

Solomon On Values Ecclesiastes

Introduction:

1. The book of Ecclesiastes was written by the amazing Solomon, third king of the nation of Israel.
2. He ruled during the “golden age” of Israel.
 - a. His father, David had defeated their enemies.
 - b. Their borders extended from the River of Egypt in the south, to the Euphrates in the north.
 - c. With boundaries settled and enemies under control the nation could focus its attention inward.
 - d. Solomon instituted a variety of construction projects—the magnificent temple of God that took 11 years to build, the king’s place, 13 years under construction, including the house of the forest of Lebanon, the hall of pillars, the hall of the throne and the judgment hall, the king’s dwelling house and the house of Pharaoh’s daughter (1 Kings 7).
3. The historian of Kings summarized the time by saying, “Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance, they were eating and drinking and rejoicing” (1 Kings 4:20).
4. There was time for education, entertainment, and cultural events. It was a time in which the worries, and riches, and cares of this life might have choked out the things that were really important, but Ecclesiastes reminds people of what the real priorities of life need to be.
5. I would like for you to evaluate your priorities, your values, the things that you really think are important in life, against the reality of your practices.
6. Welcome!

Discussion:

- I. Things that are of value as evident throughout Ecclesiastes.
 - A. Pleasure and possessions (2:1-10).
 1. When considering this point I debated how to title this section.
 - a. “Pleasure and possessions”—some pleasures are not associated with possessions. Stimulation of the body—wine, drugs, sex.
 - b. “Pleasure of possessions”—some pleasures come about as a direct result of possessions—houses, gardens, parks, flocks, herds, gold, silver, etc.
 - c. Simply “pleasure”—to include all those things that bring pleasure.
 2. Pleasure is a valuable commodity. It temporarily takes us away from the mundaneness of life. Provides excitement, variety, relief from the sameness and boredom of life (8:15).
 3. God expects humans to value pleasure.
 - a. Indeed he has designed us to enjoy pleasure. Those who forbid pleasure do not appreciate God’s design (1 Tim. 4:1-5).
 - b. Solomon enjoyed pleasure (5:18-20).
 4. For some pleasure is valued as top priority.
 5. But not Solomon (6:1-6).

B. Wisdom.

1. Solomon valued wisdom (Ecc. 2:12-14a).
 - a. Cannot read Proverbs without recognizing the value that Solomon placed on wisdom (1:1-6).
 - b. God gave Solomon wisdom at Solomon's own request (1 Kings 4:29-34).
 - c. "I directed my mind to know, to investigate, and to seek wisdom and an explanation" (Ecc. 7:25).
2. Wisdom is indeed valuable.
 - a. If it wasn't why would Solomon have written in order to communicate it to others?
 - b. Wisdom is empowering. "Wisdom strengthens a wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city" (Ecc. 7:19). Ignorance is no blessing (Ecc 2:12ff).
 - c. Educate yourself, your children, others.
3. Wisdom is a more valuable than some other things (9:15-18). But there is an element of futility here.
 - a. "Do not be overly wise. Why should you ruin yourself?" (7:16).
 - b. "The writing of many books is endless, and excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body" (Ecc. 12:12).

C. Riches.

1. Solomon was an awfully rich man not to have valued riches (1 Kings 4:20-28; 10:14-29). Some would suggest that riches are not to be valued at all, indeed that God's people should never be wealthy.
2. The relative value of riches (Ecc. 5:10-20).
3. He valued wisdom more than riches (1 Kings 3:10-14).
4. Paul told Timothy to "instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches" (1 Tim. 6:17).
5. There are some things more important than riches. "Don't mean much when there is no one to share them with."

D. Sharing, benevolence, caring for others (Ecc. 11).

1. There are rewards in "casting your bread on the waters" for "you will find it after many days."
2. There is advantage in the time of misfortune if you have divided your portion with others when you had it.
3. There is great value in benevolence. Some people are too self-centered to reap any value from having given.
 - a. Self centered in our relationships.
 - b. Self centered in our riches.
 - c. Self centered in the use of our bread (food).

E. Remembering the Lord—what's really important.

1. Pleasure and possessions vanity (2:11).
2. There is no lasting remembrance of the wise man (2:16).
3. Wealth (5:13-17; 6:1-6).
4. Blessings come from God (2:24; 3:12-14).
5. Guard your steps when you go to the house of God (5:1ff).
6. Enjoy life but don't forget who gave it (9:7-9).
7. Remember your Creator (12:1).

II. Evaluate your values.

Of the things mentioned as valuable in this lesson list them in order of their priority in your life.

In specific instances do you let the less significant occupy a more prominent place than they should?

III. Evaluate your values as evidenced by where you spend your money, time, and energy.

Do your checkbook, calendar and energy spent reflect the same priorities in reality that you ascribe to cognitively?

What is it that you say, "I don't have the money to do?" "I don't have the time to do . . . ?"

Conclusion:

1. When all has been heard, Fear God and keep his commandments.
2. For God will bring every act to judgment, whether it is good or evil.
3. How do you evaluate your life? How does God evaluate it?