

SEPTEMBER 5

Ecclesiastes 10-12

Our last day in Ecclesiastes, the dark diary of Solomon. As you finish this book you'll probably need to increase your endorphins by eating large amounts of chocolate, or by hooking yourself up to a tank of laughing gas.

Ecclesiastes 10

There are a lot of good "sayings" and good advice. Which ones speak to you? I like vs. 4, 10, and 17-20.

Vs. 1-4 I knew a guy in college who wrote a song to v. 1. It didn't make the charts, but it made everyone in the room laugh. The rest seems like good advice from the Lord.

Vs. 5-7 Solomon was taken up with the unfairness of seeing the wrong persons being given position or recognition. He didn't understand why God allowed such things. God is wise, so why would a wise God allow the unwise to rule?

Vs. 8-15 It could be that Solomon added these thoughts to say that although the wrong person was ruling, his foolishness would still catch up with him and there would be some sense of justice.

Vs. 16-17 This section, too, seems to reflect back on the thought of the wrong persons ruling.

Vs. 18-20 These are like three missiles directed at life under a ruler who doesn't belong in office. First, his foolishness will become obvious. Second, stay unaffected and happy. Third, watch your mouth. I wish I had learned to heed v. 20 when I was about 20.

Ecclesiastes 11

Vs. 1-6 These verses seem to talk about investing and work and have one general motto, "Just do it." It is interesting that as Solomon talks about God, there seems to be a sense of regret and confusion.

Vs. 7-10 I think these verses on youth are a part of the entire thought that is in the next chapter. Basically, Solomon is saying one should enjoy youth; but it is fleeting, and, in Solomon's mind, meaningless.

Ecclesiastes 12

V. 1 ...and remember your creator in your youth, because you will get old and wrecked.

Vs. 2-7 This is Solomon's poetic description of being wrecked by old age.

V. 8 Solomon's version of "bah, humbug!" I'll bet Paul didn't go out like this.

Vs. 9-12 I wonder if this is what they put on his tombstone. I think Solomon didn't spend enough time in the right book.

And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. ¹⁹And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, ²⁰that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel. (Deut. 17:18-20)

Vs. 13-14 This is all true, but still spoken from the dark heart of a former follower who got lost on earth. As they say, "a word to the wise ought to be sufficient." We are wise if we love the Lord, live in His Word and follow Him in the harvest, reaching the lost and making disciples,

who make disciples. Where Solomon is now, I know he now understands that what we are doing as disciples is wisdom and blessing, and I'll bet he wishes he had done that too.

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

This section today has to do with the offering for the poor among the churches in Jerusalem. Apparently there was a famine in Jerusalem. Corinth was one of the first churches to get behind this need (v. 11), but got stopped by something. What Paul is asking here is not that they should chip in, but that they should complete what they started. This all has to do with the conflict within the church and the presence of these false apostles. In the next chapters we'll see that these super-apostles were demanding to be paid by the church. As a point against the criticism of these false teachers, Paul never took any financial help from Corinth. This conflict goes back to 1 Corinthians 9, and those guys probably stopped the church from doing what Paul suggested in 1 Corinthians 16.

Vs. 1-5 The churches of Philippi, Berea and Thessalonica all contributed in spite of their affliction, because of their love for Christ and joy in knowing Him.

V. 5 Note that Paul is letting the Corinthians know this was the work of the Spirit and a response of love rather than apostolic pressure.

Vs. 6-7 It seems that Paul is saying that in the same way they knew that the Spirit was among them through all the gifts they had received, they should also prove the Spirit's power by allowing Him to help them finish what they had begun.

Vs. 8-9 So, what was the proof of their genuine love for Christ? It was their imitating Christ as His disciples. Those first words of v. 9, *for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus*, are so simple, and yet they are spirit and life. I don't think we are meant to ever recover from His grace. Paul had a unique and tender understanding of the grace of Jesus. Here Paul is seeking to re-open the hearts of these people with the reminder of our Lord's grace. In 2 Timothy Paul reminded Timothy of His grace, to strengthen Timothy to follow in spite of the fear of death. Nero's madness was heating up against the church and was about to send Paul into the presence of Christ when Paul wrote, *You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus*. (2 Tim. 2:1) Our strength is in the grace of our Lord. If we know His grace, it gives us amazing strength.

Vs. 10-12 The benefit was not just finishing what they had begun, but they had been motivated out of a heart of love. The benefit was in giving full expression to the heart of Christ by imitating Christ.

Vs. 13-15 I wonder if this was a concern in Corinth.

What I appreciate so much about God's wisdom in the gospel and in salvation is that our response to Christ has nothing to do with position, culture, or education. The poorest, most childlike person on earth has as much (if not more) of an opportunity of grasping Christ as anyone has. How do we grasp and embrace the grace of our Lord? It is all in our hunger for Him and in our thanks for His salvation. What an amazing equalizer. How fair and just is the Father in hiding this from the wise and understanding and revealing it to babes. This morning I was reading about Jesus teaching His disciples, *Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven*. (Matt.18:3) Following Christ is very simple if you have the right heart in the harvest. We all have Bibles, but the hungry live in the Word because it brings them close to the heart and face of our Savior. Jesus is available for us all, but the hungry would rather starve than eat a meal without being next to Him.

Psalm 49

It is very fitting to have this psalm on the day we finish Ecclesiastes. This sounds like Solomon and deals with some of the same observations Solomon made in his darkness. The difference is

the question and the answer. Unlike Solomon's words, there is hope here. The question is why should we fear in times of trouble. The answer is that God is in control and has determined a time of judgment for the proud. It seems that this could have been written, like several of the preceding psalms, after the salvation of Jerusalem in 2 Kings 18 & 19.

Vs. 1-4 This song and its message are for all nations. All the nations would have been interested after the way God delivered Jerusalem and a lot of other nations, by humbling the Assyrians.

Vs. 5-6 The riddle is in v. 5 and has to do with the pride of the rich and powerful.

Vs. 7-9 Man cannot ransom his own life from God. This suggests God's absolute power and that only God could do this. God solved the riddle of redemption on the cross. This also sounds like what Jesus taught His disciples in Matthew 16:26, *For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?*

Vs. 10-12 This is what happens to those who live life on earth only for themselves. This is how Solomon was seeing life because he had lost his contact with the Lord. Verse 12 has a subtle tone of irony and judgment since we were made in the image of God. But if we try, we can make ourselves like the animals.

Vs. 13-14 This will be the end of everyone who disregards God.

V. 15 Job had this hope living in him, helping him, giving him hope. Solomon couldn't see anything but life on earth and he faded into despair. Our strength and hope are in our redemption. I was reading this morning in Romans 6:5, *For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.* We certainly shall. Praise God!

Vs. 16-20 Both men and nations come and go. There is wealth and power and abuse, but what happens before God is what really matters. These 70 years on earth do not occupy the space of a door's thickness in the entire vastness of eternity. These are vital years because in them we decide where we will spend eternity, but once we know Christ, these years take on an entirely different meaning for us. These are the years that we join our Savior in the harvest, striving on this lost planet to rescue the perishing and make disciples, who make disciples. The joy and glory of eternity, for all eternity, will begin after we are led out of the harvest over that thin, dark threshold into light.

What kind of worship song was this? I wonder if it had a good beat. But all things considered, the truth stated here is something we need to keep before our eyes as we follow Christ in the harvest.

Proverbs 22:20-21

These are introductory words for the next batch of proverbs. This makes me think of John 8:32, *you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.* Truth frees us to know and follow our Lord.