Living with the End in Mind

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

January 12, 2020

The Book of Ecclesiastes teaches us to live our lives with the end in mind.

1. Life is short (1:1-2).
   1. The Hebrew word “hebel,” translated “vanity” means “breath” or “breeze.”
   2. The Preacher is saying that everything is like a mist, a vapor, a puff of wind, or a wisp of smoke.
      1. Psalm 39:5-6, 11 “Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity (hebel). Selah. Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain (hebel): he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them…When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity (hebel). Selah.”
   3. The preacher is saying “breath of breaths, breath of breaths, all is a breath.” Life is short!
      1. Time flies!
      2. Our children grow up in the blink of an eye!
      3. Proverbs 31:30 “Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain (hebel)…”
      4. The problem with beauty is that it’s like being born rich and then becoming poor.
   4. Ecclesiastes is a meditation on what it means for our lives to be like a whisper in the wind: here one minute and carried away forever the next.
2. Life is elusive (1:3).
   1. The implied answer to the question of verse 3 is, “Nothing.”
   2. Trying to control this life is like trying to take control of the wind, it’s not possible.
   3. In a way it’s like we’re trying to build sand castles on the beach. We can work all day to build a masterpiece, but it’s washed away with the tide and forgotten.
   4. Psalm 103:15-16 “As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.”
3. Life is repetitive (1:4-11).
   1. Everything in this life is cyclical.
      1. One generation passes away and another comes (4).
      2. The sun rises and sets every day (5).
      3. The wind blows in circles (6).
      4. Rivers flow into the seas, the water evaporates, and then falls again (7).
      5. Our senses cannot be completely satisfied with seeing, hearing, etc. (8).
   2. There is nothing new under the sun (9-10).
      1. A new government is still a government.
      2. Space exploration is still exploration.
   3. This earth will forget us no matter how hard we fight to leave a mark (11).

Application:

1. Prepare for death. All that is “under the sun” is not all there is. We have eternity in our hearts!
   1. This side of eternity, life is a breath.
   2. We do the same things over and over again, and then we die, only to be followed by our children who will do the same things in the same way and then meet the same end.
   3. We ought not live as if this isn’t true. Only preparing to die will teach us how to live.
2. Learn to live. Accepting death is the first step in learning to live. Wise people accept that they are going to die.
   1. Stop thinking that meaning and happiness lies in success and achievement in this life.
   2. Stop thinking that meaning and happiness lies in novelty.
   3. We’ll learn to stop chasing the wind and start chasing God.