

Hopeless Jumble

I. Slide1 **Announce:** see bulletin.

A. Pray Jayna: fluid around heart again.

II. Slide2 **Intro:** *Hopeless Jumble*

A. "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" was a ballad, written for the *Wizard of Oz*, sung by **Judy Garland**. About 5 minutes into the film, Dorothy sings the song after failing to get her aunt and uncle to **listen to her relate an unpleasant incident involving her dog, Toto, and the town spinster, Miss Gulch**. Dorothy's Aunt Em tells her to *"find yourself a place where you won't get into any trouble."* This prompts Dorothy to walk off by herself, musing to Toto, "Some place where there **isn't** any trouble. Do you suppose there is such a place, Toto? There must be. It's not a place you can get to by a boat, or a train. It's far, far away. **Behind the moon, beyond the rain...**" at which point she begins singing.

1. There was originally an introductory verse, *When all the world is a **hopeless jumble**, And the raindrops tumble all around, Heaven opens a magic lane.*

[this seems to describe **Solomon's** outlook on life...in his opening, *vanity of vanities*]

B. It was **Mark Twain** who once said, *life would be a whole lot better if we could be born at age 80 and then gradually approach age 18.* - Imagine that. Imagine being born with all that *wisdom and experience* of that age **and then** moving to *the vim and vigor of youth*.

III. Slide3 **THE TITLE, ECCLESIASTES (1-1)**

A. **Hebrew** - קהלת *Qoheleth*. A rare word translated *The Preacher* only found in Eccl.¹

1. Means to *assemble, or one who gathers, collects, assembles, & addresses an assembly, a preacher*. **Or, The searcher**, he's looking for the meaning of life.

B. **Septuagint** – uses the Greek word Εκκλησιαστας (from εκκλησια = assembly)

IV. Slide4 **THE BOOK**

A. It seems to be a *meandering* book, but it actually is laid out this way...

¹ Eccl. 1:1,2,12; 7:27; 12:8-10

1. Solomon's **Search** ch.1-4. Solomon's **Sayings** ch.5-10. Solomon's **Solution** ch.11,12.

V. Slide5 **THE AUTHOR (1)** *Before you read any book it's good to know **the author***

- A. Solomon never gives his name, **but** gives descriptions that indicate it's him.
 1. The preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem (1). King over Israel(12). He had great wealth & wisdom (1:13, 2:1-11).
- B. Solomon **began** his reign as a *humble* servant of the Lord, seeking Gods *wisdom & help*.
 1. **1 Kings 3:5-15** [God asks **what shall I give you?** Understanding heart. Discern between good & evil. You got it + I'm adding riches & honor]
- C. As he **grew older** his heart turned away from Jehovah to the *false gods* of many wives (married for politics **not** love).
- D. His **later years** were miserable because God removed his hand of blessing.
 1. **1 Kings 11:1-13**. He was allowed to maintain his throne *only for David's sake*.
 2. Alexander Whyte said, *The worm was gnawing all the time in the royal staff upon which Solomon leaned.*
- E. Slide6 Most believe Solomon wrote Proverbs as the **Wise Teacher**. And The Song of Solomon as the **Royal Lover**, early on when he walked w/God. **Then** probably Ecclesiastes near the end of life as **The Preacher** which also carries the idea of *debating*, in this case not w/others **but** w/**himself**. Presenting the topic, discussing it from many view points, then coming to some practical conclusion.
 1. **Did Solomon ever repent before he died?** **A:**The end seems to point to that(12:9-14)
- F. Solomon was the ideal person to write this book
 1. Slide7 He possessed the wealth, wisdom, & opportunity necessary to carry out the "experiments" required for this investigation into **the meaning of life**. (www)
- G. There are 4 fundamental questions of life: 4 areas in which people are *seeking answers*.
 1. You've asked them, I've asked them, every **thinking** person asks them.
 2. They boil down to this: **origin, meaning, morality** and **destiny**.
 - a) How did I come into being? What brings life meaning?
How do I know right from wrong? Where am I headed after I die?
 3. Slide8a **Origin:** *How did I come into being? Where did I come from?*

- a) There are 2 possible answers to the question of origin:
- (1) **First**, that all intelligent life came through *chance mutation*.
 - (a) Nothing + infinite time + chance = everything.
 - (2) **Second**, behind it all there exists an *intelligent creative Being or Force* who started the process, and has continued to guide it with some ultimate purpose in mind.
- b) **Slide8b Meaning:** purpose.
- (1) If we can agree that a **Creator** exists, then you are a **created being**.
The purpose for any created being or thing can only be determined by the Creator who designed the creation.
 - (2) We find our answer for *the purpose question* in the Bible. *We were created in the image of our Creator so we could know Him in personal intimacy. Also, He created us so that we could live in relationship with other persons and to exercise good stewardship over all the rest of creation.*
- c) **Slide8c Morality:** *How do I know right from wrong? How should I live today?*
- (1) There are 3 possible answers to this question:
 - (2) **Option One**, each person can **determine his/her own** morals and laws.
 - (3) **Option Two**, is that we could have a **popular vote** and determine the law by a simple majority rule.
 - (4) **Option Three**, is that the Creator designed a world in which certain **physical laws**, such as the law of gravity would govern the world, and certain **moral & spiritual laws** would govern our relationships *within* that world.
 - (a) If God created an orderly **physical** world, does it not make sense that He would ensure that there was also **moral** order?
Here again we find these laws and values in the Bible.
- d) **Slide8d Destiny:** *Where am I headed after I die?*
- (1) There are 3 possible answers:
 - (2) **Option 1**, **life** is all there is & when we **die**, we return to dust & cease to exist.

(3) **Option 2**, is the **circular view** of history where everything that exists is part of the oneness of the universe which is itself eternal. You may be reborn in several different lifetimes or even life forms.

(a) The end result of successive *positive* reincarnations is said to be this blissful union with the one, the divine force, which is described as **nirvana, a mindless and person-less existence**. (but this idea is not far from dying, returning to dust, and ceasing to exist)

(4) **Option 3**, it is the natural conclusion to all we have talked about. You were created in the image of God so that you might know Him and serve His purpose now **and for all eternity**.

(a) Your Creator is eternal by His very nature **and** thus He alone can give eternal life. **He has made u so that you can live eternally w/Him**.

e) Which 1 of these did you struggle with before becoming a Christian?

f) Mine personally was #2 What brings life meaning? (*there's got to be more to life than this*, i.e. partying)

g) While every major religion makes exclusive claims **about truth**, the Christian faith is unique in its ability to answer all 4 of these questions.

(1) The Christian worldview is coherent.

Christianity is capable of withstanding the toughest philosophical attacks.

VI. Slide9 THE MOTTO (2)

A. **Vanity of vanities** - I like when someone gets right to the point. **No beating around the bush** for *Shlomo* here.

1. Like *Dr. Doolittle's 2 headed Llama*, Solomon places this **book end** of **Vanity of Vanities** in the last chapter also (12:8).

2. NIV - **meaningless**.

3. MSG says, **Smoke, nothing but smoke**. That's what the Quester says, **There's nothing to anything - it's all smoke**. [Quester = *a long search for something*]

- a) Smoke & mirrors lyrics from Imagine Dragons last album - *All I believe, is it a dream, that comes crashing down on me. All that I hope, is it just smoke & mirrors. I want to believe (ohh oh oh oh oh oh oh) But all that I hope, is it just smoke and mirrors?*
- B. **Vanity** – the futile emptiness of trying to be happy *apart* from God.
1. Solomon liked this word. He used it **37 times** in Eccl. as he wrote about **life under the sun**.
 2. It means – emptiness, futility, vapor, that which vanishes quickly & leaves nothing behind. [a popped **soap bubble**. **Cotton candy** touching your tongue. **Vape/vapor** from an e-cigarette, vanishing in moments]
 3. From the **human** point of view, life does appear futile. *It's easy to get pessimistic*
 - a) I saw one bumper sticker that read, *Work, eat, sleep. Work, eat, sleep. Then you die.*
 - b) A Jewish Writer described **life** as **A blister on top of a tumor & a boil on top of that.**
 - c) Carl Sandburg (American Poet) compared life to an **onion**, *You peel one layer at a time & sometimes you weep.*
 - d) Woody Allen said, “In real life people disappoint you. They are cruel, and life is cruel. I think there is no win in life. Reality is a very painful, tough thing that you have to learn and cope with in some way. What we do is escape into fantasy, and it does give us moments of relief.”
 4. What a relief to hear Jesus say, *I have come that they may have **life**, and that they may have it **more abundantly**.*
 5. This **isn't** Solomon's *only message*, stay tuned till the end.

VII. Slide 10a **THE KEY VERSES & PHRASES**

- A. **Under the sun** – 29 times (**also**, *under heaven* 3 x's)
1. It means he's looking at life from **underneath** the sun **not above it**.
 2. From the **human perspective**, he declares all to be empty in our **biosphere**.
 3. **Power, popularity, prestige, pleasure** – **nothing** can fill mans void **but God Himself**. Life under the sun **or** life under the SON? :)
 - a) *Or, Life under the sun is futile w/o a relationship w/the One who **made** the sun.*
 4. **Wealth, works, wisdom, or this world** – all have the same sad conclusion.

- a) Imagine an **Ant** crossing your lawn. Big drops of water pelting him, the smallest of twigs is climbing a mountain to him, feet trying to squish him, a machine with big sharp blades that chase him, big bugs...*life is against me, he must think.*
But that's not it at all *Mr. Ant.* Come **above** the grass. Sunshine, a purpose to all these things, a lawn mower that isn't after you at all, a reason for bigger bugs... food chain, the water drops are from the sprinkler system for the life of the lawn. *Life isn't **against** you necessarily, **nor about** you necessarily.* [You see what you're looking for]

B. **Slide10b Labor** – 23 times. (see vs.3)

1. It Means to toil to the point of exhaustion & yet experience little or no fulfillment in your work. **Like** the 1st of the 3 stonecutters who were asked what they were doing...*The first replied, 'I am making a living.' The second kept on hammering while he said, 'I am constructing a wall.' The third one looked up with a visionary gleam in his eyes and said, 'I am building a cathedral.'*
2. This **toiling to the point of exhaustion** carries w/it the idea of **grief, misery, frustration, & weakness.**
 - a) Moses expresses this in Ps.90:10 *The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*
 - b) Again, looked at from **under the sun**, a person's daily work seems futile. **BUT** the believer can always hold to 1Cor.15:58 *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*
3. *The highest reward for man's toil is not what he gets for it, **but** what he becomes by it.*²
 - a) "Life is 10% what **happens** to us, **and** 90% how we **respond** to it."

VIII.Slide11 **THE RELEVANCE FOR TODAY**

A. Is Ecclesiastes for today?

² John Ruskin, Leadership, Vol. 7, no. 4.

1. Well, he writes about **injustice** to the poor (4:1-3); **crooked politics** (5:8); **incompetent leaders** (10:6,7); **guilty people** allowed to commit more crime (8:11); **materialism** (5:10); a desire for “**the good ol’ days**” (7:10).

B. **Slide12** Practical info for us as we go through Ecclesiastes (from www)

1. Don't bury your head in the sand & pretend problems don't exist.
2. Face life honestly, but look at life from God's perspective.
3. Use your God given Wisdom, but don't expect to solve every problem or answer every question.
4. Obey God's will & enjoy all that He gives you.
5. Death is coming...**so** be prepared.
6. Moses sums up in Ps.90:12 *So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.*

C. **Slide13** Is your life a monotonous life, **or** a daily adventure?