

Ecclesiastes 1

Finish Well

I. Problem of Emptiness

1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

- **Preacher:** Heb. *qoheleth* Lit. preacher, public speaker, speaker in an assembly
- 2 Clues the author is Solomon
 1. Son of David
 2. King of Jerusalem

2 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher; "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

- **Ecclesiastes Key Word: Vanity** Heb. vapor, breath, emptiness. lit. gentle breeze

Job 7:16 ... my days are but a breath.

James 4:14 [Life is]... a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.

- **Brevity of Life**

Psalms 90:10 [Moses] The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

- Life is short, difficult and empty

3 What profit has a man from all his labor In which he toils under the sun?

What **profit** [Advantage, Gain] is there in all our **labor** [Mischievous, Misery, Travail]?

Paraphrase: Why do we always feel like we're spinning my wheels and going nowhere?

- Key Word: Vanity; Emptiness
- **Key Phrase: Under the Sun** ; i.e. Earthly, godless and temporal perspective
- No Hope/No Joy/No Peace

God formed us for His pleasure, and so formed us that we as well as He can in divine communion enjoy the sweet and mysterious mingling of kindred personalities. He meant us to see Him and live with Him and draw our life from His smile. But we have been guilty of that "foul revolt" of which Milton speaks when describing the rebellion of Satan and his hosts. We have broken with God. We have ceased to obey Him or love Him ...and in guilt and fear have fled as far as possible from His Presence. [Tozer]

4 One generation passes away, and another generation comes; But the earth abides forever. 5 The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, And hastens to the place where it arose. 6 The wind goes toward the south, And turns around to the north; The wind whirls about continually, And comes again on its circuit. 7 All the rivers run into the sea, Yet the sea is not full; To the place from which the rivers come, There they return again.

- **Earth and its God-ordained systems** remain even as we come and go:

1. **Sun** rises/sets/rises again
2. **Wind** travels in a circuit and starts again
3. **Rivers** run into the sea which evaporates and forms clouds that give rain and fill rivers which again flow into the sea

Earth remains but generations of men are born and die

- **Redwood Trees:** Up to 2,000 years. Seen 20 generations come and go
- **Under the Sun Perspective:** Glass half empty? Monotonous, Tedious, Wearisome?

8 All things are full of labor; Man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, Nor the ear filled with hearing.

- Senses desire more and more; to see more, hear more, feel more.
- **Consumed by business:**
 1. TV
 2. Movies
 3. Internet
 4. Video Games
 5. Cell phones
- Always feeding but never full?

Talking with a friend on a park bench?

9 That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is **nothing new under the sun**. 10 Is there anything of which it may be said, "See, this is new"? It has already been in ancient times before us.

- **Nothing new under the sun?**

This does not mean new things aren't created... rather that there are no new reasons for creating things; i.e. to stay busy in our Mischievousness, Misery, Travail [NJC]

11 There is no remembrance of former things, Nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come By those who will come after.

- Nobody today remembers the past; Nobody in the future will remember today

SUMMARY: Problem of Emptiness

1. Everything attempt "under the sun" leaves us empty
2. Earth continues even as generations pass away
3. Everything has been tried yet there is no satisfaction

II. Inspector Solomon: Journal Under the Sun

12 I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. 13 And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven...

- **King Solomon of Israel** in Jerusalem: Here the Preacher

1. **Set my heart:** Lit. to devote, consecrate, dedicate
2. **Seek/Search out:** Lit. to spy out, explore
3. **By Wisdom:** Knowledge applied

Mission: *Devote myself to wisdom and apprehend all that is done by man on Earth*

Solomon writes a Diary/Scientific Journal and shares it with us!

12b ...this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised.

- **Burdensome task:** Lit Sore task; bad, disagreeable, malignant

What is the burden given by God; An innate desire to ask...WHY?

- That man might be **exercised?** Lit. Occupied, busied, afflicted with!

14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind.

- I have seen [studied/inspected] ALL the works of man

**Solomon the Inspector's Report:
All is vanity...All is grasping after the wind.... Waste of time**

15 What is crooked cannot be made straight, And what is lacking cannot be numbered.

- **Under the Sun Journal Entry:**
 1. What is crooked will always be crooked
 2. What is broken will always be in broken

16 I communed with my heart, saying, "Look, I have attained greatness, and have gained more wisdom than all who were before me in Jerusalem. My heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge."

- **Spoke to my heart?** Heb. *lāv* inner man. Secondary; seat of emotions and passions

Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart [natural mind led by emotion/fleshly desires] is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?"

Matthew 15:18 ...those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. 20 These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."

Solomon spoke to his heart and got bad advice!

17 And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly...

- **Set my heart;** i.e. Determined in his innermost being to pursue with wisdom
 1. **Madness:** Root word is pride, flash forth light, boast

2. **Folly:** Foolishness [only found in Ecc.] Lit. to turn into foolishness

Heart led Cocktail: Madness and Folly led by wisdom

Find out what madness and folly are and dive in!

Psalm 14:1 and 53:1 [David] The fool [one given to folly] has said in his heart, **"There is no God."**

- **Fool:** One who willingly denies God's existence, power, judgment

Romans 1:18... the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

- **Today:** World of fools who believe they are wise...
- **Unlike Solomon not led by Wisdom...**

17b... I perceived that this [Madness/Folly] also is grasping for the wind.

- Playing the fool didn't work

18 For in much wisdom is much grief, And he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

- In much wisdom is much grief? In much knowledge is much sorrow?
- Ignorance is bliss?

Knowledge and Wisdom without God as the Goal is emptiness...

SUMMARY: Journal "Under the Sun"

Journal Entry: What is crooked will always be crooked/ What is broken will always be in broken? **God has another plan...Eternal Plan**

Matthews 19:26 ... "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Luke 3:4 "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight.⁵ Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The **crooked places shall be made straight** And the rough ways smooth;⁶ And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"