

- B. The Preacher is taking us on a journey... from preoccupation with self to the costly forgetfulness of self. It can only be safely traveled in Christ.

LIVE THE STORY

The Gospel is intended to be learned and lived in community. The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- What are some ways discussed this week that the Preacher and Job might be compared?
- What is the significance of the phrase “under the sun” or “under the heavens” for understanding what is going on in this text? How many times can you find this phrase?
- How does the analogy of a two-story house with no staircase fit with life “under the sun”?
- Comparing the list of accomplishments in 2:4-9 to typical annals-of-a-king list, what might be strange about this one?
- What was the focus of all the accomplishments of this king?
- What are some of the ways that we might experience the frustration of (seemingly) meaningless accomplishment in our own lives?
- What is the burden that the Preacher says that God has laid on the “sons of Adam” (1:13)? How might the phrases relationship to *hevel* help us understand it?
- Do you think the Preacher has a good theology of “the fall”?
- How does Christ Jesus compare with the king of Ecclesiastes?

When Life Gets Twisted: *Finding Meaning in the Absurdity of Life II*

Jerry Cisar — April 26, 2020

Text: Ecclesiastes 1:12—2:26

Introduction

- Eccl. 1:13 An *evil* business
 - Eccl. 2:17 It was *evil* to me.
 - Eccl. 2:21 This also is vanity and a **great evil**.
- A. Wisdom’s Wonder: “God is never addressed in the sage’s discourse. Prayer is not part of his rhetoric.” (Brown, 142)

While Job is tested for His righteousness, the Preacher is testing, at least rhetorically, whether righteousness or folly makes any difference.

- B. The Preacher reflects on human experience and finds that nothing satisfies his sense of justice.
- C. Living in a two-story house with no staircase

I. The Preacher’s Accomplishments – Annals of a King

- A. Testing the Efficacy of Wisdom, Accomplishment, or Pleasure.
- i. The Preacher apparently wants to explore the possibility of finding satisfaction in a life of madness and folly (1:17).
 - ii. “Cheering myself [my flesh] with wine” (2:3)
 - a) Remember, this isn’t God’s wisdom, but human wisdom.

Tremper Longman: The Preacher “is carefully weighing the significance of the act as it relates to his overall search for meaning, not that he always retained his rational abilities.”

B. Parody: *Annals of a King* (2:4-9)

The Preacher’s “self-introduction draws from the widespread genre of royal annals but in a way that is contrary to the genre’s intent.” (Brown)

The Preacher intends to immortalize himself, not by his... accomplishments but by his abysmal failures. (Brown, 144)

- i. “For me” 9 x in 5 verses.
- ii. The Preacher did all this for himself!

C. *The pursuit of happiness under the sun, with no upstairs, will never satisfy!*

II. The Preacher’s Frustration – The Fate of a King (2:12-20)

- A. Not a good resource for our theology of the afterlife!
 - i. From an “under the sun” perspective, *dead is dead!*
 - ii. Death renders everything, including wisdom, futile or meaningless (under the sun)!

iii. “Who knows?” (19)

B. “Wisdom has its benefits, but in the end, so what?”

- C. The Preacher is exploring the frustration of life as we experience it in a fallen world, a world which Paul says has been subjected to frustration... the frustration of futility.

III. The Preacher’s Theology – Abel for the Sons of Adam

- A. The Preacher is frustrated, to say the least, by the burden which God has laid on *the sons of Adam!* (1:13-14; 2:3, 8)
- B. While the Preacher dismisses the pursuit of pleasure or joy under the sun as satisfying, he also acknowledges it as a gift from God. (2:24-26)
- C. God is making all things new... He is set to restore what has gone wrong.
 - i. We still gets tastes of how it was meant to be. And we have hope... beyond the sun.
 - ii. We also labor under this frustrating burden, that the Preacher asserts, God has given to the sons of Adam.

Conclusion

- C. Human wisdom will always fail us.
 - i. “By his relentless debunking,” the Preacher “weans us from all false wisdom and thus prepares the way for Jesus Christ, the true wisdom of God.” (Davis)
 - ii. 1 Corinthians 1:30-31