

SCRIPTURE JOURNAL CONVERSATIONS

Ecclesiastes — Conversation 1

Yesterday I hinted that I was going to do something different tonight.

We're going to have a SCRIPTURE JOURNAL CONVERSATION. I'm going to sit with a couple of the guys in our "living room" and have a conversation built around our Bible Bus readings in the book of Ecclesiastes.

I believe the book of Ecclesiastes is such a timely place to find ourselves in our COVID-19 world because so much of this book has to do with the way we interpret life in our broken world. *"WHY is this happening?" "WHY is this happening?" "HOW did we get to this place?" "WHERE is all this heading?" "WHERE am I going to end up?"* The majority of what the author of Ecclesiastes said was processed through the grid of a very specific world view. I'll get to that "world view" in a moment.

The author (whom I believe to be Solomon) identifies himself as a preacher. And as we've been working our way through the first 8 chapters (as of today) he has been preaching to us!

So we should read the book like a sermon. When you and I are listening to someone preach we listen with some understanding of his point of view and we listen knowing that the particular details of his preaching are building towards a conclusion.

Ecclesiastes is pretty much autobiographical. Solomon is preaching about things that are absolutely crucial for life — and he does it by way of his incredibly transparent personal testimony. THAT is critical to grasping and understanding what the preacher is delivering

Solomon takes us on a crazy journey through his life experiences — and no matter how crazy his thinking was at any point in his testimony — no matter how many weird conclusions he came to along the way — they were not final conclusions!

Everything is leading to the **13th verse** of the **12th chapter** when he says, “Here’s the conclusion of the whole matter!”

Ecclesiastes 12:13 The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

Solomon says a lot of things that contradict what is said elsewhere in scripture. But they have to be read in the context of where he was, or better yet, where he wasn’t, in his relationship with God. He describes the world that all of us see — all of us live in — all of us experience. But He is looking at it as a man who thinks and lives as if God doesn’t matter.

A key to understanding how Solomon arrives at his conclusions is his constant use of the phrase *under the sun* — he uses it **29 times**. When we read that phrase, he’s telling us that he was trying to understand life from ground level. He’s talking about the world that we can see; the material world. He is processing life without any vertical reference point. He draws conclusions about life with no regard the eternal and no ultimate accountability to God.

In light of that we can say that Ecclesiastes is filled with what we might call **true lies**. Looking at the world from the perspective that “*God does not matter*” — *that life is temporal and there will be no answering to God*” — **it is true — all is vanity**. But because that world view is wrong — because the premise is false — it **is not true** that **all is vanity**.

Solomon takes us on a long journey to help us think through just how wrong this perspective is.

