

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES (July 14, 2024)

FOR PERSONAL OR GROUP STUDY

For the next four weeks we turn our attention to the Old Testament (the story of God at work in this world before the arrival of Jesus). Our particular focus, the book of Ecclesiastes. This Old Testament book puts into words the sense I have that all I have, all I could have, is not, would not be, enough. No matter what I achieve, how much I am loved, all the pleasure I experience, something is still missing. The writer is a person of incredible wisdom, wealth, position, and power. He did not hold back in his pursuit of pleasure. Still, he found hollowness not wholeness, longing rather than satisfaction. How can that be? He's done everything that promised him happiness, everything, and still there was an emptiness in his heart and soul. What if nothing in this world can fill our deepest longings? That's what Christian faith claims. That's why Jesus came. That's what the writer of Ecclesiastes discovered. We can discover that too.

Summer Series Ecclesiastes: Wisdom is Vapor (Ecclesiastes 1) ESV

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

² ***Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.*** ³ What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?

⁴ A generation goes, and a generation comes,
but the earth remains forever.

⁵ The sun rises, and the sun goes down,
and hastens to the place where it rises.

⁶ The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north;
around and around goes the wind,
and on its circuits the wind returns.

⁷ All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full;
to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again.

⁸ All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it;
the eye is not satisfied with seeing,
nor the ear filled with hearing.

⁹ What has been is what will be,
and what has been done is what will be done,
and there is nothing new under the sun.

¹⁰ Is there a thing of which it is said,
'See, this is new'?

It has been already in the ages before us.

¹¹ There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after.

¹² I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. ¹³ And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by ***wisdom*** all that is done under heaven. It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. ¹⁴ I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, ***all is vanity and a striving after wind.***

¹⁵ What is crooked cannot be made straight,
and what is lacking cannot be counted.

¹⁶ I said in my heart, "I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge." ¹⁷ And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind.

¹⁸ For in much wisdom is much vexation,
and ***he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.***"

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. What does this writer say about life? vv. 2 and 14
2. What does he say about "wisdom"? v. 18

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

3. What does, "the eye is not satisfied with seeing" mean? v.8
4. What does, "a striving after wind" mean? v.17

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

5. Who is the wealthiest person you know? The smartest? The person who has pursued every pleasure? Are they "whole"?
6. What are things that promise us (in the USA) wholeness?
7. What is the one thing you are most drawn to for satisfaction?
8. When you take time to honestly reflect on your life ... do you find what the writer of Ecclesiastes found? Or, have you found something the writer of Ecclesiastes did not find? Discuss.
9. Do you believe Jesus offers what nothing else can? Explain.
10. What are you currently pursuing to fill your deepest longings?
11. Take time to re-write verse 1-10 in your own words.

As you spend time praying, remember that prayer is meant to be a natural part of your day. Prayer is a conversation: talking to God and listening to God. Ask God to help you honestly evaluate your life, and what you are pursuing to find satisfaction. He will help you because He loves you.