

project 4:4

one year one bible one church one lord

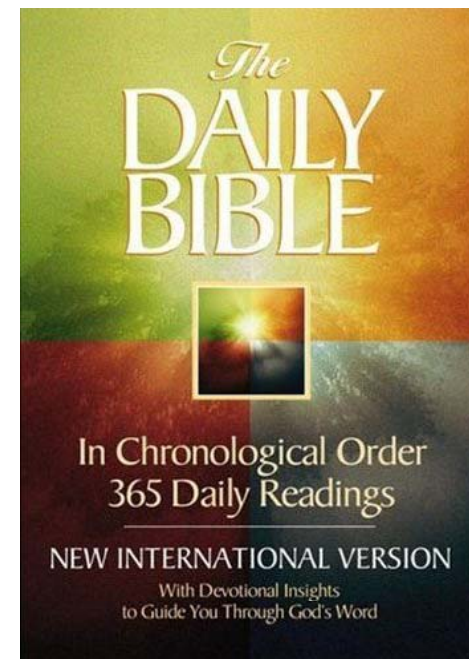
~~Song of Solomon~~ and Ecclesiastes

May 30, 2010

PV Pleasant Valley Church of Christ

This Week

- ▶ We'll cover readings through May 31st
- ▶ ~~Song of Solomon~~ and Ecclesiastes
 - ▶ Failure of the World (knowledge, work, pleasure, money) to Satisfy Our Longings (1-4)
 - ▶ Value of Wisdom and Reverence in the Midst of Meaninglessness (5-10)
 - ▶ The Conclusion of the Matter (11, 12)



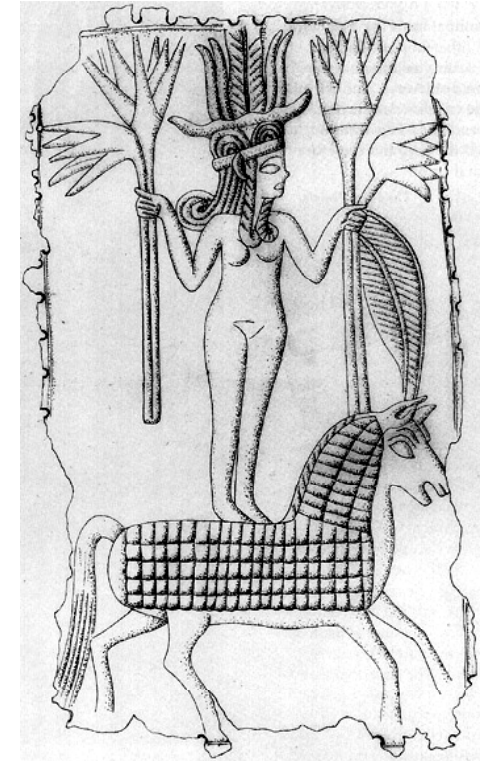
Quick Overview

- ▶ Solomon is King over Israel in Jerusalem
- ▶ He has 700 wives of royal birth and 300 concubines
- ▶ His wives bring their foreign gods with them
 - ▶ Solomon builds temples and “high places” for their worship on the “hill east of Jerusalem”
 - ▶ They will remain there for 400 years
- ▶ Three of these deities are named in I Kings 11
 - ▶ Ashtoreth
 - ▶ Molech
 - ▶ Chemosh



Ashtoreth

- ▶ Known as *Astarte* to the Phoenicians
 - ▶ Ashtoreth was the Hebrew transliteration
- ▶ The principal goddess of the Phoenicians, representing the productive power of nature
 - ▶ A goddess of fertility and sexual love
- ▶ Some confusion among scholars as to where Ashtoreth and Asherah are the same goddess
 - ▶ Most see them as different



Molech

- ▶ Also known as *Moloch*
 - ▶ Worshipped by the Ammonites (descendants of Lot)
- ▶ Worship required human sacrifice
 - ▶ “Passing through the fire”
 - ▶ Particularly children
- ▶ Warnings against worship of Molech can be found as far back as Leviticus
 - ▶ Anyone who offered their child to Molech was to be put to death



Chemosh

- ▶ The “abomination of Moab”
 - ▶ Quite possibly the same deity as Moloch
 - ▶ Though worshipped in different forms by the Moabites and the Ammonites
 - ▶ Ammonites were also descendants of Lot
- ▶ Worship of Chemosh also required human sacrifice
- ▶ Celebrated on the “Moabite Stone”
 - ▶ Stele of King Mesha circa 840 BC
 - ▶ Credit for defeat of Israel given to Chemosh



Additional Background

- ▶ Because of his apostasy, God declares that the kingdom will be taken away from Solomon's descendants
- ▶ But out of respect for David, it will not happen during Solomon's lifetime
 - ▶ Why would God operate in this manner?
 - ▶ Says an enormous amount about David's relationship with God
- ▶ We learn that the kingdom will be torn apart after Solomon's death



Background for Ecclesiastes

- ▶ Though there is much debate as to the authorship and time of writing, I'm going with this:
 - ▶ Solomon is the author
 - ▶ The book is written late in his life, after years of apostasy
 - ▶ His wisdom has finally allowed him to see clearly the error of his ways
 - ▶ He has a sincere desire to record what he has learned to pass onto his children and future generations



For Discussion

- ▶ If you knew that your life was coming to an end and you had one last chance to pass along some words of value to your descendants, what would you tell them?



A Few Main Themes

- ▶ Nothing new under the sun
- ▶ Everything is meaningless
- ▶ Life is not fair
- ▶ Enjoyment of the fruits of one's labor is a gift from God, but is not guaranteed
- ▶ Materialism brings great burden
- ▶ Wisdom is better than folly, even if not rewarded in this life
- ▶ Man's purpose is to fear God and keep His commandments



To Begin

▶ Ecclesiastes 1:1-7

- ▶ ¹The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem: ²“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.” ³What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun? ⁴Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. ⁵The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. ⁶The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. ⁷All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again.



To Begin (cont.)

▶ Ecclesiastes 1:8-11

- ▶ ⁸All things are wearisome, more than one can say. The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing. ⁹What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. ¹⁰Is there anything of which one can say, “Look! This is something new”? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time. ¹¹There is no remembrance of men of old, and even those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow.



For Discussion

- ▶ Is there anything “new under the sun” today?
 - ▶ We have all kinds of new and intriguing things surrounding us
 - ▶ U-verse
 - ▶ iPods
 - ▶ iPhones
 - ▶ iPads
 - ▶ e-Mail
 - ▶ e-Commerce
 - ▶ eDoc America
 - ▶ Why is there “nothing new”?



Enjoyment of Fruits of Labor

▶ Ecclesiastes 2:10b

- ▶ ^{10b}My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor.

▶ Ecclesiastes 2:24-25

- ▶ ²⁴A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, ²⁵for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?



Enjoyment of Fruits of Labor (cont.)

▶ Ecclesiastes 3:12-13

- ▶ ¹²I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. ¹³That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil— this is the gift of God.

▶ Ecclesiastes 3:22

- ▶ ²²So I saw that there is nothing better for a man than to enjoy his work, because that is his lot.



Enjoyment of Fruits of Labor (cont.)

▶ Ecclesiastes 5:18-19

- ▶ ¹⁸Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him—for this is his lot. ¹⁹Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work—this is a gift of God.

▶ Ecclesiastes 8:15

- ▶ ¹⁵So I commend the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun.



For Discussion

- ▶ Does God really intend for us to:
 - ▶ Find enjoyment in our work?
 - ▶ If so, why?
 - ▶ If not, why not?
 - ▶ Enjoy the fruits of our labors?
 - ▶ If so, why?
 - ▶ If not, why not?
- ▶ What responsibilities do we bear when we are blessed by God in this way?
- ▶ How do we reconcile this with having a spirit of giving?



To the Contrary

- ▶ Ecclesiastes 5:10

- ▶ ¹⁰Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless.

- ▶ How do you explain this apparent inconsistency?

- ▶ Ecclesiastes 10:19

- ▶ ¹⁹A feast is made for laughter, and wine makes life merry, but money is the answer for everything.

- ▶ What is your reaction to this proverb?



Wise Sayings

▶ Ecclesiastes 7:10

- ▶ ¹⁰Do not say, “Why were the old days better than these?” For it is not wise to ask such questions.

▶ Ecclesiastes 7:18b

- ▶ ^{18b}The man who fears God will avoid all extremes.

▶ Ecclesiastes 7:20

- ▶ ²⁰There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.



Wise Sayings (cont.)

▶ Ecclesiastes 7:21-22

- ▶ ²¹Do not pay attention to every word people say, or you may hear your servant cursing you—²²for you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others.

▶ Ecclesiastes 11:4

- ▶ ⁴Whoever watches the wind will not plant; whoever looks at the clouds will not reap.



The Joy of Youth

- ▶ Ecclesiastes 11:9-10

- ▶ ⁹Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment. ¹⁰So then, banish anxiety from your heart and cast off the troubles of your body, for youth and vigor are meaningless.

- ▶ Does this seem like bad advice?



The End of Life

▶ Ecclesiastes 12:1-4

- ▶ ¹Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, “I find no pleasure in them” - ²before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain; ³when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim; ⁴when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when men rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint;



The End of Life (cont.)

▶ Ecclesiastes 12:5-8

- ▶ ⁵when men are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags himself along and desire no longer is stirred. Then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets. ⁶Remember him - before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well, ⁷and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. ⁸“Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Everything is meaningless!”



The True Meaning of Life

▶ Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

- ▶ ¹There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under heaven:
- ▶ ²a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
- ▶ ³a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
- ▶ ⁴a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
- ▶ ⁵a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain,
- ▶ ⁶a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
- ▶ ⁷a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
- ▶ ⁸a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.



The End of the Matter

▶ Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

- ▶ ¹³Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: **Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.** ¹⁴For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.



Your Turn ...

- ▶ What insights have you gained from this week's study?
- ▶ What did you find in these passages that you have never seen before?
- ▶ How did the Lord speak to your heart through the Word this week?
- ▶ How will your walk with Him be different as a result?



Next Week

- ▶ Keep Reading!
 - ▶ Elijah – God’s Miracle Man
 - ▶ Combined Adult Class in the Auditorium

Questions?

