

“DISCOVERING THE UNREAD BESTSELLER”

Week 18: Sunday, March 25, 2012

ECCLESIASTES – “IT’S _____ ABOUT _____”

BACKGROUND & TITLE

The Hebrew title, “_____” is a rare word found only in the Book of Ecclesiastes. It comes from a word meaning - “_____”; in fact, it’s talking about a “_____” or “_____”. The Septuagint used the Greek word “_____” as its title for the Book. Derived from the word “ekklesia” (meaning “assembly, congregation or church”) the title again (in the Greek) can simply be taken to mean - “_____ / _____”.

AUTHORSHIP

It is commonly believed and accepted that _____ authored this Book. Within the Book, the author refers to himself as “the son of _____” (Ecclesiastes 1:1) and then later on (in Ecclesiastes 1:12) as “_____ over _____ in Jerusalem”. Solomon’s extensive wisdom; his accomplishments, and his immense wealth (all of which were God-given) give further credence to his work. Outside the Book, _____ tradition also points to Solomon as author, but it also suggests that the text may have undergone some later editing by _____ or possibly _____.

SNAPSHOT OF THE BOOK

The Book of Ecclesiastes describes Solomon’s _____ for meaning, purpose and satisfaction in life. The Book divides into three different sections - (1) the _____ that _____ is _____ - (Ecclesiastes 1:1-11); (2) the _____ that everything is meaningless (Ecclesiastes 1:12-6:12); and, (3) the _____ or direction on how we should be living in a world filled with _____ pursuits and meaninglessness (Ecclesiastes 7:1-12:14). That last section is important because the Preacher/Teacher ultimately sees the emptiness and futility of all the stuff people typically strive for _____ from God – p_____ – p_____ – p_____ - and p_____. The word “_____” appears 36 times in the NIV, all in reference to things we try and substitute for God. Simply put, all the earthly goals and ambitions (when pursued as a means in-and-of-themselves) ultimately result in dissatisfaction and a sense of being unfulfilled. While the Book of Proverbs describes how life would be if every person on this planet acted fairly, the Book of Ecclesiastes describes what actually _____ in our fallen, _____ and imperfect world.

That expression “_____” is used 28 times in the NIV and refers to life on a _____ plane. It is here (without any connection to God) that life has no meaning. While the Book as a whole points out negative themes in life, it never suggests approaching those themes with an attitude of _____ (or even _____). Solomon concludes that God is the ultimate answer to all of life’s uncertainties. That doesn’t mean that God affords us with answers we can always understand (in fact on many occasions) the opposite is true. But in cases where human reasoning can’t fathom or understand how/why certain things occur, we can overcome the “meaningless” of these things by looking to a God who is _____ and always _____. Solomon concludes that wisdom (in its truest sense) involves looking at life as God sees life (Philippians 3:20). True wisdom means trusting in Him at all times, because ultimately, it is God’s Sovereignty over everything that matters. Life should be viewed as a _____ from above and it should be enjoyed as much as possible, regardless of how we feel, what we confront or have to go through (Ecclesiastes 2:24-26; 3:12-13,22; 5:18-20; 8:15; 9:7-10; 11:8-9). Only when the Preacher considered life from God’s perspective “_____” (the “_____” versus “horizontal” plane as referenced in Ecclesiastes 1:13 and 3:1) can _____ and _____ be achieved.

THE PURPOSE OF ECCLESIASTES IN THE BIBLE

The Book of Ecclesiastes addresses a number of important subjects. From a _____ perspective, it speaks about our _____ (Ecclesiastes 7:20); it speaks about the reality of “_____” - (Ecclesiastes 8:8); it speaks about our _____ (Ecclesiastes 9:7-10 and 12:13); and on the flipside, it speaks about our “_____” immortality (Ecclesiastes 3:11 and 12:7). From a _____ perspective, the Book speaks about God’s _____ and involvement in life (Ecclesiastes 3:14 and 5:2); it speaks about God’s _____ and power (Ecclesiastes 6:2, 7:13 and 9:1); it speaks about God’s ultimate _____ (Ecclesiastes 12:14). The Book uses the exclusive name of _____ (“God”) some 41 times rather than _____ (“LORD”) to place an emphasis on the “_____ / _____” relationship rather than on the

“Redeemer/redeemed” relationship that would later come to light. Thus Solomon’s concludes that we are to _____ God and keep His _____.

THE COMMON THREAD OF JESUS

The Book of Ecclesiastes gives a comparative account of life, concluding that life without God is a life filled with endless pursuits, all in an effort to “_____ His _____”. It was the 17th Century French philosopher mathematician and physicist Blaise Pascal who would later say – “*There is a God shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus*”. Solomon wrote that God has made everything beautiful in its time and that He has set “_____” in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Solomon’s reference to words given by the one _____ (as seen in Ecclesiastes 12:11) are fulfilled in the New Testament with the coming of _____. As our shepherd, it is _____ who saves a person and who enters our heart so that we can discover true _____, _____ and _____ in life (John 10).

LIFE LESSONS FROM ECCLESIASTES TO APPLY IN OUR LIVES TODAY

THOUGHTS AND QUESTIONS TO PONDER

QUESTION 1

Do you detect a sense of “_____” in our world today?
Do you see people (perhaps this is you) who _____ to _____, and yet in doing so, are frustrated, impatient, worried and uncertain?
What do they (or you) need to do?

QUESTION 2

In terms of living life as God intends, which is more important - _____ or _____?
Can a person be happy and not content?
Can a person be content and not happy?
What is _____ and how is it different from HAPPINESS?

QUESTION 3

How does someone know they are paying too much attention to the things of this _____ and not enough attention to the things of their _____?

QUESTION 4

If _____ is a reality in us (as Solomon and the rest of the Bible declares) and if _____ has the ability to override common sense and cause people to do foolish and destructive things, what does that suggest about _____ greatest and ultimate _____?

QUESTION 5

Think for a minute about the people you are closest too.
Do they _____ in a coming _____ before God?
If not, what do they believe about _____ and what happens afterward?
How have they come to that conclusion?
What responsibility do _____ have in telling them otherwise?