

THE FLORAL HEIGHTS INFORMER

www.floralheightschurchofchrist.org

09 March 2008
VOLUME 8; ISSUE 10

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A Divinely Revealed Approach to Life

An Overview of Ecclesiastes

Introduction:

The Hebrew word *Koheleth* was translated by the Greek Septuagint translation to Ecclesiastes which means “one who speaks in the assembly.” The English word “Preacher” is used throughout the text of the book in place of the Hebrew (*Koheleth*). The book sets out to answer the question found at 1:3, “*What profit hath man of all his labor wherein he labors under the sun?*”

Author and Date of Writing

Some believe the author to be anonymous. Keil and Delitzsch contend that the author is a man living in the Persian Empire (i.e., anywhere from 464 to 332 BC) in Palestine and dwelling near the temple of God (cf. Eccl. 4:17; 8:10). Some believe the author of Ecclesiastes to be one who merely claimed to be Solomon. Most believe; however, that the book was written by Solomon. The author of Ecclesiastes claims to be the “*son of David*” (Eccl. 1:1 and applied to Solomon at II Sam. 12:24). He is the “*king in Jerusalem*” (Eccl. 1:1 and applied to Solomon I Kings 1:43). The author of Ecclesiastes is one of “*great wisdom*” (Eccl. 1:16 and applied to Solomon at I Kings 3:5-15). Furthermore the author of Ecclesiastes was one of great wealth (Eccl. 1:16; 2:7-9 and applied to Solomon at I Kings 10:23) and a builder of great structures (Eccl. 2:4-11; I Kings 6 all; 9:17). It seems very clear that Solomon is the true author of this book and thereby dated between 970 and 930 BC.

Contents of Book

Solomon had set out to “*apply his heart to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven:*” (Eccl. 1:13; 8:9). Solomon wanted to know the “*reason*” for all things

Local News:

Welcome to all our visitors:

We pray that you will be edified by our service and that you will ask questions if things are not as you are accustomed to seeing. Please do come back at your every opportunity!

Mac McBroom had a massive heart attack this past Thursday afternoon. He was taken to the emergency room and an attempt to put a stint into his heart was made. At the time of this writing Mac remains at the United Regional Hospital (room 741) in a critical condition.

Deirdre Wilson continues to stay with her mother in Abilene. The latest prognosis is favorable for her survival.

Manuel Ruiz (the prisoner I have been studying with) will be up for parole in a couple of months. He asks for our prayers on his behalf. We just completed a study of the book of Titus and will be moving on to Philemon.

Adult Bible Studies:

Sunday mornings we are studying the book of James and Wednesday we are studying The Song of Solomon.

Continue to pray for our shut-ins:

Stella Davidson
696-1030 (Home)

Calvin York
692-0489 (Home).

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(Eccl. 7:25) and to “*Lay to my heart even to explore*” (Eccl. 9:1). His objective was to find the answer to the question posed at Ecclesiastes 1:3, “*What profit hath man of all his labor wherein he labors under the sun*” (see also Eccl. 3:9; 5:16). Man lives a life (some short and some long) (Eccl. 2:16; 3:2; 8:12-14; 11:8), labors for sustenance (Eccl. 2:11), experiences heartaches, sorrows, pain, and sickness (Eccl. 5:17; 7:4, 10), suffers oppressions (Eccl. 4:1ff), seeks out things such as wisdom (Eccl. 1:13), pleasure (Eccl. 2:1), and happiness (Eccl. 2:3). All these things occur in life yet Solomon’s quest is to answer the question of why and what profit can come of these things? The Preacher said, “*For what hath a man of all his labor, and of the striving of his heart, wherein he labors under the sun?*” (Eccl. 2:22 see also 3:9). Solomon eventually concludes that the endeavor of attempting to understand why things happens is itself a vain exercise because no man can know God’s providential ways (Eccl. 8:16-17). The book bears out the fact that the “*profit*” sought after is not earthly but rather eternal.

Ecclesiastes is a book that sets out to record Solomon’s observations in life. He has observed that some live good and others live evil yet good and bad things happen to all (i.e., there is no divine preferential treatment toward the righteous or discrimination against the unrighteous) (see Eccl. 9:1ff; 2:14; 8:12-13). Furthermore, the Preacher takes note that righteous men suffer as wrong doers and evil men live a peaceful life (Eccl. 8:14). The preacher has observed some “*evil*” things in life. That is, things that are unnatural, just not right, or do not seem fair and further identified as “*error*” at Eccl. 10:5. He considered it evil that a man may labor diligently all his life and gain wealth and wisdom yet when he dies his portion goes to a sloth and a fool (see Eccl. 2:21). Again, the preacher notes that it is an evil thing for a man to gain much riches only to have them taken away by an “*evil adventure*” so that he has nothing to leave his son (Eccl. 5:13-14). The Preacher considered it evil that a man comes into the world naked, works hard and gains much, yet then dies not being able to take anything with him (Eccl. 5:15-16). Then again Solomon considered it an evil thing to be blessed with riches yet die too soon to enjoy them (Eccl. 6:1-2). Furthermore the Preachers sees evil when the wicked are viewed with dignity while the rich sit in low places and princes walk rather than ride (Eccl. 10:5-7). Solomon observes the fact that a righteous man may find himself suffering serious sickness, early death, sorrows due to the loss of a loved one, an unfortunate event that causes him to loose his life’s savings and all simply because he is a man upon the earth. Such a one does not suffer because of evil or good but rather all events happen to all

walks of life (Eccl. 9:23). The point is that anything can happen to anyone at any given moment (Eccl. 9:2). The Preacher wants to know why that is.

These thoughts cause a man to contemplate the same question that Solomon poses. What profit is there in all of these events under the sun (Eccl. 1:3; 2:22; 3:9)? Ecclesiastes leaves its readers with a real picture of life. The rich suffer as do the poor. The righteous man experiences calamity just as the wicked. Solomon reveals to us that through all our experiences on earth God's providential hand is there (see Eccl. 9:1). The Lord is playing an active role in all of humanity's life (Eccl. 6:1-2). He has no preference, prejudice, or discrimination when it comes to allowing calamity and prosperity in a man's life (Eccl. 9:2, 11). Solomon reveals that there is no way for man to know what the hand of God will do next in one's life (Eccl. 7:14; 8:16-17; 11:5). Man cannot predict (Eccl. 7:10) nor change (Eccl. 7:13) God's providence. Solomon's advice for man is to thereby work hard upon this earth, even though a calamity may befall us, (Eccl. 11:6).

Though "*all is vanity*" and man cannot calculate or predict God's providence we can nonetheless understand that there is a purpose to all events in this life. Man is being proved while walking through this life (Eccl. 3:18; 8:14; I Pet. 1:6-7; James 1:2-3). Let all humanity know that as we experience calamity, adversity, wealth, happiness, love, and all that life throws at us God is watching our reactions and knows the very thoughts of our mind (see Deut. 31:21b; 32:18-19; Jer. 23:24-25). The wicked and foolish will experience great sorrows as a reaction to calamity because their hope is in this world (II Cor. 7:10). The Christian ought to say as Job, "*Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah*" (Job 1:21 see also II Cor. 4:16-18; Heb. 10:32-39). A secondary purpose found in the vain things of life is joy. Though all is vanity not all is without purpose (see Eccl. 3:1). God intends man to enjoy the blessings of this life while we are among the living (Eccl. 2:24; 3:12-13; 5:18-20; 8:15; 9:7-9).

Conclusion

Ecclesiastes gives us a panoramic view of life itself. We are born into this world and experience pleasures, heartaches, love, hatred, desires, wealth, and calamity. The entirety of life does not last long at all (James 4:14). When the end comes one may truly say that "*all is vanity*" (Eccl. 1:2; 2:17; 4:4; 9:9; 11:8; 12:8). The word vanity means to be worthless. Why would Solomon conclude that all things done under the sun are "vanity?" The book of Ecclesiastes positively infers that the profit the Preacher searches for and contemplates is **eternal value**. To attempt to gain some eternal value from any of the earthly things mentioned in this book is truly to grasp after the wind (Eccl. 1:14). He thereby concludes that the whole duty of man, while living this short and vain life, is to "*fear God and keep his commandments*" (Eccl. 12:13; see Deut. 5:29; 6:2; Rev. 14:6-7 as compared to Jn. 15:5-10). All of life is likened unto a race wherein man is proved by fiery trials (see I Cor. 9:24ff). Those with a "perfect" approach to life will patiently endure the calamity of life and grow stronger day by day (see Phil. 3:13-15; James 1:2-4). While God authorizes that there is "*no better thing under the sun than mirth*" (Eccl. 8:15) He also warns man to be mindful of judgment and eternity (Eccl. 3:16-17; 11:9; 12:14; Rev. 20:13). The message of Ecclesiastes is that there is no eternal profit in the things done under the sun; however, man should enjoy this life while being mindful of God's laws, eternity, and judgment. What will God see in you and where will you spend your eternal existence?