

THE MEANING OF LIFE

From the book of Ecclesiastes (Part 2)

(Leader's Notes)



King Solomon had everything this world could offer, and yet he wasn't satisfied. In the book of Ecclesiastes, which he wrote, he said everything was meaningless – knowledge, wealth, pleasure, power and prestige – without God. Let's see what we can learn from his searching and study.

? What were the questions King Solomon asked about life? Ecclesiastes 1:3, 2:3, 2:22, 3:9

(His first question was 'what does man gain from all his toil?')

His second was 'what was worthwhile for men to do during the few days of his life?'

Another was 'what does a man get for all his toil and striving?'

Then he repeats the first question, 'what does man gain from his toil?')

? How did King Solomon feel at this time? Ecclesiastes 2:17, 20

(He hated his life and began to despair.)

? Have you ever gone through a time in your life when you felt like King Solomon? What caused you to feel like that?

If there were no answers to the questions King Solomon asked then we would be without hope! However there are answers! Not only does the King ask these questions, but he discovered the answers, and in one word the answer is GOD.

? What truths did Solomon write about God that gave him hope? Ecclesiastes 2:24-26, 3:11, 14, 5:19, 12:7

(Our very existence depends on God. He alone is the true source of wisdom, knowledge and happiness. What God does lasts for eternity. When God gives wealth and enables you to enjoy it, and be happy with your work, then it is a gift from God. Ultimately our spirit will return to God who gave it to us.)

? What has helped you when you have gone through a time of questioning the purpose of life, or felt despair? Share.

In Ecclesiastes 3:1 it says, 'He (God) has also set eternity in the hearts of men.' God has created us with an inner awareness of his existence. It is through coming to know him that our life begins to make sense.

? What are two things God wants us to value and enjoy in this life? Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, 5:18-20

(He wants us to enjoy and value our relationships with others.

He created us to work and wants us to enjoy what we do and find satisfaction in it.

Also he wants us to enjoy what we have and be content with our situation in life.)

? Why do you think relationships are so important in our lives? What difference does it make if God is central in our relationships ? Discuss.

As we read the book of Ecclesiastes, we may get the impression that we should just live to enjoy life. 'Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die'! However there is something to remember, and King Solomon shows us this.

? What does Solomon urge us to remember? See Ecclesiastes 3:17, 11:9, 12:14, Luke 12:16-21

(Everyone will stand before God one day and give an account for the way they have lived. As believers in Jesus Christ we know that we will no longer face judgement, as the wicked will, but we will stand before Jesus to give an account for our lives.)

? Since we know we will stand before Jesus one day to give account, how should we live according to King Solomon? Ecclesiastes 5:1, 4-7, 8:12, 12:13

(We need to listen to what God says to us. Also we need to be careful what we say and not make promises we can't keep. The book concludes by saying we should fear God and keep his commandments.)

? What is one thing that has stood out to you as we have studied the book of Ecclesiastes?

Conclusion

There are many others things that we can learn from this book, but perhaps the most important truth is that our life has meaning and purpose when we are in a right relationship with God. Without God, everything the world offers is meaningless, so we need to guard our hearts. Never let pleasure, money, study, pleasure or careers, take the place that only our Creator can fill. He has made us to enjoy what we have and what we do, within the boundaries he has given us.