

Theme: True wisdom lives in light of eternity, fearing and obeying God, knowing that each of us will give an account to God.

## I. Intro – Dostoevsky and Woody Allen

- A. In Job, everything set right at end
- B. What about when this does not seem to happen?
- C. Is there really justice and meaning in life?
- D. Dostoevsky – *Crime and Punishment* – Yes! (Raskolnikov)
- E. Woody Allen – *MatchPoint* – No! (explain and quote)
- F. Who is right?

## II. The Structure of Ecclesiastes

- A. The structure of Ecclesiastes
  - 1. Prologue – introducing Qohelet (1:1-11)
  - 2. Main body – Qohelet’s teaching (1:12-12:8)
  - 3. Epilogue – the conclusion of wisdom (12:9-14)
- B. Why the structure matters
  - 1. Not everything Qohelet says is true
  - 2. The final section tells us the truth

## III. The Teaching of Qohelet

- A. Can sound orthodox and wise (3:1-3; 4:9-12)

## B. Everything is meaningless/vain

- 1. Used 38 times in 30 verses (1:2; 2:11; 12:8)
- 2. Work (2:21-23)
- 3. Pleasures (2:1)
- 4. Wisdom (1:17-18)

## C. Speaks of life “Under the sun”

- 1. Used 29 times in 27 verses (1:3; 1:9; 1:14)
- 2. Refers to this present life; present existence

## D. Basic message: 1:14; Longman summary

## IV. The Wise Editor and His Message

### A. Another person wrote epilogue

- 1. Note use of 3<sup>rd</sup> person (12:9-10)
- 2. He gives final word to give ultimate truth

### B. The message of the wise editor

- 1. After everything, final true word (12:13a)
- 2. Fear God (12:13b; Pro 1:7 – wisdom’s theme)
- 3. Keep His commands (12:13b; Deut 6:1-2)
- 4. Whole duty – applies to all (12:13c)

5. God will judge everything
  - a. Everything judged (12:14)
  - b. Judgment day (Mt 12:36; Acts 17:30-31; Rom 2:16)

C. Basic message – live in light of eternity

## V. Conclusion & Summary

- A. Do we see the futility of “life under the sun”?
  1. The fall has produced real problems into life
  2. Hallmark of existentialism and nihilism
  3. Life is good – but there are many real problems
- B. Do we see the hope of resurrection and eternal life?
  1. This will bring final full justice and joy
  2. This is the only thing that can “balance the equation”
  3. Without this hope, Christian life is pitiable
- C. Do we live in light of eternity?
  1. Do we recognize more than life “under the sun”?
  2. Do we recognize that we will stand before God?
  3. Do we see Christ is our only hope in judgment?
  4. Do we fear God now?

5. Do we strive to obey His commands now?

D. Communion: now and at consummation

### The Limits of Wisdom Ecclesiastes: The Conclusion of Wisdom

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11; 12:13-14

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Communion

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Raskolnikov

“It would be fitting if I were apprehended and punished. At least there would be some small sign of justice, some small measure of hope for the possibility of meaning” – Chris Wilton in *MatchPoint*

1 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: 2 a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, 3 a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, Ecclesiastes 3:1-3

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: 10 If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! 11 Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

11 Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun. Ecclesiastes 2:11

"Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Everything is meaningless!" Ecclesiastes 12:8

21 For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. 22 What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun? 23 All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless. Ecclesiastes 2:21-23

I thought in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless. Ecclesiastes 2:1

17 Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind. 18 For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief. Ecclesiastes 1:17-18

“Life is full of trouble, then you die” (Longman, commentary, 34)

1 These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, 2 so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. Deuteronomy 6:1-2

The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. Ecclesiastes 12:13 (NASB)

36 But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. Matthew 12:36

30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." Acts 17:30-31

16 This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares. Romans 2:16