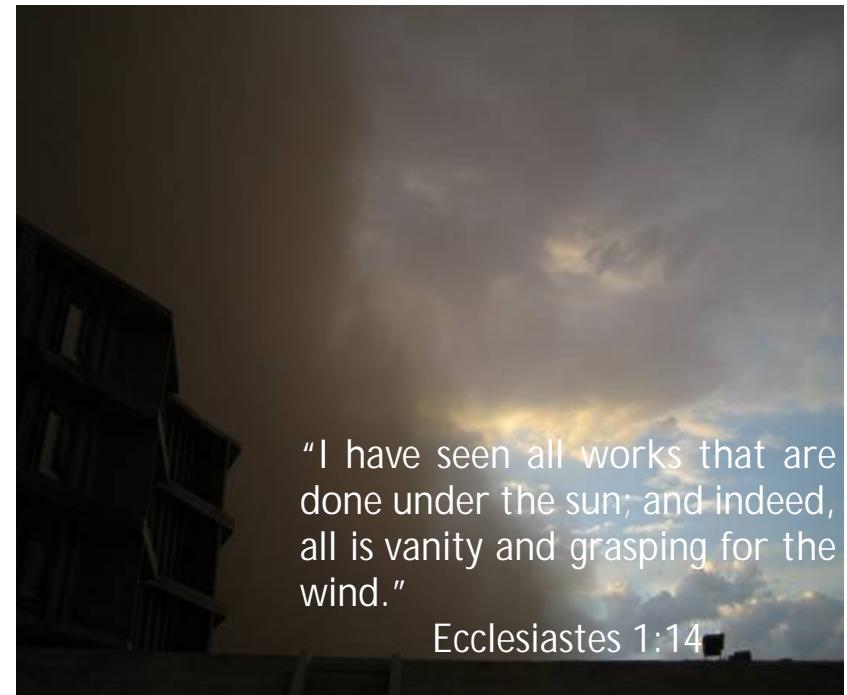
Notes

If you have questions during the week, please drop us an e-mail at
jim@calvaryroswell.com or phil@calvaryroswell.com

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Thru the Scriptures 2006-08



"I have seen all works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind."

Ecclesiastes 1:14

Ecclesiastes 1-6

October 25th-31st, 2007

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,
and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction,
for instruction in righteousness,
that the man of God may be complete,
thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Ti 3:16-17)

Ecclesiastes—

Above all else Ecclesiastes would teach us the emptiness of everything apart from God. The word ‘vanity’ which recurs throughout the book does not mean merely foolish pride, but the emptiness, in its final result, of all life lived for this world alone. This book would wean us from love of the world. It says to us all, “ Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is nor of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (I John 2:15-17) It says to us: “ Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal : for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:19-21) Yes, Ecclesiastes says to every Christian: “Set your affection on things above; not on things on the earth” (Col 3:2)

—**Sidlow, J. Baxter, *Explore the Book.***

Helpful Study Links:

Additional Commentary: (Great Resource!)

http://preceptaustin.org/ecclesiastes_commentaries.htm

Sermon Links:

“Ecclesiastes 1-6” by Chuck Smith

http://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/chuck_smith_c2000/Ecc/Ecc001.html

“Things are not what they seem” by Ray C. Stedman

<http://raystedman.org/eccles/3810.html>

“That Wonderful plan for your Life” by Ray C. Stedman

<http://raystedman.org/eccles/3808.html>



Author: Solomon (Eccl 1:1)

Consider wisdom of Solomon. He is by God's reckoning the wisest person who has ever or will ever live. (1Kings 3:12, 4:29) Truly this makes it worth our hearing what he has to say. Of course, Jesus is the exception to the statement in 1Kings – because He is God and Man – and is all Wisdom Matt 12:42.

Consider the folly of Solomon. One of the struggles people often have with Solomon, is although God says he was the wisest man – we see him make many foolish decisions. We see him violate God's Word in having foreign and multiple wives and at the end of his life even worshipping false gods. So how do we put that together with Solomon being the wisest man ever? In one simple sense it is a great example and a great warning – knowing what is right and doing what is right...are two very different things. But Solomon's poor choices don't invalidate the wisdom God gave Him or the words that here God inspired through him.



Theme: The theme of Ecclesiastes is somewhat disputed.

Many view this book as a man writing from the depths of depression. It is sometimes touted as a book showing the folly of falling away from God.

Yet I challenge you not to let preconceived notions cloud your reading. Consider the testimony God gives us within the book by reading Eccl 12:9-11.

And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and what was written was upright—words of truth. The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd. (Eccl 12:9-11)

Very specifically, God tells us these words in this book are carefully worded....chosen to impact our lives. These are not depressed ramblings...but powerful, well chosen thoughts.

So then, what is the theme of the book of Ecclesiastes?

Life without God is empty! It is a book that considers “life under the son”. Understand it this way, as a book that looks at life as if what many people want is true – that this is all there is – that there is no God. So, it tackles life and looks at it to see the value of life if you leave God out of the picture. Simply – what it tells us is that life outside of God – is empty and vain. Truly, it is only God and in God that we find the meaning of life and its fullness.

Ecclesiastes place in the OT

The Old Testament is broken down into five sections:

The Torah – the law, the first five books of the OT.

The Historical Books – from Joshua through Nehemiah, covering the historical accounts of the OT.

The Poetical Books – Job through Song of Solomon – teaching us and approaching thought from the Poetical side.

The Major Prophets – From Isaiah through Daniel – giving us the account of the ministry of these prophets

The Minor Prophets – from Hosea to Malachi

Ecclesiastes is found in the five Poetical books. It is interesting to look at the basic literary types of these five books.

Job – Questions, debate, suffering

Psalms – worship, songs.

Proverbs – Wisdom

Ecclesiastes - Philosophy

Song of Solomon – Romance

Truly God has designed man with an “artistic” side and these books lay that out. It is interesting to even look at your own life, and see that probably one of these books appeals to you more than the other – because it better fits how you look at life, through what artistic lens you view life.



Ecclesiastes is a book of Philosophy. One definition of Philosophy is “Investigation of the nature, causes, or principles of reality, knowledge, or values, based on logical reasoning.” It is to look at life...and seek to figure it out. Ecclesiastes does this in several ways – but as has already been stated – it tackles it in a wonderful way by examining life and considering its value. It looks at life “under the son” – that is following the assumption that many seek to live by – that there is no God. It challenges us to consider — what if the evolutionist were right? What if life is only “under the sun” - what if we leave God out of the picture—then where is the satisfaction of life? With this understanding—what does us show us about life...and its purpose...its satisfaction. Ecclesiastes shows how empty, vain and pointless life is without God – and will calls us throughout the book – to find life only in God.

Title of Ecclesiastes

The name “Ecclesiastes” is derived from the word “Preacher” in Eccl 1:1 and 12:9 – as the author of the books describes himself as a Preacher.

The Hebrew word is נָבָעַ נִקְהֶלֶת

The Greek translation of this word is ekklesia (“assembly”) and means “one who addresses an assembly.” It is from this Greek translation that our title Ecclesiastes has been derived from

Interestingly enough – the Greek word ekklesia is the word that is translated “church” in the New Testament.

Thus you could say that this book is a sermon from a preacher to an assembly or a church. It is a message to God’s people in this world.

Daily Bible Study

Thursday, October 25th, 2007

Passage for today: Ecclesiastes 1

Questions to Ponder

1. How does Solomon describe life “under the sun”? From whose perspective is he writing?
 2. Is there anything lacking in this perspective? How does this chapter apply to your life?

Daily Bible Study

Friday, October 26th, 2007

Passage for today: Ecclesiastes 2

Questions to Ponder

1. In what things did Solomon turn to for satisfaction? Try to sum this up into three areas. How does he describe his life with all of these things?
 2. The term “grasping the wind” is used multiple times in this book. How is this a good description of man’s pursuits? How does it apply to you?

Daily Bible Study

Saturday, October 27th, 2007

Passage for today: Ecclesiastes 2

Questions to Ponder

1. This is the second day in chapter two. What additional insights has the Lord given you in this chapter?
 2. In verses 18-21 Solomon distresses over leaving his work to the man who would come after him. How is this described in verse 21? What things should we seek to leave as an inheritance to those who follow us?

Daily Bible Study

Sunday, October 28th, 2007

Passage for today: Ecclesiastes 3

Questions to Ponder

1. Look through the list of things in verses 1-8 and make some observations.
 2. How does this section layout overarching principles for this life? What does it say about the inevitability of pain?
 3. Look at verse 14, 15. Why should man reverently fear God?

Daily Bible Study

Monday, October 29th, 2007

Passage for today: Ecclesiastes 4

Questions to Ponder

Why, in verse 3, does Solomon say it is better to have never existed? As you consider the world, do you have the same conclusion? What is lacking from this perspective?

Read verses 9-12. What does this say about our need for others? How can you apply this verse to your life?

Daily Bible Study

Tuesday, October 30th, 2007

Passage for today: Ecclesiastes 5

Questions to Ponder

1. What does it mean to give the sacrifice of fools? Greater importance is placed upon hearing rather than speaking. Why is this so important for us to do?
 2. What does this chapter teach us about financial gain?

Daily Bible Study

Wednesday, 31st, 2007

Passage for today: Ecclesiastes 6

Questions to Ponder

1. Read verses 1-6. What is the main idea of these verses? Above riches, family and long life, what is the greatest need of man?
 2. Read verse 10. What does this say about man's position? How do we contend with God?

“...By which they may be exercised.”

Ecclesiastes 1:13

When you see the word exercise, what kind of images come to mind? For me, I think of a treadmill in a gym or in a person's house. My parents have a treadmill and just for fun when I go home on vacation, I sometimes climb aboard to see where I stand in the realm of fitness. At first, I set the speed to a solid pace and, just to show myself (and anyone else looking on) how fit I am (or think I am), I raise the angle of the conveyor belt. For a minute or two, my body holds the pace. But after a few more minutes, I find myself seeking more to survive than to prove my fitness. I find out after about eight minutes into the exercise that God has fashioned my body in a most delicate way (and that I am not in as good of shape as what I thought). I begin to sweat profusely and my lungs don't seem to catch enough air. After a couple more minutes of the torture, I find myself lunging desperately for the emergency shut off switch and then I grab the handles and step on the sides of the rushing conveyor belt seeking to regain my breath and composure. That is one image that comes to mind when I think of exercise.

In Ecclesiastes 1:13, Solomon, the wisest man in history (1 Kings 3:12), used a word that the New King James Bible translates as exercised to describe the burdensome task of trying to figure out the actions and dealings of men in this world. The word in other places of Scripture gives the idea of being afflicted, oppressed or humbled. (Now those words closer fit my idea of exercise). Here Solomon is sort of setting the theme for the book of Ecclesiastes. And in this verse, I see frustration and I see humility.

It seems that Solomon here is not claiming to have diligently set his mind to understand the actions of men by book smarts or by calculations. But in this verse, he confesses that he set his entire effort diligently toward understanding all that is done under the sun by wisdom. In other words, Solomon sought deep and wide to grasp the actions man by way of heavenly understanding. So, when he got done seeking these things out, he confessed that it was a burdensome task that severely exercised him.

Christian, how often do you diligently seek to figure out the actions of man on this earth? For me, I find my mind going there

more than it should. And the truth is, it wears me out. True wisdom, I am often reminded can only be found in Christ. When I want to figure something out, my only Source and my best use of time truly is to surrender all I have to Him and then let Him guide me into His understanding. When He guides me, I am not left to question if my sources were true or correct, but I am left with a stable understanding built on the Truth (which is always in line with His Word).

Oftentimes, searching for truth by wisdom is labor. It is an exercise that is most humbling and can even feel afflicting at times. But what I am finding is that the more I participate in the exercise, the more I grow. Also, the more I participate in it, I am finding that the labor has not so much to do with my effort to press forward in my flesh, but has everything to do with dying to my flesh and letting the Lord guide me by His Spirit into all truth. Another way of saying it is that dying to self the taxing exercise!

Solomon here seems to be looking back at his pursuit and sharing with us that it was a tough thing. He summed up what he found in his pursuit as “vanity and striving after the wind.” What a terrible thing it is to seek after the world only to find that its end is emptiness and striving after the wind!

Christian, as you seek and search out these passages of Scripture, keep it fixed in your mind that there is only one thing in the world worth pursuing. It is not knowledge. It is not money. It is not rituals. It is not intellectual philosophies of man. It is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! He alone is our riches and He alone is our glory. And in Him is all wisdom and spiritual understanding that leads to life everlasting! As you set your heart to understand Him more through this wonderful book of Ecclesiastes, join in with the apostle Paul, and forsake all this world calls worthy. Leave it all behind for the sake of the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord! Seek not to master philosophies and intellectual brilliance by way of striving after the wind. But let the sails of your heart be filled with the breath of His majesty as you die to self-trying and let Him open up your understanding that you might comprehend His word and be moved into joy abounding and worshipful praises from your heart!

“Behold, all is vanity.”

Ecclesiastes 1:14

Taken from *Morning and Evening*

By Charles Spurgeon

Nothing can satisfy the entire man but the Lord's love and the Lord's own self. Saints have tried to anchor in other roadsteads, but they have been driven out of such fatal refuges. Solomon, the wisest of men, was permitted to make experiments for us all, and to do for us what we must not dare to do for ourselves. Here is his testimony in his own words: “So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.” “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” What! the whole of it vanity? O favoured monarch, is there nothing in all thy wealth? Nothing in that wide dominion reaching from the river even to the sea? Nothing in Palmyra's glorious palaces? Nothing in the house of the forest of Lebanon? In all thy music and dancing, and wine and luxury, is there nothing? “Nothing,” he says, “but weariness of spirit.” This was his verdict when he had trodden the whole round of pleasure. To embrace our Lord Jesus, to dwell in his love, and be fully assured of union with him—this is all in all. Dear reader, you need not try other forms of life in order to see whether they are better than the Christian's: if you roam the world around, you will see no sights like a sight of the Saviour's face; if you could have all the comforts of life, if you lost your Saviour, you would be wretched; but if you win Christ, then should you rot in a dungeon, you would find it a paradise; should you live in obscurity, or die with famine, you will yet be satisfied with favour and full of the goodness of the Lord.

**“All his days are but sorrows, and his travail is
grief. (r.v.)”**

Ecclesiastes 2:23

taken from *Our Daily Homily*

By FB Meyer

What a glimpse this is into a heart that has put God out! Solomon's power turned away his heart, so that he was not perfect with God, as David, his father. He drifted from God; and plunged into pleasure and laughter; into building and planting; into the pursuit of science and learning. “Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them. And, behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind” (r.v.). Nothing can satisfy us but God. We were made for Him; and the heart, as Augustine says, must be for ever restless till it finds rest in Him. Thus the shell, brought home from the sea-shore and placed on the shelf, sighs each time you place it to your ear for the ocean whence it came.

We have no need to envy those who prosper in this world, but are without God, and without hope. Their days are sorrows, and their travail is grief, and at night their hearts take no rest. But if we are to avoid their inward anguish, we must avoid their fatal mistake, and learn to take God into our lives. The river of life, which is the Holy Spirit, flows at our feet; but we must stoop to take it freely. Dr. Gordon records the story of a traveller in Barbary, who saw a beautiful clear spring of water, over which was inscribed the legend; “Drink, and be gone.” Robbers infested the region, and were constantly on the track of the traveller, ready to waylay and rob him. Therefore he must snatch the cooling draught and hasten on. Shall we refuse ourselves all pleasure in this world? Shall we write Touch not on every innocent gratification? No; but as soon as we have tasted of the pleasant draught, and lingered long enough to refresh our jaded souls, to hasten to life's serious tasks.

“He hath set eternity in their heart.”

Ecclesiastes 3:11

taken from *Our Daily Homily*

By FB Meyer

The Preacher has been enumerating the various extremes and alternatives of existence, and the natural conclusion might seem to be that since each neutralizes the other, it might be as well for a man to do nothing at all. But a deeper thought is suggested. Man is greater than the changes around him; he has eternity in his heart, and therefore all the varied circumstances of human life resemble the wheels of some great machine, the cogs of which turn in different directions, but the effect is a forward motion, and the manufacture of a fabric that will outlive the machinery that made it. We are greater than circumstance, or change, or things. We have the capacity for the Eternal and Infinite. As the sea-shell sighs for the ocean, so our hearts cry out, though sometimes inarticulately, for God, for the living God. Christ said that foxes have holes and the birds their nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head; and this is true in another sense. The noblest men are those least able to rest anywhere short of God. God made man in his own image; and nothing more surely attests the greatness of our origin than those faculties of the soul which are capable of yearning for, conceiving, and enjoying the Infinite, the Immortal, and the Divine. And every appetite in nature and grace has its appropriate satisfaction. Let us come to Him who has the words of eternal life, who is Himself the Bread that endureth unto eternal life. He that cometh to Him shall never hunger; he that believeth in Him shall never thirst.

“Here would we end our quest; Alone are found in Thee The life of perfect bliss — the rest Of immortality.”