

SERIES OVERVIEW

In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon sets out to discover if “life under the sun” is truly worth living. He goes on a journey throughout the book and finds himself originally declaring that everything under the sun is meaningless (Hebrew. Hebel—literally translated, vapor or breath. Used 38 times in this book). Solomon is overwhelmed with the truth that death is coming for every person, and that nothing worked for, earned, or pursued seems to have any lasting value. It’s not until Solomon starts focusing his attention on things “beyond the sun” that he recognizes life’s true meaning and purpose. He ultimately discovers that the whole purpose of man is to enjoy life and all its blessings, to live by faith, and to prepare for eternity by fearing God and keeping his commandments.

- [Watch Overview](#) (Watch as a group)

CONTEXT

In Ecclesiastes 3:16-4:3, the Teacher reflects on the prevalence of wickedness and injustice, even in places of judgment and righteousness. The passage also expresses deep sorrow over oppression and the suffering of the oppressed, concluding that those who have never been born are better off than both the living and the dead.

THE BIG IDEA

The world is full of injustice, and the justice system doesn’t always help. Our only hope for justice is God’s promise to judge and hold the guilty accountable.

SCRIPTURE: Ecclesiastes 3:16-4:3

16 Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness. 17 I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every matter and for every work. 18 I said in my heart with regard to the children of man that God is testing them that they may see that they themselves are but beasts. 19 For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity.[a] 20 All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return. 21 Who knows whether the spirit of man goes upward and the spirit of the beast goes down into the earth? 22 So I saw that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work, for that is his lot. Who can bring him to see what will be after him?

Evil Under the Sun

4 Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them. 2 And I thought the dead who are already dead are more fortunate than the living who are still alive. 3 But better than both is he who has not yet been and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun.

GROUP DISCUSSION

What is one thing that stood out to you from the sermon and why do you think God wants you to remember this truth?

Read Ecclesiastes 3:16-4:3 as a group.

In verse 17, what 2 groups of people did the Teacher say would be judged on Judgement Day? How did Pastor James describe each group and how do you describe them?

Where do your thoughts and emotions go when you think of Judgement Day?

What brings us hope in the midst of Judgement Day?

The point of verses 18-22 is... if life under the sun is all there is, then humans have no advantage over animals. What does Genesis 1 (imago dei) teach us about our role in creation?

Read Ecclesiastes 4:1-3 as a group. Solomon is reinforcing the notion that if life under the sun is all we've got, the Preacher is right. How does the life, death and resurrection of Jesus change a hopeless life to a life full of hope?

How does Isaiah 1:17 speak to the oppression found in verses 4:1-3?

Our response to verses 4:1-3 and Isaiah 1:17 must be to; DECLARE JUSTICE & DO JUSTICE. How do we declare & do justice in our culture and which one is harder for you?

Discussion continued: What does Ecclesiastes 3:16-4:3 teach us about God?

Discuss this quote:

"Hell appears as God's gesture of respect for human choice. All receive what they actually chose, either to be with God forever, worshipping him, or without God forever, worshipping themselves. Those who are in hell will know not only that for their doings they deserve it but also that in their hearts they chose it." –

J.I. Packer, Concise Theology.

How does this quote align with the biblical truth that hell is self-chosen and God doesn't send anyone to hell?

PRAYER (In gender based groups)

*Share praises, answered prayers, and prayer requests.

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