

Sunday School Lesson July 12, 2020

Good morning, I hope you are well and blessed.

Lesson for July 12, 2020, "The Boy Jesus" Background Scripture is from Ecclesiastes 3:1-15, and Luke 2:39-52.

I enjoy reading Ecclesiastes and trying to understand Solomon's words. I will provide below a few verses below that I think hit home, for me. There are many more, but time doesn't permit, insight to all of them. All the verses are important. I hope that each one will read Ecclesiastes by yourself, without, me messing up the words and the meaning.

Ecclesiastes 1:1-2 says, "The words of the Teacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity".

Ecclesiastes 5:2 says "Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter a word before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few." I think that's pretty clear, that we should give some thought to the way we approach God.

The Book of Ecclesiastes is an essay on the topic "Is life worthwhile?" The writer answers this question in the negative. He considers the various ends or goals for which people live and finds that each of these reasons brings only vanity and frustration: "Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun." Referring to himself as an elderly person of considerable means and as a man who personally has tested the ways by which people pursue a meaningful life, the writer finds that life, ultimately, is self-defeating. He has tried riches and found that they do not satisfy. He has sought fame and found that it, too, is an empty feeling. He has even pursued wisdom, but it, likewise, fails to satisfy the human spirit. The more he learns, the more dissatisfied he becomes with that which he has already attained.

The Book of Ecclesiastes does not directly identify its author. The conventional belief is that the author is indeed Solomon. Solomon's reign as king of Israel lasted from around 970 B.C. to around 930 B.C. The Book of Ecclesiastes was likely written towards the end of his reign, approximately 935 B.C.

When Solomon says, "Meaningless! Meaningless!", or "Vanity of vanities" he did not mean everything in the world is of zero value. His point is that all human efforts apart from God's will are meaningless. Solomon had it all, but when he left God out of the equation, nothing satisfied him. There is purpose in life, and it is found in knowing God and keeping His commands. That is why Solomon ends his book this way: "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, whether it is good or evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)

The book of Ecclesiastes gives Christians a chance to see the world through the eyes of a person who, though very wise, is trying to find meaning in temporary, human things. Most every form of worldly pleasure is explored by the Preacher, and none of it gives him a sense of meaning.

In the end, the Preacher comes to accept that faith in God is the only way to find personal meaning. He decides to accept the fact that life is brief and ultimately worthless without God. The Preacher advises the reader to focus on an eternal God instead of temporary pleasure.

Man has tried to be happy without God; it is being tried every day by millions of people. Solomon was the wisest of men, and he had a wisdom that was God-given. He tried every field of endeavor and pleasure that was known to man, and his conclusion was that all is vanity. God showed Job, a righteous man, that he was a sinner in God's sight. In Ecclesiastes God showed Solomon, the wisest man, that he was a fool in God's sight. In Ecclesiastes we learn that without Christ we cannot be satisfied—even if we possess the whole world and all the things that men consider necessary to make their hearts content. The world cannot satisfy the heart because the heart is too large for the object.

The key word is vanity, which occurs thirty-seven times. The key phrase is "under the sun," which occurs twenty-nine times. Another phrase which recurs is "I said in mine heart." Although Solomon's conclusions are not inspired, the Scripture that tells us about them is inspired. This is the reason for the explanation: "I said in mine heart", "under the sun," and "vanity."

In Ecclesiastes chapter 3, Solomon believed that there is a time and place for everything, whether it be good or bad. He believes that you must seek guidance from God to truly know what your path in life is. Solomon's point is that God has a plan for all people. He provides cycles of life, each with its work for us to do. Timing is important. The secret to peace with God is to discover, accept, and appreciate God's perfect timing.

Ecclesiastes 3:14 says; "I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him." We should respect and stand in awe of God because of who he is. Purpose of life starts with whom we know, not what we know or how good we are.

From the section: Stepping into the world. While we might be willing to admit that young people have superior technical skill and school taught knowledge that surpasses what might have been retained by their elders, the Gospel story shows us a young person with wisdom so impressive that his elders, not just in years but in religious authority, accept him as a peer, in their conversations. He does not only listen and ask questions; the teachers are amazed at his understanding and his answers." (Luke2:47)

Jesus is "filled with wisdom" (Luke 2:40), and yet he still grows in wisdom (Luke 2:52). This text passage covers the next two decades from age twelve until he is about 30 years of age and enters upon his public ministry. The Gospel of Luke states the three areas of Jesus growth were, wisdom (spiritual insight), stature (physical size), and favor with God and man.

There is probably much more in this passage, but here are four major takeaways:

1. Growth takes time. Jesus went through the same period of childhood and adolescence that we must. Sometimes we're in so much of a hurry to get on with life. God is not in such a hurry. He is more interested in the process of spiritual growth than just its eventual achievement. He is with us, training us, parenting us, and helping us, as we grow in Him.
2. We experience a tension between our responsibilities to God and to our fellow men. Sometimes those responsibilities conflict so much that we must choose one or the other. Jesus experienced the same tension and there were times that he had to choose to serve God rather than man. Jesus makes very clear where our ultimate allegiance must lie: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26).
3. We must often submit to those who are our inferiors. It is rather amazing that Jesus would return home to Nazareth and submit to parents who, though they loved him, had no real grasp of who he was and what he was called to do. Yet, he did submit and obey them because that was God's plan for the present.

4. We need God's grace upon us. We are not dependent upon our skills or our wits, but God's grace. We can go far in this world on our native, God-given abilities. But to succeed in the Kingdom we need, we must have God's favor upon us. His grace, his anointing, and his gifting. As Moses said to the Lord in the wilderness, "We must have God's favor and grace upon us or we are nothing and will amount to nothing."

In Ecclesiastes Solomon laments many of the mistakes that he made and comments on his personal experiences with wealth, influence, women and what he had observed in the lives of others who also sought after worldly pleasures. Like so many people who seem according to the world's standards, "to have it all", he found that there is nothing that truly satisfies in this life; but to love and serve God.

Ecclesiastes cannot be interpreted correctly without reading the final verses. Solomon shows us in the book of Ecclesiastes that we should enjoy life, but this does not exempt us from obeying God's commandments. We should acknowledge the evil, foolishness, and injustice in life, yet maintain a positive attitude and strong faith in God. We will not be able to use life's inconsistencies as an excuse for failing to live properly.

In the final verses of Ecclesiastes we are told the Teacher pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true.

"Now all has been heard: here is the conclusion of the matter; Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

Closing: For the love that casts out fear, the faith that sustains and the hope that never perishes, be with us now and forever more. Amen. God watch over us and take care of us.

Next week's lesson July 19, 2020, "Wisdom that Astounds and Offends" from Mark 6:1-6, and Mark 7:1-23.

Sources for this lesson: The Bible, Bible Studys.org, Thru the Bible Commentary of Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon by J. Vernon McGee, Ecclesiastes Interpretation by William Brown, and The Present Word Adult Bible Lessons.