

3.1 The New Thing and the New Man

Ecclesiastes 12:9-14

Introduction

1. Hi. My name is Jeff.
 I was fat and bald when I was born ... and ... it looks like I'm going to die that way.
 When I do things I enjoy, I get tired.
 When I eat or drink things I like, I get full and can't take anymore.
 I can't seem to get ahead and only get further behind
 Is the universe against me?
2. Verses 9-14 are the conclusion of this book
 - A. 1:1 is the title or heading
 - B. 1:2 starts the book and 12:8 parallels it to close the book

Exposition

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1. Solomon set his teaching in order
 - a. Not a random musing or stream of consciousness
 - i. Nor descent to despair
2. Everything he experienced was self-conscious
 - a. He endeavored to search out by wisdom (1:13, 16-17; 7:23, 25; 8:16)
 - b. He never lost sight of his purpose through all his deliberate experiences (2:3, 9)
3. He set in order many wise sayings
 - a. Speaks of deliberate design and master arrangement
 - b. Poetic book
 - i. Contains 222 verses
 - ii. Divides evenly into two halves of 111 verses
 1. The first asking what is good for man to do
 2. The second emphasizing man's inability to understand God's work
 - iii. The key word is vanity, it appears 3 times in the second verse
 1. The numerical value of the Hebrew consonants is 37
 - a. 3 times 37 is 111
 2. This word also occurs 37 times in the text of this book
 - iv. The keyword in Ecclesiastes is "vanity"
 - a. The numerical value of the Hebrew consonants is 37
 - i. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet and the letters could be used to write numerals, similar to Roman numerals
 - A. The first 9 have values from 1-9
 - B. The second 9 have values from 10-90
 - C. The remaining 4 have values from 100-400
 - b. The Hebrew word for vanity is found 37 times in the text
 - c. The singular form is used in 1:2 three times—vanity, vanity, vanity
 - i. 3 occurrences times the numerical value of 37 is 111
 - ii. Then the vanity is doubled to equal 222
 - d. What is the significance of all that?

- e. We don't know for sure
- f. It's not accidental and confirms the end of the book (12:9-11)
- g. Speaks comprehensively that everything under the sun is subject to vanity

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1. Note how this book is described
 - a. It isn't a pessimistic book of despair—it is a book of truth and therefore wisdom
 - b. The true fool takes this book and ignores it or says, "That won't be me"
2. Not only wisdom in substance but also in form and style
3. Ultimately, this book delivers truth

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1. Goads penetrate and take hold
 - a. Thus wisdom to those who heed it
2. Masters of assemblies are collectors of truth
 - a. Who in turn dispense
3. Shows continuity of truth
 - a. As opposed to pop opinion
 - b. Because all truth comes from one source
 - c. The one Shepherd is God, who is the one source of wisdom (2:26)

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1. Weariness is seeking wisdom in godless ramblings of men
2. The one book is our anchor
3. The admonishment is this: if you can't/won't learn wisdom in this book, you will wear yourself out looking for it and not find it

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1. In light of all that has gone before
 - a. The vanity of the creation, et al
 - i. Vanity is the key word and theme in Ecclesiastes and must be defined if we are to understand this book
 - a. 1:2-3 proposes the author's purpose
 - a. All is vanity and if all is vanity, what profit is there for man
 - a. Profit would be man getting ahead
 - b. How can man beat the vanity under the sun
 - I. 1:4-11 Defines what is meant by vanity
 - a. 4-7 describe cycles that only repeat and never progress
 - b. 8-11 show that man cannot beat it
 - a. As the wheel revolves, what comes around is only what has been before, despite that different men may experience a different part of the wheel
 - II. Vanity of vanities describes the inescapable and inscrutable cycles of life in this fallen world
 - a. It is an unvarnished presentation of life as it really is
 - III. This vanity is thematic throughout the book
 - A. Solomon then describes the experiment he conducted to find out wisdom for living in such a world

- I. He was uniquely positioned given the unique wisdom and resources he had to conduct such an experiment (1:16)
 - II. As he explored every avenue under the sun to find out wisdom and folly, he never lost his wisdom (2:9)
 - a. In other words, he had the experiences but never lost sight of his objective, nor lost his wisdom for thoroughly examining those experiences
 - III. He basically found out that ultimate questions about life can't really be answered by looking within or searching around in the dark
 - a. The answers we can have and understand come through wisdom that is God's gift
- b. This isn't a giving up it is an embracing
- c. Wisdom is to know our responsibilities

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- 1. Final judgment (Re 20:11-15; 1 Co 3:10-15; 2 Co 5:9-10)

Theology

- 1. Ecclesiastes ends in an odd way
 - A. We've just had over 11 chapters of everything under the sun is vanity
 - I. Wealth, poverty, success, failure, sleep, food, pleasure, joy, mourning, birth, life, death, family, neighbors, justice, rulers ... everything is vanity
 - II. There is nothing new
 - a. You can't do anything new
 - b. You can't escape the vanity of this creation
 - c. You could be wise, do everything right, and still die, and some fool gets your stuff
 - B. So how can this be the conclusion?
 - I. Where is the hope?
- 2. Ecclesiastes ends with unresolved tension
 - A. Similar to the book of Judges
 - I. A book filled with some of the most horrific things in the Bible
 - II. A judge would arise and then fail or die
 - III. The book ends with a bloody civil war that left the tribe of Benjamin almost wiped out
- 3. We don't often do well with unresolved tension
 - A. But unresolved tension is crying for resolution
 - I. And we find resolution through connecting this book and its major themes to the one story of Scripture
 - B. The author goes to great lengths to teach everything under the sun is vanity and there is nothing new under the sun (1:9-10), so no man has done a new thing under the sun
 - I. But Jesus Christ has done a new thing. The mystery of godliness, God in the flesh, came into the world
 - II. He was foreordained outside of and before the vanity (1 Pe 1:20)
 - III. Through his death he abolished death and life and immortality to light (2 Ti 1:10)
 - IV. He said, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Re 1:18)

- V. The Gospel is that Jesus Christ has done the truly new thing in this vanity and through his life, death, and resurrection, through faith in him we pass from death to life (Jo 5:24) and all the old things pass away and all things become new (2 Co 5:17)
- VI. So then for all who are in him, our lives are redeemed from destruction and labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Co 15:58) because his resurrection breaks meaningfully into the vanity and rescues us from it (1 Co 15:12-20)
- C. Also with the coming of his kingdom is a new day coming where the vanity of this creation is made new (Is 43:19; Ro 8:18-25)
 - I. Described as new heavens and new earth (Is 65:17-25)

Conclusion

1. Ecclesiastes is not a Messianic prophecy
 - A. But it is written to teach us wisdom and to show us our need of a Savior
 - B. We can't escape the vanity of this creation, we must be saved