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HOW ARE WE TO FIND ANY MEANING IN LIFE? (Ecclesiastes 1-2)

...Bob Dylan's old song, "Blowin' in the Wind," points out the mystery of life as we know it. He sings, "the answer is blowing in the wind" ...that is, life's meaning is unknowable and beyond us.

...Where do you look for meaning and purpose? Many make a mad pursuit of one thing after another. Education, success, getting a spouse, money, career, fame, and things are often sought after in hopes of giving meaning to...

...Solomon, begins his examination of life as we know it and tells us "it is empty and vain." (1:2) Men and women keep reaching for meaning and purpose, but will never grasp it "under the sun." But, there must be more!!!!

THREE OBSERVATIONS BY SOLOMON REMINDING US THAT WE WILL NEVER FIND MEANING APART FROM GOD.

...For life not centered on God is purposeless and meaningless. Without Him, nothing else can satisfy.

I. We Will Never Be Able To Discover Life's Meaning From Nature. (vv 4-11)

...For nature seems machine-like and permanent, while we come and go. This leads us to restlessness.

- A. Nature seems to perform endless cycles of the same thing every day. In contrast, we come, we live, we die, and go into the earth. Solomon notes 4 things: earth, sun, wind, and rivers...
 1. While generations come and go, the earth stands. Why should this be?
 2. Wasn't man made in God's image, yet he appears to be in a state of passing away.
- B. Evolution doesn't help. Ultimately, it only de-humanizes man. Man... a cosmic accident, a random by-product of the universe. If man wonders, "who am I?" Evolution answers, "You are nothing."
- C. Furthermore, nature is not kind! In many parts of the world, "if you limp, you're lunch."
...not only this, but nature does not reward goodness. Rather, it is impersonal and will consume...
- D. Solomon's point: If you look only at the world around us, you will never find a meaning for life.
- E. He tells, that God has "laid a heavy burden upon us." (v.13) This refers to the Fall.(Gen 3:16-19)
 1. Consider Adam: He had no philosophical problems in the Garden. He walked with God, he had absolute answers for creation...his dignity, the distinctiveness of his wife, he understood the place of animals, he knew why he was here...
 2. When Adam sinned, "the lights went out." His awareness of his place and purpose vanished. His children, (us), think we are all part of this machine searching... meaning.

II. We Will Never Be Deeply Satisfied With Life's Pleasures. (1:12-2:23)

...For these will always leave us empty, yearning for something else that will ultimately fulfill.

- A. Solomon pursues knowledge (intellectualism) for the meaning of life. (vv12-18)
...He studied philosophy, religion, history, science, etc...but none yielded the answers to life.
...Man's wisdom cannot understand or explain life. Rather, the more learning, the more grief.(18)
- B. Solomon engaged in pleasure seeking (Hedonism), but found this "wanting." He discovered that wealth and pleasure do not satisfy the human heart. After it is over, you must wake up and return to the real world.
- C. Solomon attempts to find purpose in materialism...in things. (4-11)
 1. He became wealthy...built great buildings and projects...had a harem(sex)...music.
 2. He engaged in every conceivable pleasure. All of this was "vanity." (v. 11)
- D. In fact, he tells that life seems so empty because death comes to all, and strips us of all the fruit of our labors. It does not matter whether you are wise or a fool. The grave swallows everyone. We will leave everything behind. We are all headed to a casket.
 1. All your stuff will be distributed to others...will they be fools with it?
 2. In a short time, no one will even remember your name.

...Man in himself, in his intellect, pleasures, & human religions, is grabbing at something beyond his reach!

III. We Will Only Find Life's Meaning In Our Relationship With God. (vv.24-26)

...For with Him, all of life and His other good gifts are to be gratefully received, used, and enjoyed!

- A. Solomon tells, the possession of the "blessings" and "goods" of life are a gift from God.
...all good things must be received and understood as coming from the hand of God if they are to be used properly and joyfully! "without Him, there is no finding of true enjoyment." (25)
- B. Also, men definitely do not have it within their ability to extract enjoyment from life.
- C. To find meaning for life, you must "please God." Hebrews 11:6 tells us how to do this.

LESSONS FOR OUR LIVES: