

Is It Worth It

A Look at Ecclesiastes

For just a little while in this lesson we are going to look at the book of Ecclesiastes. If you are at all familiar with this book you will know it to be the search for the meaning of life by the preacher, his results and ultimately, his conclusions. Solomon is universally accepted as the writer of the book, and that really emphasizes the things he has to say. Solomon had been blessed by God with all wisdom in all things. So when we read about the things that he engaged in while trying to find that elusive...



“Meaning of Life”

We are talking about the wisest man to ever live looking for these things, which makes his comment about this life even more poignant and interesting...

Eccl 1:2

1

2 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher,
"Vanity of vanities! All is vanity."

This term vanity comes from the Hebrew...

Hebel OT:1892

2

Means "breath; vanity; idol." Cognates of this noun occur in Syriac, late Aramaic, and Arabic. All but 4 of its 72 occurrences are in poetry (37 in Ecclesiastes).

There are various ways that the word is used in the Old Testament...

3

1) The word represents human "breath" as a transitory thing:

Job 7:16

16 "I loathe it; I would not live always: let me alone; for my days are vanity [literally, but a breath]".

4

2) Hebel means something meaningless and purposeless: As we saw in *Eccl 1:2*.

5

3) This word signifies an "idol," which is unsubstantial, worthless, and vain:

Deut 32:21

6

32 "They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities".

The author of the book identifies himself, in the Hebrew, as *Qohelet* (1:1-2; cf. 1:12; 7:27; 12:8-10).



Qoheleth OT:6953 קהלת (ko-heh'-leth);

feminine of active participle from OT:6950; is defined as an (female) assembler (i.e. lecturer): or in the abstract, preaching (used as a "nom de plume", Koheleth): It is translated variously as "The Teacher," NIV; "The Preacher," KJV; "The Leader of the Assembly,"



”HEAR THEN THE WORDS OF THE PREACHER”

Ecc 1:3-11

READ

- 3 What advantage does man have in all his work
Which he does under the sun?
- 4 A generation goes and a generation comes,
But the earth remains forever.
- 5 Also, the sun rises and the sun sets;
And hastening to its place it rises there again.
- 6 Blowing toward the south,
Then turning toward the north,
The wind continues swirling along;
And on its circular courses the wind returns.
- 7 All the rivers flow into the sea,
Yet the sea is not full.
To the place where the rivers flow,
There they flow again.
- 8 All things are wearisome;
Man is not able to tell it.
The eye is not satisfied with seeing,
Nor is the ear filled with hearing.
- 9 That which has been is that which will be,
And that which has been done is that which will be done.
So, there is nothing new under the sun.
- 10 Is there anything of which one might say,
"See this, it is new"?
Already it has existed for ages
Which were before us.
- 11 There is no remembrance of earlier things;
And also of the later things which will occur,
There will be for them no remembrance
Among those who will come later still.

The writer at this point doesn't seem too optimistic about this life; in fact, he seems almost despondent at the conclusions he has reached. Why bother trying to do anything, why create, why work, why make an effort, when anything and everything that might result means nothing to you in the long run? The preacher is saying that the world will continue on its ponderous journey regardless of what man might accomplish in his life. Whatever man does, whatever he invents, whatever he accomplishes becomes minuscule in relationship to the world's journey through the universe. The world, the universe, is the same today as it was yesterday and will be tomorrow.

We might look at the wonderful things and achievements that man has done and say...



“Look at us, aren't we special!”

Yet the world takes no notice and beyond that the writer points out that even man takes very little notice. Think about the great achievements of the world. Technology, advancements in medicine, improvement of living conditions, but, can you name the person who invented the computer or the person who invented the wheel? Man has devised awards to honor those who have done some great thing, Westinghouse Prize, the Nobel Peace Prize. Most people can't even name one. Man's life is short and his accomplishments, however great they might be, are soon surpassed

by the next man's and the next man's, to the end that however awesome the first deed may have been, the resulting events reduce the first to at best, a pleasant memory. So, the Preacher says why bother, since we are here so fleetingly, and our accomplishments so soon forgotten, why bother? What benefit is there for one who invents or comes up with the technology.

When reading the book it becomes easy to see the Preachers search for the meaning of life, or as stated by Wiersbe, where is the value of life. Is all the frustration, anxiety or loss of love worth what we get back in this life? That truly becomes the question at the center of this discussion, what benefit is there in this life?

Wiersbe's Commentary states the theme of Ecclesiastes as given in 1:1-3 as,



"Is life really worth living?"

The Bible Commentary states...



"There can be little doubt about the theme of Ecclesiastes; it is announced both at the beginning (1:2) and the end (12:8) of the book and is often echoed throughout (e.g., 1:14; 2:11,17,26; etc.). The author ("the Teacher") declared that everything is "meaningless" or "vanity".

Solomon looks at life with its seeming contradictions and mysteries, and he wonders if the "endless toil" of existence is worth it. People toil all their lives, then die, and somebody less worthy inherits their wealth and wastes it. Solomon comes to the conclusion that the best thing to do is to enjoy the blessings of God today, fear God, and keep His Word. Of course, with the added light of the NT we know that "our labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor 15:58).

Lets look at some of the things that Solomon searched while looking for his answers;

Toil

Career

7

Ecc 1:14

14 I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind.

Ecc 2:10-11

11 Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun.

Wisdom

Learning

8

Ecc 2:14-15

15 Then I said to myself, "As is the fate of the fool, it will also befall me. Why then have I been extremely wise?" So I said to myself, "This too is vanity."

Righteousness

Self Righteousness

9

Ecc 8:13-15

14 There is futility which is done on the earth, that is, there are righteous men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked. On the other hand, there are evil men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I say that this too is futility. **15** So I commended pleasure, for there is nothing good for a man under the sun except to eat and to

drink and to be merry, and this will stand by him in his toils throughout the days of his life which God has given him under the sun.

Wealth

Greed

10

Eccl 5:10-11

10 He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity.

Eccl 6:2

11

2 a man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor so that his soul lacks nothing of all that he desires, but God has not empowered him to eat from them, for a foreigner enjoys them. This is vanity and a severe affliction

Pleasure

Lust

12

Eccl 2:1-2

1 I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself." And behold, it too was futility. **2** I said of laughter, "It is madness," and of pleasure, "What does it accomplish?"

Youth and Vigor

The Good Old Days

13

Eccl 11:10

10 So, remove vexation from your heart and put away pain from your body, because childhood and the prime of life are fleeting.

Life

Now

14

Eccl 6:11-12

12 For who knows what is good for a man during his lifetime, during the few years of his futile life? He will spend them like a shadow. For who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun?

Eccl 9:9

15

9 Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life, and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun.

Eccl 3:2-8

READ

2 A time to give birth, and a time to die;
A time to plant, and a time to uproot what is planted.
3 A time to kill, and a time to heal;
A time to tear down, and a time to build up.
4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
A time to mourn, and a time to dance.
5 A time to throw stones, and a time to gather stones;
A time to embrace, and a time to shun embracing.
6 A time to search, and a time to give up as lost;
A time to keep, and a time to throw away.

7 A time to tear apart, and a time to sew together;
A time to be silent, and a time to speak.
8 A time to love, and a time to hate;
A time for war, and a time for peace.

In one sense the picture that Solomon paints in Ecclesiastes can be very depressing, if not understood in the correct context. Solomon is not addressing the accomplishments that man has done, the building of monumental structures, the curing of diseases, or the invention of technology. These things are not under consideration, though he does use these things to illustrate his point. The point is that regardless of the great accomplishment of any individual, those accomplishments do absolutely nothing to benefit someone after this life is over. That is the context of Solomon's statements. What is it in this life that gives meaning to it? More important, what is it in this life that will benefit man in the next?

There is a time for all things of this life, but friends, we need to recognize that there must be a time, in this life, to prepare for the next. That is what the message Solomon is trying to get across is all about. There is an emptiness in the life of man that not everyone recognizes. Christ speaks to this in...

Luke 8:15

16

15 But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.

People who have good hearts and are honest with themselves and with the Word of God, come to an understanding, of who they truly are and what they truly need. Solomon is saying that if we are truly honest with ourselves we will come to the same conclusion that he arrived at...

Eccl 12:13-14

17

13 The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. 14 For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

This is man's duty, his whole duty, nothing else in this world can ever save a man from his sons.

So the only question we must answer to ourselves but more importantly to God...

18

Is It Worth It

Is the life we have chosen to live worthy of the grace and mercy God offers through Christ?