

Time is meaningless without Jesus

Lesson for Sunday, May 26, 2024

INTRODUCTION:

- ⇒ Solomon is working hard to show us the futility of a life without the Lord. His goal is to push us to life in Christ.
- ⇒ The Holy Spirit's goal in Ecclesiastes is to teach us that everything is meaningless unless you have Jesus.
- ⇒ Nothing will frustrate us more than the circumstances of life. There really is no such thing as a "normal week". How do the times impact your life and your attitude? Solomon addresses these questions in this week's text.

BIBLE STUDY:

1. God controls our times (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8)
 - a. Solomon's point is quite simple to understand: If this world is all that there is, then time is meaningless.
 - b. But there is more to our lives – there is God! There is eternity! And we will read later in this chapter that God has placed eternity into the hearts of mankind.
 - c. This makes us different and distinct from the rest of creation. Human *time* and *life* differ from that of every other created being. And though every creature of God has its purpose, God added a greater dimension to the life of man. Consider Solomon's explanation...
 - d. Everything has a time and season (1).
 - i. Solomon began this chapter by stating a very basic fact: *There is a time for everything, and also a time for every purpose or activity* in man's life on earth. Think about this statement for a moment; it is seldom fully understood.
 - ii. First, he was saying that man's life includes a variety of activities and experiences. Our time on earth is marked by diversity and fluctuation; it is not always the same, unchanging, monotonous routine.
 - iii. Second, Solomon was emphasizing that the variety of events and experiences in life are *ordered and appointed by God*. The specific words the author uses in this verse are key to understanding this great truth.
 - e. Notice that there is a purpose (1). In simple terms, a person's life is a variety of experiences and activities all controlled by God. He has a plan for every individual life. Fate does not determine the days of our lives or what occurs in those days. God has a specific purpose and plan, and the events of our lives are in accordance with that plan.
 - f. Solomon was speaking of the mysterious, magnificent providence of God. God knows all and is in control of our lives!
 - g. The events and activities of life (2-8). Solomon proceeds to list fourteen couplets of activities that are part of life. In presenting these experiences, Solomon used a common literary device of his day by listing two extremes (as in birth and death, mourning and dancing), which includes everything in between as well.
 - h. Note that in each pair of experiences, the words are opposites: birth and death, weeping and laughing, tearing and mending, for example. Life is a balance of positives and negatives. No human being experiences exclusively one or the other.
 - i. Solomon is stressing the point that God's plan for our lives includes ups and downs, mountains and valleys, pleasure and pain. In His infinite wisdom, God knows that we need to face problems and trials that will stir us to pray and draw closer to Him.
 - j. Therefore, both good experiences and trials are needed for God to complete His purposes for us. For this reason, we must learn to accept both.
 - k. DISCUSS & APPLY:

- i. God has a purpose for every aspect of our lives. Paul clearly tells us God's purpose in Romans 8:28-29 and 12:1-2. How do we come to a point where we see God working in both the good times and the bad? Discuss how we typically respond in contrast!
 - ii. God accomplishes His plan for us even when others oppose and do evil against us. Remember Joseph? He was able to see how God had worked good from the evil that his brothers had done to him years before. Remember, Joseph was confident that God was in control and that God always knows what is best.
- 2. Our Response to the Times (vs. 9-15)
 - a. If we take Solomon's point of view, we will read the first eight verses as a big, "So what?!" If God is not involved, then the times of life simply happen to us with no purpose or meaning that can be derived from our experience (9). Solomon uses this frustration to point us in another direction.
 - b. Vs. 10: Solomon is saying that there is more to life than a busy calendar!
 - c. Vs. 11:
 - i. God is the One in charge of the times (1-9) and He has appointed all of these aspects of life as part of His bigger, hidden plan.
 - ii. Man was made for more than these "times" (11), we were made for eternity!
 - iii. But we can't know or always see God's entire plan, or even fully grasp it. Our knowledge is limited and it should drive us to faith in God and what He is up to.
 - iv. We are trapped between time and eternity, and we must trust that God uses the details of this world to work out His greater plan.
 - d. Vs. 12-13: Enjoy these gifts from God and allow them to drive us to worship Him!
 - i. This is so practical for us! Solomon is encouraging us to enjoy our life!
 - ii. Cherish the work we have been assigned.
 - iii. Take note of the little things in life!
 - e. **Vs. 14 is a key point in this text.**
 - i. ***The fear of God is the key to alleviating the frustrations of life.***
 - ii. Do you ever feel frustrated? Stress ever get to you? Ever wonder why things are unfolding as they are in your life?
 - iii. Remember that every second is ordained by God and He never abandons us.
 - iv. We can trust God even when the times don't make any sense at all.

APPLICATION:

Think of what Solomon is saying like this...

Imagine you had no prior knowledge of the Star Wars movies, and I invited you over and showed you the final scene from the second movie in the original trilogy, "The Empire Strikes Back". I show you the fight scene between Darth Vader (bad guy) and Luke Skywalker (good guy). I show you the revelation that Darth Vader is Luke's father. I show you Darth Vader cutting off Luke's hand and then Luke falling down the tunnel to what seems to be his demise. Then I shut the movie off.

You would be perplexed and confused, but you would also inherently know there was a bigger plot and story line at play. You would know that there is a bigger backstory you are missing, and you would want to see what happens next because you would recognize that this could not be the end of the story. And you would be correct.

This is the frustration that Solomon (and us) often feel with the events of life. But as Christians we also have confidence that something more is going on. The problem is we have a small vantage point. We get frustrated because we only see a fragment of all that is actually taking place. But our confidence should not be in our circumstances, but in the One who controls and ordains the circumstances we find ourselves in.

- ⇒ Discuss: How do we change our perspective from the here and now to an eternal point of view?
- ⇒ Discuss how Job is another example of this principle. He had no idea why his life literally fell apart in a day, but there was something much larger going on.