

THRU THE BIBLE SYNTHESIS

"Part XV: Ecclesiastes - Providing A Correct World View For A Life Of Meaning"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) The December 18 issue of Time reported on woman, Anne Scheiber who worked all her life and saved up her meager earnings as an IRS agent. She invested it, living like a pauper and being badly mistreated at work. When she died at age 101 last January, she left \$22 million to the Hebrew Yeshiva University. Norman Lamm, president of the school receiving her gift, said: "She was obviously very intelligent and very unhappy. It would have been so much happier for her if she had (given her money) in her lifetime so she could see the benefits accrued to others."

What could Anne Scheiber have done so that her life might have amounted to more than living a miserable life for 58 years only to leave \$22 million to OTHERS when she died?!

(2) A Christian father whose only daughter became pregnant out of wedlock recently said of the tragedy: "My dreams have all been crushed!" **What does this father, his wife and daughter and brothers do NOW to make something valuable out of the future?!**

(3) Reverend Tom Buckley of AMOC supplied us an urgent news bulletin about a sudden tragedy. AMOC Missionary Pastor, Marlin Chadbourn was killed in a traffic accident in Kansas two weeks ago this afternoon. He leaves his wife, Beth and three children, Katesa, Jonathan and Stephen to survive him. The missionary church is also without a pastor. Needs abound on the emotional, mental, financial and physical planes. It was so sudden, so catastrophic, so **unexpected!**

In view of where these people are right now in this tragedy, what should they do to make the most of their futures?!

This is December 31, 1995. There are only four years and half a day left for us to live in the 20th century. In view of where we have come, in view of where we are now and in view of where we are headed, what can we do NOW for our lives really to amount to something of lasting value beyond our time on earth?

(We turn to the "Need" section of the sermon . . .)

***Need:* "As I mark where I am right now in life, and contemplate the future, I want the REST of my life to COUNT for something of lasting value! Yet, I don't know where to begin! Any ideas?!"**

I. **With history's increasing spiritual apostasy of group institutions, the individual was left dangling without the CORRECT WORLD VIEW he needed to live with MEANINGFUL PURPOSE in life.**

- A. Though God created the world and set man up as His deputy, sin deposed him, so Satan became ruler on earth, Gn. 1-5; 2 Cor. 4:4.
- B. The Lord renewed history through the Noahic flood, Gen. 6:1-9:7.
- C. Yet, Noah's descendant, Nimrod, began an apostasy, opposing God's rule on the earth, Gn. 10:8-10; 11:1-9; Rev. 12:1-3.
- D. Now, Nimrod's error urged men **not** to trust **God** to feel **secure** enough **to scatter** around the earth as **God** had urged, **but** to unite and depend on **things in this** life for fulfillment, Gn. 9:1-17; 11:1-4.
- E. This was the birth of **pagan secularism**: it led men to **VIEW things** and **this life** as the **SOLE SOURCES** of **MEANING**, **disillusioning** the naive and inciting **God's wrath** on its promoters! (Rom. 1:18-23)
- F. God thus chose Abraham to start a nation to check this sin, Gn. 12:1-3
- G. After many challenges en route, that nation, Israel, led by her failing priesthood and monarchy failed to curb Nimrod's apostasy and became seduced by it until God sent her into captivity, Gn. 12:4-2 Chronicles.
- H. Israel's failing **institutions** left the **individual** tempted to **adopt Nimrodian secularism**, much to his consequential **loss of hope!**

II. **To counter secularism and its disillusionment, Ecclesiastes urges us to SWITCH the WORLD for GOD as our Source of Meaning!**

- A. The word "ecclesiastes" comes from ***Qoheleth*** which means "one who convenes and speaks at an assembly", ***Ryrie Study Bible, KJV***, Intro. to Eccles., p. 944. Since the assembly is the nation Israel (Ecc. 1:1, *Ibid.*), the message is to individuals in Israel's temple assembly!
- B. The theme of the book is that man's **earthly** life **viewed "under the sun"** (as a **secular ecosystem** empirically considered) is **vain!** (1:2-3)
- C. **Thus, Ecclesiastes shows individuals the utter futility of making this life one's SOURCE of MEANING so as TO WEAN them away from Nimrodian apostasy to seek the transcendent, eternal God's purposes for him!** Here is an outline for Ecclesiastes:
 1. All human **achievement** is futile if viewed empirically, 1:1-4.
 - a. This earthly life's cycles are futile if viewed empirically, 1:4-11.
 - b. Thus, human wisdom in this life is empirically futile, 1:12-18.
 - c. Thus, pleasure and wealth are empirically futile also, 2:1-11.
 - d. Thus, materialism is futile if empirically considered, 2:12-23.

- e. Accordingly, learn to be content with what achievements **God** permits us to have in life, Ecc. 2:24-26; 3:1-22: (1) Be content with **God's** providences, 2:24-26. (2) Be content with **God's** order of our life's events, 3:1-11. (3) Be happy with **God's** good gifts in life, 3:12-13. (4) Be content with **God's** perspective of future judgment to motivate us to use His gifts well, 3:14-21,22.
 2. Life's **circumstances** are futile if viewed empirically, 4:1-5:20:
 - a. Oppression exists, making life futile if viewed empirically, 4:1-3.
 - b. Work makes this life appear futile if viewed empirically, 4:4-12.
 - c. Political success is futile if viewed empirically, 4:13-16.
 - d. False worship is futile if viewed empirically, 5:1-7.
 - e. Hoarded riches are futile if viewed empirically, 5:8-17.
 - f. Summary: Be content with what circumstances of life are our portion according to **God's** will, whether good or bad, 5:18-20.
 - g. Owning wealth, a major goal of men is thus also futile, 6:1-12.
 3. In view of these conclusions, here is advice on living, 7:1-12:8:
 - a. In view of man's evil, prepare to **account to God**, 7:1-29.
 - b. In view of **God's** inscrutable providences, prepare to give an **account to God** by how we live, 8:1-9:18.
 - c. In view of life's uncertainties, live uprightly before **God**, 10:1-20
 - d. In view of the aging process, do the best with what resources **God** has given us to live **uprightly** and sensibly, 11:1-12:8.
 4. **Summary: (a) this work was penned by an able author under divine inspiration, so we must heed it, 12:9-12; (b) it concludes that we live to give an account to God (NOT for life itself, 13f).**
- III. **Ecclesiastes contributes to the "thread of redemption" by turning man FROM secularism BACK to God to prepare to point him to ETERNAL fulfillment in Christ, Mk. 8:36; Jn. 3:16; Rv. 21:1-22:5.**

Application: To make our lives COUNT, resist seeking fulfillment in this life, but obey God by (1) believing on Christ as Savior, Acts 17:30; Jn. 3:16. (2) Then (a) confess our sins (1 J. 1:9) and (b) depend on the Spirit (Ga. 5:16-23) to (c) obey Scripture (1 Jn. 2:1-6). (3) Then view this life as but a stage for an upright life, be content with what blessings God gives now BUT expect total fulfillment only in eternity!

Lesson: This life cannot fulfill man, for, due to sin, it is a field of broken dreams! Rather, this life is GOD'S STAGE! So, (1) fear Him, (2) obey Him, (3) be content with His gifts, and so (4) expect His bliss in eternity!

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

Charlotte Elliott grew up in England at the end of the eighteenth century, living a carefree life as a productive artist, humorist and author. Life was good and "fulfilling" for her.

But at age thirty, Charlotte's health began to fail and in a year she was bedridden. Her sudden loss of health and limitations in life led Charlotte to a despondent outlook on life. Concerned, her father invited evangelist Cesar Malan to their home and asked him to speak with his daughter. As Dr. Malan conversed with Charlotte, she admitted that she needed Christ in her life, but that she didn't know how to find him. Cesar Malan replied, "Come to Him **just as you are.**"

Charlotte accepted Christ as her Savior on her bed of illness. Though her physical health did not improve, her spirits were lifted by a newfound faith in Jesus. Some years later, when everyone else in the household was ministering to build a school for the children of poor clergymen, Charlotte was at home in bed, unable to serve and frustrated at her illness. However, in an act of faith, she wrote down what she **did** have going for her. Recalling Cesar Malan's witness for her to come to Christ "**just as you are,**" she wrote these words:

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!"

Charlotte's sister-in-law, without her knowledge, found the poem and had it printed in 1835. The sale of that poem brought in more funds than all of the other projects by Charlotte's associates! It has since been used as an effective tool to urge thousands to trust in Christ in evangelistic crusades down through the decades!

Charlotte Elliott's lot in life was that of **losing** her carefree lifestyle and productivity as a writer and artist in balmy England to **drive** her to Christ so she could serve God as few others have done -- **by writing a song under suffering** that God has used ever since! **In like fashion, we must lose our earthly lives in the will of God to find them productive beyond this world's transient futility!**