

The Bible Jesus Read

Lesson 5

Wisdom Literature--Ecclesiastes

“I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure... and behold all was meaningless, like striving after the wind” Ecclesiastes 2:10-11

Read Ecclesiastes 1

1. What repetitious phrase does the author use (1:2, 14)? Ecclesiastes appears to have been written by Solomon (1:1) at the end of his life. Describe the Bible's depiction of Solomon as to wisdom, talent, possessions, wealth, fame, accomplishments, etc. (1 Kings 4:21, 26, 30, 34; 10:1-7, 14, 23). Along the way, did he deny himself any pleasure or earthly pursuit of happiness (1 Kings 11:1-3; Eccl 2:10)?
2. What great pursuit did Solomon master (Eccl 1:16-18)? After accumulating such knowledge and wisdom, what was his conclusion (1:16-18)?
3. What was his next great experiment (Eccl 2:1-3)? Does hedonism accomplish anything in the long run? Do monuments, buildings and parks (to yourself) accomplish anything (2:4-6)? What about wealth and possessions (2:7-9; 5:10)?
4. Does wise living excel foolish living (2:13)? Nevertheless, what fate awaits both the wise and foolish (2:14-15)? Does Solomon with all his wealth and hedonism sound like a happy man (2:17)? Does he sleep well (2:23)?
5. Is there any reward to labor (2:24; 3:12-13)? Up to now, Solomon's perspective has been temporal and materialistic, in Eccl 2:24-25, what is his spiritual perspective?

6. Can man fathom God's ways and eternal perspective (3:11)? God has put an "eternal perspective" in our heart, so will anything this side of Paradise fulfill us? Even though he inherently knows God exists, did he search in every direction and in every way to find meaning apart from God?

7. Ecclesiastes is the only book in the Bible that offers a perspective from purely human wisdom. Because of this perspective, it contains several statements that seem to contradict the rest of the Bible. List some of these seeming contradictions (1:15; 3:19-20; 7:16-20; 8:15; 9:2; 11:9).

8. Is there anything new or original to look forward to (1:4-10; 3:1-8; 6:10)? Does man have any control over the future (6:10; 7:14; 9:1)? Can any man beat his ultimate destiny (9:11-12)?

9. Solomon's search for meaning shows that experience (Ch 1-2) and rationalism (Ch 3-12) are not enough without revelation from God. What was the lure of the original sin (Genesis 3:5; Isaiah 14:14)? Can anyone really know what God knows apart from God revealing it to him (Ps 147:4-5; Isa 29:16; Isa 46:8-10; Rom 11:33-36; Dan 2:20-22, 28)? What would the author of Hebrews 1:1-3 say to Solomon?

10. Having established that everything in this life is meaningless and without purpose what is the author's conclusion for the seeker (Eccl 12:13-14)? Solomon's kingdom was built on accumulation, but Jesus' kingdom was built on self-sacrifice. What was the wise question of Jesus in Math 16:26? According to Jesus, why did He come into the world (Mark 10:45)?