

OT-OV

Lesson 105

1. Last week I finished our overview of the book of Proverbs. When time expired we were over-viewing the book of Ecclesiastes. I want to review some of that taught last week and then pick up with new material on page 3.

Ecclesiastes was written (though not without doubters) by Solomon; if Solomon did not write the book it is certainly about him; this most would agree. If Solomon is the author we can conclude it was written late in his reign. If written about him but not by him, the date of writing is said to be c. 600 B.C.

1. In the book the world, its wealth, wisdom, pleasures, and boundless resources are pronounced as vanity. The theme of the book seems to be: material objects will not satisfy the heart of man. Solomon at the end of his tenure as King was in the throes of deep reversionism.

2. The book of Ecclesiastes gets its name from the Septuagint, there the title is said to be Ekklesiastes meaning "assembly." The name in the Hebrew is literally Qohelet, "one who assembles." This has been taken to mean either

3. "one who collects" wise sayings, or

4. "one who addresses an assembly," that is, a preacher or speaker, the implication being that one assembles a group for the purpose of addressing them.

5. The primary aim of the author is to show from personal experience that all earthly goals and blessings, when pursued as an end in itself, will lead to dissatisfaction and emptiness.

6. As we will see the author makes clear, life without God controlling is indeed meaningless but on the other hand the wisdom of knowing God early in life can bring a measure of purpose and happiness.

7. The highest good in life, according to Ecclesiastes lies in reverencing and obeying God, and in enjoying life while one can.

8. The unusually pessimistic statements in this book must be understood as the musings of one attempting to think and live apart from divine revelation. In the final analysis only Doctrine is adequate to address the human situation.

9. Outline

I. Title and Prologue (Ecc 1:1-11)

- II. Things That Are Vain (Ecc 1:12-2:26)
- III. The Futility of Human Effort (Ecc 3:1-4:3)
- IV. The Futility of Wealth (Ecc 4:4-6:12)
- V. Overcoming Life's Frustrations (Ecc 7:1-8:15)
- VI. Overcoming Despite Powerlessness (Ecc 8:16-11:8)
- VII. Epilogue Ecc 11:9-12:14)

10. After identifying himself as "the preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem, the author immediately launched into the main theme of the book, namely, that life "under the sun" seems to be devoid of value and meaningless.

11. The phrase meaningless under the sun describes life and reality as perceived by mere human observation. It is a world view devoid of doctrine. Ecc 1:2, 3 and 9

12. Nothing is new he goes on to say, for present events have occurred in the past and will occur again in the future. Ecc 1:10-11

13. Things which are vain:

13.1 The author gets specific: first he argues that human striving for knowledge for knowledge's sake is of no benefit. Ecc 1:13-18

13.1.1 He says even the pursuit of knowledge is fruitless for the more one knows the more hopeless things seem.

13.2 Pleasure like human accomplishments are also said to be empty. Ecc 2:1-11

13.2.1 In fact the kingly office, declares the author, provides wisdom and pride of accomplishment but such leaves the king only wanting more. In Ecc 2:13-14 the author does admit wisdom is better than folly and yet both sage and fool die in time and become equally forgotten.

13.3 Acquiring material possessions is also said to be empty; for what one gains must be bequeathed at his death and the recipients may be wasteful fools taking only a short time to scatter the gains to the four winds. Ecc 2:18-22

14. The author concludes the best a man can do is to enjoy his work and the simple pleasures of life; he concludes even this is from God. Ecc 2:24-25

15. The one who follows God's protocol will receive blessing from God but the godless one accumulates wealth which will ultimately be distributed to whomever God pleases. Ecc 2:26

16. In the span of eight verses the Author refers to "time" twenty-nine times concluding that life is marked out by events over which people have no control. Ecc 3:1-8

17. The author concludes however that the patterns of life will be instructive to those open to God's Word, i.e., His divine sovereignty and protocol. Ecc 3:14

Ecc 3:14 I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him.

18. He further concludes understanding God's plan is difficult because life consists of many anomalies. Ecc 3:16-19

Ecc 3:16 And I saw something else under the sun: In the place of judgment--wickedness was there, in the place of justice--wickedness was there.

Ecc 3:17 I thought in my heart, "God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed."

Ecc 3:18 I also thought, "As for men, God tests them so that they may see that they are like the animals.

Ecc 3:19 Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless.

19. In time the Author observes there is a lack of justice; in fact he concludes the dead are better off than the living and the unborn more fortunate than both the living and the dead. Ecc 4:1-4 and Job 3:16

Ecc 4:1 Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun: I saw the tears of the oppressed-- and they have no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors-- and they have no comforter.

Ecc 4:2 And I declared that the dead, who had already died, are happier than the living, who are still alive.

Ecc 4:3 But better than both is he who has not yet been, who has not seen the evil that is done under the sun.

Ecc 4:4 And I saw that all labor and all achievement spring from man's envy of his neighbor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

Job 3:16 Or why was I not hidden in the ground like a stillborn child, like an infant who never saw the light of day?

20. Without capacity to enjoy wealth, the acquisition of wealth is futile.

20.1 The preacher alleges that fools never have enough and that a person is better off with contentment than envying another's wealth. Eccl 4:4

Ecc 4:4 And I saw that all labor and all achievement spring from man's envy of his neighbor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

20.2 Wealth often makes a man a miser, so that he withdraws from the company of others. This then deprives him of one of the few joys that life can offer, companionship and friendship. Ecc 4:8-12

Ecc 4:8 There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. "For whom am I toiling," he asked, "and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?" This too is meaningless-- a miserable business!

Ecc 4:9 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work:

Ecc 4:10 If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!

Ecc 4:11 Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone?

Ecc 4:12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

21. The author recommends caution when approaching worship; go for the purpose of learning and be brief in your prayers. Ecc 5:1-2

Ecc 5:1 Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong.

Ecc 5:2 Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few.

21.1 Make sure you know what you are doing when you go to the house of God. Do not be too quick to promise God regarding what you will or will not do.

Ecc 5:4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow.

Ecc 5:5 It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it.

Ecc 5:6 Do not let your mouth lead you into sin. And do not protest to the temple messenger, "My vow was a mistake." Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands?

Ecc 5:7 Much dreaming and many words are meaningless. Therefore stand in awe of God.

22. The Preacher warns we should not be surprised at the evils of government. Ecc 5:8-9

Ecc 5:8 If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still.

Ecc 5:9 The increase from the land is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields.

23. Riches he contends are not satisfying for they have their own built-in liability.
Ecc 5:10-16

Ecc 5:10 Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.

Ecc 5:11 As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them?

Ecc 5:12 The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep.

Ecc 5:13 I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner,

Ecc 5:14 or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when he has a son there is nothing left for him.

Ecc 5:15 Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand.

Ecc 5:16 This too is a grievous evil: As a man comes, so he departs, and what does he gain, since he toils for the wind?

24. The author takes note that it is God who provides opportunity to work and enjoy the fruits of one's labors.

Ecc 5:18 Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him-- for this is his lot.

Ecc 5:19 Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work-- this is a gift of God.

Ecc 5:20 He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart.

25. The life of a person under the sun is like an unsatisfied appetite. The more he eats, the more he wants. Ecc 6:7

Ecc 6:7 All man's efforts are for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied.

26. Life is tough in the devil's world; the Author concludes that death is better than life.

Ecc 7:1 A good name is better than fine perfume, and the day of death better than the day of birth.

Ecc 7:2 It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart.

Ecc 7:3 Sorrow is better than laughter, because a sad face is good for the heart.

Ecc 7:4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure.

27. One thing all people share says the Preacher is an inability to understand God and His ways. Ecc 8:17

Ecc 8:17 then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all his efforts to search it out, man cannot discover its meaning. Even if a wise man claims he knows, he cannot really comprehend it.

28. Two things even an unbeliever can enjoy in time; a wife and a job.

Ecc 9:9 Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun-- all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun.

Ecc 9:10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.

29. If a fly one of the scourges of the East, falls into a vat of perfume and dies, its decaying body ruins all the perfume. So a little folly can degrade much of the good done by man. Ecc 10:1

Ecc 10:1 As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

30. Ecc 10:8-10 provides several general observations on the dangers of various activities, and therefore the need for prudence.

Ecc 10:8 Whoever digs a pit may fall into it; whoever breaks through a wall may be bitten by a snake.

Ecc 10:9 Whoever quarries stones may be injured by them; whoever splits logs may be endangered by them.

Ecc 10:10 If the ax is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed but skill will bring success.

31. The preacher urges men to remember their Creator while young and worry not about your old age years. Ecc 11:7-10

Ecc 11:7 Light is sweet, and it pleases the eyes to see the sun.

Ecc 11:8 However many years a man may live, let him enjoy them all. But let him remember the days of darkness, for they will be many. Everything to come is meaningless.

Ecc 11:9 Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment.

Ecc 11:10 So then, banish anxiety from your heart and cast off the troubles of your body, for youth and vigor are meaningless.

32. Ecc 12:1-5 would seem to be an allegory on the decay of old age and the approach of death.

32.1 The figures of the sun, the light, the moon, the stars, and the clouds depict old age as a storm that gathers and obscures the light and the heavenly bodies, so that there is no warmth or brightness, that is, no enjoyment of life.

Ecc 12:1 Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them"--

Ecc 12:2 before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain;

Ecc 12:3 when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim;

Ecc 12:4 when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when men rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint;

Ecc 12:5 when men are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags himself along and desire no longer is stirred. Then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets.

33. The purpose of his wisdom, says the Author, has been to communicate it to others. He has attempted to do this effectively and frankly.

Ecc 12:9 Not only was the Teacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs.

Ecc 12:10 The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true.

Ecc 12:11 The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails--given by one Shepherd.

Ecc 12:12 Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body.

Ecc 12:13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

Ecc 12:14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

End Lesson