

Teach Us, Qohelet (Part 3)

Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

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The writer of Ecclesiastes is called *Qohelet*, which means teacher and gatherer. He is like a grandfather who assembles the family in order to share his wisdom. But so many of us would rather figure it out on our own and experience things for ourselves rather than heed *Qohelet's* words. Perhaps it's out of stubbornness or pride that we turn away. But if we really listen to him, then we will not have to repeat his mistakes.

Qohelet was dissatisfied with life and thus struggled to find meaning and purpose. In chapter 1, he tried to find meaning in worldly wisdom. He gained knowledge and intelligence, but at the end his conclusion in 1:15 was that the world is an irreparably broken place. It's not hard to see the brokenness in our world, even close to home. None of us can fix this brokenness.

So *Qohelet* looked elsewhere for fulfillment. In chapter 2 he talks about how he sought pleasure and indulgence. There was no meaning in wisdom, so perhaps there would be some meaning in enjoyment. Likely most of us can relate to this pursuit of enjoyment and pleasure. The phrases "under heaven" and "under the sun" in vv. 3 and 11 form an *inclusio*. *Qohelet* searched for every possible pleasure in this world that man could experience during the few days of their lives. He understood the crucial fact that life is short. Because of the brevity of life, we long to fill it with something meaningful. So *Qohelet* searches for meaning by enjoying himself. We too think this way. We know that we should enjoy activities now before we are too old to do them anymore. We should enjoy our children because they grow up so fast, and soon they will leave us. Young people think they have a long way to go, but old people realize just how short life is. My mother died relatively young, so I have an engrained recognition of the brevity of life. If you live with this recognition, it will help you be more spiritual. It will help you be thankful for the time you have and to enjoy God's provision, but also to fix your eyes on the things of true value, that which can truly satisfy.

But *Qohelet* tried to fill his short life with all possible pleasures. He drank wine, not to the point of drunkenness, but enough to feel loose and happy. In vv. 4-10 he lists all the projects he accomplished and possessions he obtained. Verse 5 mentions all the kinds of fruit trees he planted, which reminds us of the description of Eden in Genesis. *Qohelet* was trying to create an Eden for himself. He had slaves, choirs of singers, and a harem that was devoted to his pleasure.

He lived the ultimate life, withholding nothing from himself. Yet in v. 11 he found there was no fulfillment in it. It was meaningless. These things cannot fulfill us because they inherently disappoint. Do you believe this truth that *Qohelet* teaches us? How many times have you bought a new toy or new phone only to realize after a while that it's not as satisfying as it was when you first got it? When I was a kid, my mom bought me a Voltron toy two weeks before my birthday and hid it away. I secretly played with it before my birthday, but then I saw my friend had a Robotics toy set, so by the time my birthday came I told my mom that I didn't want Voltron anymore and asked for Robotics. These things just bring temporary happiness, but not real joy and fulfillment. We say that we understand what *Qohelet* is saying, but then we turn around and pursue the same pleasures he found to be meaningless. If we continue to live as if things will be different for us, we are fooling ourselves.

The reason why these things are meaningless is because they are all self-serving. In today's passage *Qohelet* references himself several times. We must learn that living for our own pleasure and enjoyment has no lasting value. This is why church is so necessary. Here we are reminded that there are other important people in our lives that we should dedicate our time, money, and service to. Most of the week we are living our own lives and concerned with our own business, but here we are reminded of the need to be selfless. Listen to *Qohelet* and do not repeat his mistakes. Don't wait until the end of your life before you realize you have been pursuing something worthless. There is more to life, so let us listen and heed *Qohelet's* words.