



Weekly Bulletin April 10, 2016

The Message of Ecclesiastes

by Bob Waldron

also welcome any comments or questions about this bulletin.

One of the most common remarks made about Ecclesiastes is that it is a very depressing book. This comment is interesting, because, apparently, many today consider life itself depressing. American society has become very humanistic and materialistic. Depression and suicide are common. People are trying to live without God, and life just is not always very rewarding and joyful. Almost anyone has some good times, some good moments, but, overall, they do not balance out the bad parts. Life without God is depressing, and many apparently do not consider it worth living.

Many people think that the writer of Ecclesiastes is agreeing with that pessimistic outlook on life. They think that

The Prattmont Church of Christ is just what the name suggests, a church that belongs to Christ. We are not a denomination; we are simply a group

of Christians trying very hard to practice the teachings of our Head, Jesus Christ. The New Testament offers a complete pattern for what each local church should be like—its organization, its worship, its work, etc. We are committed to following that pattern. We cordially invite you to attend our services. We would

TIMES OF SERVICES:

Sunday

Bible Study 9:00 A.M.
Worship 10:00 A.M.
Training Class 5:00 P.M.
Worship 6:00 P.M.

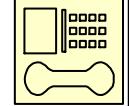
Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 P.M.

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all through the book he is saying that life is worthless, vain, empty, and hopeless. There is a tidbit of pleasure here, a little wisdom there, but it is all worthless. Then at the very end of the book, he drops us a rope of hope and says, “Fear God and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.” If that is the message, then its view of life is depressing.

But look at the message in its entirety. The writer of Ecclesiastes affirms the pointlessness of life, the vanity of life without God, *but he does not recommend life without God*. *There is an alternative to the vanity of life*. His conclusion is, “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole of man” (12:13). The *whole book* is an argument that it is God who gives us the ability to enjoy life, and that *apart from Him* life is empty and meaningless. All of life is therefore summed up in the responsibility to seek a relationship with God and to live life His way. The following passages show that throughout the book the writer is dealing with the difference God makes in the meaning of life: 2:24-26; 3:13, 17-18; 5:1-7, 8, 18-20; 8:12-13; 9:7-10; 11:5, 9-10; 12:1-7, 13-14. The mistake that men make about life on earth is expecting more from it than there is. If we see ourselves from a divine perspective, then earthly life occupies its proper place in our existence.

One of the points made in the book is that life is arranged

so that, even though most of us have ideas of just what we would like from our life here on earth, we cannot count on achieving our earthly goals (1:2-11; 9:11). Even those who do obtain most of what life on earth offers (such as Solomon) find it unfulfilling by itself (2:1, 25, 18-23). Likewise, the book teaches this corresponding principle: *There is good in our life here upon the earth*. We should consider that good a blessing from God. The enjoyment of one's work (3:22), the enjoyment of food and drink (5:18-20), and the enjoyment of youth (11:9-10) are all gifts from God, *but remember that these things are not what life is really all about*. Life is about having a relationship with God (12:13), and He will “bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (12:14).

The Old Testament reveals very little of what lies beyond this life. In Ecclesiastes men are taught to rely upon God for the future. There are many inequities in life; there are situations beyond our power to change. We must trust in God to deal with such things. The implication is clear that there will be a future time when God will right all wrongs, even if not in this life. In a way the message of Ecclesiastes can be summed up in the words of Jesus: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).