



ST. PAUL'S BIBLE STUDY

Ecclesiastes
3:16-22

Pastor's Notes

Overview: Starting in verse 16, we shift to the middle section of the book of Ecclesiastes. And what does this middle section cover? It covers humanity's biggest problem, which is... humanity. Yes, the world is fallen and corrupted by sin; however, the biggest problems in this world (day-to-day) seem to be due to human sin.

V. 16 One would expect that in leadership that there would be godliness. We expect more of our judges, governors, senators, presidents, and especially clergy. We expect justice and righteousness. However, the opposite seems to be true. Injustice and unfair treatment are often found in the highest places in our society. For example, look at some of the most successful churches in the United States. Do they have justice? No, of course not. They don't preach God's Law. But instead, the Law is often watered down, and God is considered more relaxed, hip, and supposedly relevant. And what about righteousness? Is the righteousness of Jesus given via the Word and Sacraments? Of course not. In these supposedly successful churches, people are often told to pull themselves up by their bootstraps with popular slogans. Consider the trial of Jesus? Were justice and righteousness followed? No way!

V. 17 People may get away with sin for a while; however, it always catches up with a person. In other words, people will lie, cheat, and steal to get to power, but once in power, this junk catches up. There is no escaping sin. Sin chases us around and pops its ugly head up—many times right when a person is at the top of their so-called game. It should not shock us when politicians and leaders are caught for improper sex and money embezzling. It should shock us when they don't. Lord have mercy!

We live in a morally significant universe. What we do in this life has consequences—if not now, especially at the judgment. If we were a bunch of Nihilists (no such thing as moral principles in this life), our thoughts, words, and deeds wouldn't matter. However, there is no such thing as a 'true' Nihilist... for everyone eventually gets offended by other people's actions. Everyone has at least some kind of morals.

V. 18 What a tough judgment. Beasts! This speaks to our humanity, for no one can pass the test of purity in this life.

V. 19 Now, thinking about life under the sun, are we humans any different than animals? Sure we have wills, life insurance, endowments, etc. But in the end, we die and return to dust like the average cow.

V. 20 Death is the great equalizer in life. We all go to the same place—death. Whoever dies with the most toys does not win—but is dead like everyone else without toys.

V. 21 Without the Bible, do we know what happens after death? Our human eyes cannot see beyond death—we see only death. All that our human eyes can conclude is that mankind and animals both end up dead and in the ground. But hey, at least we are not eaten (as humans) first.

V. 22 Even a complete secularist needs to admit that Solomon is right in verse 22. Enjoy what you have because you can't take it with you. Oh, but how we try to live as if we can take everything with us. Are our fights over insignificant things that important, considering that it won't matter after we die? Tragically we humans will get worked up about the smallest things and then shrug off the big things in life, like death. Even in the church, we will fight over the color of the carpet with tenacity, but when it comes to doctrine (doctrine that could impact one's eternal destiny), we say, "Let's get along, after all, we are Christians."