

SESSION 2 – “Location-Wise”

...Get Wisdom! – Because You (and your peeps) are Doing Life “Under-the-Sun”

WELCOME to Life-Under-the-Sun

[Ecc 1:3] "...the phrase “under the sun” (used twenty-eight times in the book) draws a geographical line between God, who is “in heaven,” and man, who lives “on earth” (Eccl. 5:2; cf. Matt. 6:9), and also a theological one. This phrase designates not the secular life (life without reference to God) but the fallen world that both the secular and nonsecular share as sinners under God’s curse—his faithful carrying out of his promised punishment to Adam. What is found on earth—the thorn and thistle-infested ground, our sun-soaked sweaty toil of the ground, our bodies dying and returning to the ground—is not found with God in heaven. We are “under the sun”; he is above it.

So when Pastor Solomon asks his question (“What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?” Eccl. 1:3), it is a curse-filled question, one that has already been answered by that sober superlative—“Vanity of vanities, . . . all is vanity!” (v. 2). It is also one that will be further answered pessimistically in verses 4-11." **Douglas Sean O'Donnell**, Ecclesiastes, Ref. Exp. Comm.

?? - What Were You Expecting?

The Ecclesiastes DOCUMENTARY (Ecclesiastes Highlight Reel)

...Remember Solomon's Resume: **1Ki 4:29-31** *And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore,³⁰ so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt.³¹ For he was wiser than all other men,*

-- **He's Going to Put "Life in a Fallen World" ('Under-the-Sun') under his high-tech 'Wisdom Microscope' ...and then he's going to write His "Doctoral Thesis" on the Doctrine of Depravity!** ...He's going to present his dissertation to us in the form of Ecc.—And then, hopefully, we will be convinced that we need God more than we ever thought!

Ecc 1:2, 8-9, 14-15 ² Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. ...⁸ All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. ⁹ What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. ...¹⁴ I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind. ¹⁵ What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted.

...Ecc (Solomon's Molecular Vexation passages) ...are also the things that "Vex Us"!!

- **"Pleasure-Vexation"** is Under-the-Sun ... **Ecc 2:1** ¹ *I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity.*

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- **"Achievement-Vexation"** is Under-the-Sun ... **Ecc 2:4-5, 9, 11** ⁴ *I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. ⁵ I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. ...⁹ So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. ...¹¹ Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind*
- **"Oppression-Vexation"** is Under-the-Sun ... **Ecc 4:1** ¹ *Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them.*
- **"Loneliness-Vexation"** is Under-the-Sun ... **Ecc 4:7-11**
- **"Money-Vexation"** is Under-the-Sun ... **Ecc 5:10-11** *He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. ¹¹ When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes?*
- **"Physical & Emotional Suffering-Vexation"** is Under-the-Sun ... **Ecc 5:17** *"... all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger.*
- **"Meaning-Vexation"** is hard Under-the-Sun ... **Ecc 7:13-14** *Consider the work of God: who can make straight what he has made crooked? ¹⁴ In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him.*
- **"Unfairness-Vexation"** is Under-the-Sun... **Ecc 7:15** *In my vain life I have seen everything. There is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his evil-doing. ...**Ecc 8:14** "...there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity.*

Whoa! What's the Deal?

"But in the poetry that opens his book the Preacher is not commenting on what life is like without Christ. He is not saying this repetitive roundabout is what life is like from a secularist perspective. This is not what the world feels like from the viewpoint of existential nihilism, or postmodern navel gazing. It's just what the world is like. It's reality. It's the same for everyone, Christian or non-Christian, adherent or atheist: we each live under the sun." **David Gibson**, "Live Life Backwards", p. 36

Divine Design – In Life-Under-the-Sun

Solomon is Explaining the Molecular Structure of a Fallen World! ...an Environment that was created for the Permeating Presence of God is Now Operating WITHOUT That!! ...

...Why is this beautiful creation that was formed by God capable of FEELING so Awful?

Rom 8:18ff ...**GOD Injected This World with a "Futility Infection"** ...it finds its way into every element of "Life-Under-the-Sun"

Rom 8:18-25 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

...WHY Would God Do That? (This is such a "Pervasive Experience" ...He Must Have a Pretty Big Reason!!)

v. 20, 24-25

...Life-Under-the-Sun is **FALLEN**, it is **CORRUPTED** ...It is **TEMPORARY**! It is Not Our Home! ...**BUT**, we have a tendency to fall in love with "Lesser Things" and Miss What is Ultimate!!

Get Wisdom for This "Life-Under-the-Sun" ...for Yourself & Others

Futility is Real and Really Frustrating! ('Vexing'- *kâ'as* (Heb.); *to trouble; by implication, to grieve, rage, be indignant: — be angry, provoke (to anger, unto wrath), have sorrow, vex* (Enhanced Strong's Dictionary)

Ecc 1:8 "All things are full of weariness... dissatisfaction ...unfulfillment

GROANING is Groaning! ...It's the Real "Ouch!" Effect that Futility Produces! ...Rom 8:18-20

...What's in Your Groaning?

??— Who/What are you "Blaming" for Your Groaning? ...This is a Critical "Get Wisdom" Insight!

- The Default Setting of Modern Man is the assumption that All Displeasure Can be Avoided
...Katrina ...Bourbon Street Terrorist ...L.A. Wildfires ...Global Warming
- If there is Displeasure—someone is to Blame!!
 - Who are you blaming for your "groaning"?

Recognize... you could be "unwisely" expecting the peeps in your life to "turn off/down" the groaning in your life—which is actually coming from Rom. 8!!

- Is this true in your marriage? ...Is it true in your work? ...at Church? ...in Your Extended Family

- Remember! In the Bible "Displeasure" (Groaning) has Other Explanations than the People Closest to You ...&... Displeasure is in Our Lives by God's GOOD, Sovereign Design!!

??—How Much of Your Energy, Efforts, & Attitude is being Wasted ...Because we lack the Wisdom to Understand that "there's More Going On Here than People & their Personalities!!

...What's in the Groaning of Others?

-- What's the ingredients in your wife's groaning? ...your children? ...your parents? ...your boss?

The People You're Doing Life With—Are Doing Life-Under-the-Sun!!

Ecc 1:8-9, 15 ⁸ All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. ⁹ What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. ...¹⁵ What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted.

1Pet 3:7 *"...husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way"*

...Husbands, GET WISDOM! ...Recognize and be prepared and be understanding—Your Wife is Doing Life-Under-the-Sun!!

Eph 6:4 *"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger"*

...Fathers, GET WISDOM!! ...Recognize your sons and daughters (in the various times/seasons of their lives) are doing Life-Under-the-Sun!!

??—Will I then play the BLAME-GAME with my peeps? ...will I conclude "I made a mistake" in marrying you?? ...will I be gripped and paralyzed by surprise? (**1Pet 4:12** *"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you."* ... **Jn 16:33** *"In the world you have tribulation ("vanity molecules"). But take heart; I have overcome the world."*

...We Have Solomon's Lab Report! We should not be "surprised or shocked" that "everything", "all of life" seems to come up short! It can feel difficult, wearying, unfulfilling, troubling—but Jesus has OVERCOME the Chemistry of Vanity!

??—When you taste "weariness or emptiness or unfulfillment or trouble" in your job, career ...in your ministry role ...in your church context ...Are you going to respond like someone who's never read Solomon's Lab Report? or Peter's Summary—"Do not be surprised!"

Whatever You Do... Get Wisdom! Get insights and Understanding! (Pr 4) ...because "Life-Under-the-Sun" on "Planet Futility" is going to be tough enough! Whatever You Do—Don't Add STUPID to Your Life!!

SESSION 2 – EXERCISE/ASSIGNMENT

What Did You Expect?

- What things or experiences in your life have caught you by surprise? You didn't anticipate how a season or experience could feel?
- What has been a source of disappointment in your life?

Ecc. 1:8 describes life under the sun as containing weariness, dissatisfaction, and feeling unfulfilled. How have you experienced settings or moments that felt like that?

Ecc. 1:14 describes crooked things that can't be made straight and an abundance of things in life that are "lacking" and seem to come up short. How have you experienced this verse in your life?

Life contains seasons of adventure and seasons of sameness (even boredom). What aspects of your life feel "adventuresome" at this point and which ones feel rather familiar—even boring?

Read the following quote and consider how it applies to you.

"So, in Ecclesiastes 2, the Preacher basically tells us that life under the sun always has nine basic amusements available for us on its closet shelves. Therefore, our options for a high under the sun always abound! But take note. The same old closet has offered these same nine games to every generation under the sun. These games are fun, but they are very old, tattered, and badly worn with use. Oh, and these are the only games in town. • Jokes (Eccl. 2:2) • Alcohol (Eccl. 2:3) • Art (Eccl. 2:4) • Nature (Eccl. 2:5–6) • Money and possessions (Eccl. 2:7–8) • Music (Eccl. 2:8) • Sex (Eccl. 2:8) • Affirmation (Eccl. 2:9) • Work (Eccl. 2:11)

Under the sun, we scavenger hunt for happy things; ancient, this scrounging (Gen. 3:6)." Zack Eswine, "Recovering Eden", p. 65

- What of these pleasures do you tend to "Scavenger hunt for" personally in some significant way?

1 Pet 3:7 and Eph 6:4 call for us to "understand" other people in our lives. Who are the people in your life and what does it mean for you to "get wisdom" for them in their season or time of life? How have you considered or understood their life experience "under-the-sun"?

As you walk with other people in their struggles in "life-under-the-sun" would you describe yourself more as: (1) an understanding and sympathetic person ...(2) a person who offers a quick-fix solution/bible passage ...(3) One of Job's counselors (trying to help people figure out what they are doing wrong)?

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