

Vanity & Vapor **Ecclesiastes 1:1-18; I Cor.10:31**

0.0 Introduction

- 0.1 A short story on a change of (my) heart regarding Ecclesiastes...
- 0.2 One of three types of wisdom (sapiential) literature: didactic (Prov), theodicy (Job) and cynical (Ecclesiastes)
- 0.3 It expresses a blunt and bleak look at the ongoing cycles of our world
- 0.4 A type of natural theology: based on observations & experiences of the created order

1.0 The Nature of Theology of the Wisdom Literature

- 1.1 Everyone is a theologian – and that includes *you*
- 1.2 Theology starts with God, and includes other things such as human nature
- 1.3 Theology involves “faith seeking understanding” (Anselm of Canterbury)
- 1.4 Theology is both a way of seeing (orthodoxy) and a way of living (orthopraxy)

2.0 The Theology of the Wisdom Literature

- 2.1 Rarely draws from divine laws
- 2.2 Reflective and experimental
- 2.3 Wrestles with the human condition & daily experiences
- 2.4 Often similar to ‘secular/pagan’ wisdom
- 2.5 Poetic, concise maxims → highly practical
- 2.6 Wisdom literature promotes “the art of steering through life”

3.0 The Viewpoint of Ecclesiastes: ‘Vanity’ (vv.1-11)

- 3.1 Easy to see why “cynical wisdom” if “vanity of vanities, all is vanity”
- 3.2 *Vanity* = what is vain = things pointless, purposeless, fleeting (like vapor)
- 3.3 Does God even fit into the picture? (7:29; 11:5; 12:7; 3:11) – not if life is isolated

4.0 The Observer in Ecclesiastes (vv.12-18)

- 4.1 Style similar to “House” – lead character a cynic (as foil for affirming life)
- 4.2 That character: “the Preacher” (Qoheleth) = preacher/teacher who collects sayings
- 4.3 Why it appears to be Solomon: Ecc.1:1; I Kg.4:29; Ecc.2:6-7
- 4.4 Why maybe not Solomon: I Kg.11:1-3; *his* corvee inflicted all this pain; also, 1:16

5.0 The Importance of This for Us Today

- 5.1 Four things drew me to Ecclesiastes
- 5.2 Spoiler alert: nothing matters...unless God really is God (Ecc.12:13-14)
- 5.3 Remember your Creator, from your youth if you can (Ecc.12:1)

Next week (May 2) – The Vanity of Pleasure and Wisdom – Ecc.2:1-17