

Ecclesiastes: Replacing Vanity with Value

David Rountree

Knowing what to do and who to believe seems up for grabs.

Search For Value Outline

- In Science (1:4:11).
- In Philosophy (1:12-18).
- In Pleasure, including music, dance, wine, architecture, gardening, cattle breeding, art collecting, etc. (2:1-11).
- In Materialism (2:12-26).
- In Fatalism, letting everything go, "what will be, will be (3:1-15).
- In Deism, natural religion based on human laws of the universe (3:16-4:16)
- In Formal ritualistic religion (5:1-8).
- In Wealth (5:9-6:12).
- In Morality, being "a good o boy" (7:1-12:12).

The Teacher of Life

1. The **Greater** Teacher: the preacher & author of Ecclesiastes.
 - a. Called Koheleth, a Hebrew term usually translated "preacher" (1:1-2,12; 7:27; 12:8-10). The Greek word for "one who calls an assembly" is Ecclesiastes. The *Septuagint* gave this title to the book.
 - b. Who is the preacher?
 - "A son of David," "A king in Jerusalem," (1:1) "A king over Israel and Jerusalem," (1: 1,12)
 - "A builder of great projects" (2:4-6)
 - "One who owns many slaves, sheep, and cattle" (2:7)
 - "A wealthy man," "One with many wives or a large harem" (2:8)
 - "One who was wise and increased in wisdom beyond all before him,"
 - "A writer of many proverbs (12:9)
 - No one like Solomon (Prov.1:1-7; Chron.1:11-12)
2. The **Greatest** Teacher: The Word.
 - a. Solomon acknowledged his wisdom came from one greater than himself.
 - b. The greatest teacher (Matt.12:42; Luke 11:31; 1Cor.1:30).

The Teaching on Life for Replacing Vanity with Value: 4 Themes

1. **Routines must be surrendered to God's direction and control (1:2, 14; 12:8).**
 - a. Ecclesiastes begins and ends with the announcement that everything in life is *vanity* (1:2; 12:8). The term "vanity" is used more than 30 times in Ecclesiastes — used metaphorically to mean "meaninglessness."
 - b. Nothing we do or find gives us any ground for security, satisfaction, or hope. In this sense, life is vain.
 - c. Illustration of Sir Leonard Wolfe and ping-pong.
 - d. God's solution: Eccl.3:1-9; 1 Cor. 15:58; Matt. 6:19-20.

2. **True education begins and ends with God (1:13, 16-18; 2:12).**
 - a. The preacher undercuts the naive importance we place on our own brains.
 - b. We exalt those who "know the system," yet wisdom without God is vanity. Education without God cannot be of high value.
 - c. God's answer: 1 Cor.13:2; Prov.1:7; 1 Cor.2:6-10.

3. **Human experience is inadequate without God's revelation (11:3-5).**
 - a. Human observation is limited.
 - b. Divine revelation is a necessity.
 - c. God's answer: 2 Tim.3:16-17.

4. **Redeeming value is only possible with God in the picture (12:13-14).**
 - a. Vanity ceases through a proper relationship with God.
 - b. Romans 8:19-23.
 - c. Life must include a search on how to become sons of God (John 1:12).