

ECCLESIASTES: IS LIFE REALLY WORTH LIVING? (Intro to the Book)

...Life is a puzzle, especially to the modern man on the street. Man is made to feel as though he were a mere animal, yet everything within us cries out for a larger view of the entirety of life.

...Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes when he was an old man. (1:1) He was given the gift of wisdom from God and here delivers a sermon to the assembly. He is the "teacher" or "preacher." He searches for the KEY that unlocks the meaning of life. He looks at life with its seeming mysteries and contradictions, and wonders if the "endless toil" of existence is worth it. For, we live such a short life, and death is certain. Life appears to be VAIN. (1:2)

...Know that no book of Scripture has been so maligned and yet so misunderstood..."pessimistic, fatalist, and sad..."

THREE OBSERVATIONS AS SOLOMON SEARCHES FOR THE KEY THAT UNLOCKS FOR US THE PUZZLE OF LIFE.

...For life lived apart from God has no meaning, lacking rhyme or reason. Often it seems absurd.

I. The Book Itself Is One Sermon. Note A Few Things About It.

- A. The writing is a unit. It has an introduction and a conclusion. It is not a random collection...
 - 1. The introduction: Everything is without sense or meaning. (1:2)
 - 2. The conclusion: Fear God and keep His Commandments. (12:13)
- B. Six times he inserts a refrain, providing his major emphasis. This is like reoccurring notes in a symphony. It is not to be missed by us as he beautifully weaves it into his sermon.
 - 1. 2:24..."a man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction...work."
 - 2. 3:12-13..."know that there is nothing better for men to be happy...eat, drink and find..."
 - 3. 3:22..."nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work..."
 - 4. 5:18-20..."eat, drink, and find satisfaction in his toilsome labor...enjoy God's gifts..."
 - 5. 8:15..."commend the enjoyment of life...eat, drink, and be glad..."
 - 6. 9:7..."eat, drink with a joyful heart, enjoy life with your wife, work"

II. The Sermon's Premise: "All Is Meaningless." "Vanity." (v.1:2)

- A. By this, he does not mean that life is not worth living. Rather, he means, try as we will, we will never figure it out. He tells us how he searched for the key...but discovered that God alone is the keeper of that key and that He does not give that key to men and women.
 - 1. 3:11...God made us with "eternity." We are always trying to see the whole of life, its meaning. Yet, we will never know the end from the beginning.
 - 2. 7:14...When times are good be happy...bad...yet, a man cannot discover his future.
- B. Specific examples of the mystery(confusion) of life: "not the way it should be, but it happens!"
 - 1. 6:1-2...one can finally afford fine foods, but he cannot enjoy...teeth, indigestion.
 - 2. 9:11...the race is not to the swift. Occasionally the turtle wins...
 - 3. 2:14-16...Death, the thing that makes life most futile of all. Both the wise man and the fool die. "Something futile about that."
 - ...A young MD...killed while an old woman without her mind lives on in a nursing home.
 - ...A man spends his life building a business, but when he dies who knows what...
 - ...No matter how great you are, you great grandchildren will not even know your name.(To sense this, is to sense the meaninglessness of life.)
- C. Solomon searches nature, science, history, philosophy, and sensuality looking for the KEY. None!

III. The Solution: We Must "Look-Up." This Man Knows His God And Trusts Him.

- A. God is Sovereign. (3:11, 7:14)
 - ...Even though I cannot figure out the story line, does not mean there is not one. God...author!
 - ...Romans 8:28...At times when we can't make sense of life, we must trust His Sovereignty.
- B. God is Good. (3:12-13, 5:19) He gives us gifts to be enjoyed. Don't let the futility of life get in your way of enjoying life. Thank God for your work. It is a gift. Enjoy life. Enjoy your food, enjoy drink, enjoy sex with your wife. God is good! Live life with GUSTO.
- C. God is Just. (12:13) Enjoy life, amid its confusion, live it responsibly, for one day we will give an account of ourselves to Jesus Christ. "fear God and keep His commandments..."
 - ...In the midst of life's mysteries, we can trust His Sovereignty, enjoy His Goodness, and live before His Holiness. With this in mind, we can step where we cannot see and undergo what we cannot understand. So don't "give up" or "throw up," rather just keep "looking up!"

LESSONS FOR OUR LIVES: