

SEPTEMBER 4

Ecclesiastes 7-9

Get ready for another shock treatment, compliments of the wisest man on earth. When you read what Solomon says today it shocks you, realizing that at one time this man loved God and it says that God loved him. (2 Sam. 12:24) Much of what we'll read will sound like the book of Job, but darker. Job was grieving the loss of his children, his life and his friends. Even more disturbing to Job was not understanding why God had allowed this to happen to him. Solomon is in greater danger. He *thinks* he knows what's going on. He has sunk deeply into the darkness of his own soul. That is a pretty bad place to be. Scripture shows us that he never found a friend to pull him out of this and God allowed him to stay like this. That is an interesting thought when you consider what God did to King Manasseh and how Manasseh turned to God.

Ecclesiastes 7

Vs. 1-13 Some of these are wisdom like in Proverbs, and a couple of these observations are just dark.

Vs. 4-5 These are wise advice.

V. 10 This is something to think about as each of us gets older. It is also good for congregations to think about. The best days for us as disciples always lie before us.

V. 14 This is a very interesting thought that is dark, but it has some truth to it. From this point on, notice that it really bothered Solomon that he didn't know what God was doing or that he didn't know the future.

Vs. 15-18 Again, this is very much like Job. It seems like there is a little truth here and a little darkness. We can all agree with v. 18.

Vs. 19-24 It seems that Solomon is beginning to say that in his wisdom he discovered that all men were depraved.

Vs. 25-26 Solomon is probably referring to some of his wives.

Vs. 27-28 I think that Solomon was gathering wives in disobedience to the Word and got what he wanted. I don't think godliness was the first thing Solomon was looking for as he considered who to add to his harem.

You notice that Solomon was not the guy who wrote about the Virtuous Woman at the end of Proverbs.

V. 29 If Solomon would have read Genesis 3, he would have known about depravity without having to ruin himself to discover it. Solomon could have written, "The Heart of Darkness;" in fact, that's what he's doing.

Ecclesiastes 8

As you read this chapter, the paragraphs are laid out for you, so try to title the paragraphs. What issues or observations is Solomon stating?

Vs. 1-9 It seems that Solomon is attesting to the wisdom of the wise and the power of the king; but then in vs. 6-8 he is saying that in spite of wisdom and power, man is limited. Man bears the weight of his trouble. He doesn't know the future and he cannot keep from dying.

Vs. 10-13 This seems to be saying that the prosperity of the wicked causes men to prefer evil. Still Solomon held that those who feared God came out better.

Vs. 14-15 Like Job, Solomon couldn't figure out the disparity of how the wicked and the righteous end up. Unlike Job, Solomon's answer was just to be happy with what the Lord gives

you, *to eat and drink and be joyful*. Again, if this is saying to be content and enjoy the Lord's provision without having to have all the answers, I agree. I think Solomon is more on the side of "eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

Vs. 16-17 This statement contains truth. We shouldn't try to understand everything. We should trust God because He is wise beyond our understanding. But I sense that to Solomon's darkened heart, this was a deep frustration to him and it made him want to give up seeking God.

Ecclesiastes 9

Vs. 1-6 This is an important summary statement on chapter 8. Notice the mentions of love and hate in v. 1 and v. 6. Since we just read Job, it seems that Solomon was really depressed that life ended in death, and that the same fate came to both the wicked and the righteous. He couldn't see any farther; and so it seems, he questioned why it was better to be wise.

Vs. 7-10 This was Solomon's grand conclusion. It sort of reads again like, "let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die." It doesn't mean that there isn't some wisdom here, but because Solomon couldn't see there was life after death, he valued only that which could be done on earth. And since nothing on earth lasted, this contentment was more like resolving to give in to the futility of life on earth and just enjoy.

Vs. 11-12 This is "What's the sense?" based on the fickleness of life and events. Notice that Solomon mentions again that man cannot know. This really upset him. For Job, the issue was that man could know God. That saved Job. Job kept appealing to God for an answer. Solomon, wise as he was, didn't think he needed anything but his wisdom.

Vs. 13-16 This is "What's the sense?" based on the fickleness of men.

Vs. 17-18 These verses are a contrast to v. 1 and end on a dark, but true, note.

For us as disciples, isn't it great to know the Lord? Knowing Jesus is enough, especially living in a fallen world and lugging around this body of death. We are motivated by His love and we follow with a purpose that defies all the damage this world may have inflicted on us. We know what we need to do every day in the harvest, and staying in the Word reminds us of His love, our mission and our sure hope of being made new in Him forever.

A fruitful, but battered, disciple shared his wisdom with a younger disciple. It is a little more positive than what Solomon has to say and it reflects reality in the harvest.

But godliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. ⁹But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. ¹¹But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. ¹²Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, ¹⁴to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, ¹⁶who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. ¹⁷As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. (1 Tim. 6:6-17)

2 Corinthians 7:8-16

Paul is still debriefing himself and the Corinthians on the events that took place. He is showing God's purpose in all that happened. Look for words that repeat. This is a good section describing the heart of working through conflicts, and the purpose of God in chastening us and others.

Vs. 8-10 This was hard on Paul. It was hard on the Corinthians.

V. 10 The difference between depression and feeling grieved because of our sin is that the love of God is never forgotten when we are grieved in Him. Because of His love, we repent and are restored. Depression mis-understands God's power and sovereignty, and it focuses us on us, that we're stupid and disobedient and worthless. Paul was a violent persecutor of the church and responsible for the murders and imprisonments of men and women who loved Christ. He destroyed families. Paul never forgot this, but the love of Christ and the sovereignty of God moved him to repentance and service, not depression.

Vs. 11-12 Why does God allow conflict? Why does He let us, or others, melt down? To show us something and to reveal something about ourselves and about others. Difficulties, even conflicts, show us how He can use all things for His purposes.

Vs. 13-16 Paul, again, is affirming his love to them, and he is grateful and happy with the happy ending. God also used this situation as a good lesson for Titus in following Christ in the harvest.

Psalm 48

I think this psalm, too, was written in the afterglow of God destroying the Assyrian army that came against Jerusalem when Hezekiah was king. As I read a psalm like this, in the back of my mind I know that Jerusalem has been destroyed several times and today there is no temple. If this psalm is about the pride of having a great city or a great worship structure, then that was all, as Solomon would say, vanity.

So, let's assume that this symbolizes something that is still true and important to anyone who loves the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

V. 1 What shows God's greatness and shows He is worthy of praise?

V. 2 What do we point to that is beautiful and majestic, where God is found?

V. 3 What is it about God that shows what a secure refuge He is?

Vs. 4-7 What is it about God that confounds and humiliates all of the pride of man?

V. 8 What have we heard and seen and shows a hope that God has established forever?

V. 9 What makes you think of God's *steadfast love*?

V. 10 What praise of God will reach *the ends of the earth*? When you think of God's *right hand*, do you think of something/someone who is righteous?

Vs. 11-14 What one thing gives us joy, is our dwelling place, and *will guide us forever*? We could all answer this a little differently. Is it a place where you first found Jesus and learned of His love? Or maybe it is Jesus Himself.

Proverbs 22:17-19

Up to this point, all of the proverbs have been written by Solomon. The rest of Proverbs will be written by others, some of whom are named and others who are not.

These verses are reminiscent of those that begin the book of Proverbs. They are a call to the reader (or hearer) to incline their hearts and apply what they hear. Unlike the opening words of Proverbs in chapter 1, here there is a very strong assertion that the result of this inclining and applying will be to move the listener to put complete trust in the Lord.

We should notice and be warned that the Solomon who is writing this in Proverbs is very different from the Solomon we read today in Ecclesiastes. Wisdom tells us that we need to be in the Word at Jesus' feet every day.