

Route 66: Ecclesiastes
Life is a Vapor

I. Introduction

- A. What is your view of life?
 - 1. Pessimistic/optimistic?
 - 2. Cause/effect?
 - 3. Circular – Karma/Linear – goal?

- B. How do you interpret the apparent contradictions of life?

II. Background

- A. Authorship (1:1)
 - 1). Graeme Goldsworthy – “The omission of his name and the past tense (I was) would both be inappropriate for a reigning monarch. . . . The internal evidence of the book points to a later development in the wisdom tradition, and thus to a date later than Solomon” (450, *Trilogy*).

III. The Purpose of Ecclesiastes

- A. Purpose of Ecclesiastes – to balance a wooden (simple cause/effect) reading of Proverbs.
 - 1). The “preacher” attacks a form of wisdom that suggests, if you do the right things, you will be blessed, but if you do the wrong things you will be cursed.”
 - a). In other words, God is not controlled by laws of cause and effect.
 - 1). We see this type of wisdom at work in the friends of Job.
 - 2). Modern day illustration – The Health and Wealth Gospel
 - 2). The “preacher” also seeks to answer the questions that arise when we see apparent contradictions in this life (2:12-17).
 - a). In light of such contradictions, where does one find meaning in this life?

IV. The Message of Ecclesiastes

- A. **Everything in this life appears to be meaningless – All is vanity!**
 - 1. All is vanity – 1:2, 14; 2:17; 3:19; 12:8
 - a. 1:3-11
 - 2. You can see how Eastern religious might adopt a circular view of history.
 - 3. You can see how some people might develop a pessimistic view of life.
 - a. So, if there is no God, then eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die (3:19-20; 9:2-6).
 - 1). However, hedonism does not ultimately satisfy – it is vanity, empty!

- B. **The Pursuit of Satisfaction in this Life is meaningless – All is vanity!**
 - 1. The pursuit to find meaning and satisfaction in one’s work is vanity (1:3; 2:18-26).
 - 2. The pursuit to find meaning and satisfaction in self-indulgence is vanity.
 - a. The Party Life is vanity (2:1-3).
 - b. The accumulation of wealth and materials is vanity (2:4-8; 5:8-6:12).
 - c. The attainment of fame is vanity (2:9-11)
 - d. The evidence of the vanity of satisfaction in this life:
 - 1). Owen Wilson –
 - 2). others -

C. God is the root and ground for meaning and purpose in this life!

1. Apart from God everything is meaningless!
 - a. Evolutionary worldview – “There is no God!”
 - b. Materialistic worldview – “He who dies with the most toys wins.”
 - 1). Yet, he who dies with the most toys still dies!
2. What is the answer to the apparent meaninglessness of life? What does Ecclesiastes tell us?
 - a. God is real and sovereign – 3:9-11
 - 1). This world belongs to God and nothing happens by chance – 3:1-8
 - 2). He is just – 2:26; 3:17-18; 9:1; 11:9; 12:14
 - 3). God is not some predictable being ruled by laws of cause and effect!
 - a). C. S. Lewis – *The Chronicles of Narnia*: “Aslan is not a tame lion.”
 - b. Therefore, acknowledge God before its too late (12:1; see 12:2-8).
 - c. Fear God (12:13; see also 3:14-15; 5:1-3)!
 - d. In other words, live a life in light of the reality of who God is – the answer!
 - 1). Yes, life is hard for all! And yes, we will all die!
 - 2). But, God is real and our all in all, and He provides meaning for all, including this life.
 - a). The most contradictory event in all of history was the cross of Christ!
 - 3). Therefore, receive this life as a gift from our gracious God and live it to His glory (3:12-13)!

V. Conclusion: How are we to live this life with an eternal perspective?

- A. Enjoy your work – 2:24; 3:22.
- B. Enjoy the good things of this life (for they are from God) – 5:18; 9:7-9.
- C. Enjoy your prosperity – 5:19-20; 7:14.
- D. Enjoy your life with your wife (spouse) – 9:9
- E. In other words, live this life fully to the glory of God – 9:10.
 1. 1 Corinthians 10:31 (ESV) So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

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