

Theme: Christians do not know the future, but we should face it in faith, trusting that our Sovereign God will work all things for our good.

## I. Intro – Predictions For A New Year?

- A. Always flood of predictions for new year
- B. Some are psychic's promising to foresee future
- C. Many are just educated guesses on major events
- D. Some deal with specific areas - economy, politics, entertainment, sports, etc.
- E. How do we face a new year as God's people?

## II. The Book of Ecclesiastes

- A. The Book of Ecclesiastes is part of OT wisdom literature
  - 1. Wisdom literature talks of how to live in this world
  - 2. Describes how God has made the world
  - 3. Shows that living in line with this leads to blessing
  - 4. Ecclesiastes is a foil against misreading wisdom lit
  - 5. It points out that life does not always go according to plan
- B. The difficulties in reading Ecclesiastes
  - 1. The book is a snapshot of "life under the sun"
  - 2. Does not give whole story
  - 3. Also, some of the "wisdom" here is a foil - recounts errors made
  - 4. Sometimes can overstate the case for effect

5. Wisdom literature requires careful reading!

## C. The importance of warnings in Ecclesiastes

- 1. It reminds us of our limits
- 2. It reminds us of the unpredictability of life
- 3. It reminds us to live life before God

## III. Ecclesiastes and the Future

### A. Recognize no human knows the future

Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked? <sup>14</sup> When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. **Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future.** Ecclesiastes 7:13–14

- 1. This is key point for facing the future - it is unknown
- 2. People telling you they know the future are wrong
- 3. This is true even for Christian "prophets"  
The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law. Deuteronomy 29:29
- 4. The future is secret to us, but God has revealed His Word!

B. The future will hold both good and bad times for us  
Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked? <sup>14</sup> **When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other.** Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future. Ecclesiastes 7:13–14

1. There will be both good & bad times for each of us
2. This is one thing we CAN know about the future!
3. There is no “secret” plan or knowledge to escape this

C. We should respond to different times distinctly  
Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked? <sup>14</sup> **When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other.** Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future. Ecclesiastes 7:13–14

1. We do not face the future as Stoics - unmoved by changing circumstances
2. Good times of prosperity call for happiness, rejoicing, gratitude
3. Bad times call for consideration, thought
4. True friends go through this with us as well  
Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Romans 12:15
5. Real humanity in this fallen world - joy, sorrow, reflection

D. Recognize and embrace the sovereignty of God  
**Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked?** <sup>14</sup> When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: **God has made the one as well as the other.** Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future. Ecclesiastes 7:13–14

1. Strong note on the sovereignty of God - no one stops Him
2. God rules - even in bad times!
3. We face the future trusting in God’s sovereignty

#### IV. Facing A New Year In Faith

A. A wrong conclusion - fatalism & cynicism

1. Some would say - then it makes no difference
2. Nothing we can do - just live as you want
3. But the proper response is to live before God in faith

B. How to live before God in faith

1. Live in faith in Jesus - our covenant God
  - a. This is always where we start - faith in Jesus
  - b. This is the ultimate point of all wisdom literature - to look outside ourselves to God’s wisdom - Jesus  
From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 3:15
  - c. Let 2014 be a year of faith in Jesus!

2. Trust God to work all things to our good  
 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28
  - a. We do not know what will happen in 2014
  - b. We do know God works EVERYTHING to our good!
  - c. This is part of our faith in Jesus - trust Him in good times and bad
  - d. Let 2014 be a year of growing faith in Jesus!
3. Live in light of what we know - God's revealed will  
 The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law. Deuteronomy 29:29
  - a. We do not know future, but we do know God's will
  - b. Revealed Word given that we might live in light of it
  - c. Writer of Ecclesiastes says the same thing  
 Now 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. <sup>14</sup> For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14
    1. We know God's commands - follow them!
    2. Live before God - Who will one day judge us
  - d. Let 2014 be a year of growing obedience to Jesus
4. A plan for a new year - trust and obey!

## Facing A New Year In Faith

Ecclesiastes 7:13-14

December 29, 2013

Communion

Psalm 115:14-15

14 May the Lord make you increase, both you and your children. 15 May you be blessed by the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. Psalms 115:14-15

13 Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked? 14 When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future. Ecclesiastes 7:13-14

## V. Communion - Looking To God At the Turn of the Year