

Ecclesiastes 5.1-7

Going to Church makes You a.....

WELCOME to CHURCH! It would be INTERESTING to POLL Everyone

WHY did you Come! CURIOUS to see RAYCOM Building A

WHAT do you Expect to BENEFIT by Coming Here? NOW? In ETERNITY?

SURPRISED you're back to hear MORE about OLD SOURPUSS! Qohelet

Qohelet not NAME but TITLE > 'ONE who GATHERS the ASSEMBLY'

Gather to TEACH? to QUESTION? Gather to MOAN Life's UNCERTAINTY

We've called him SEARCHER – The PHILOSOPHER – maybe The WHINER!

So FAR Nothing has MADE him TOO HAPPY, TODAY he goes to CHURCH!

FIRST – a bit of BACKGROUND / REVIEW – thus far we HAVE SEEN...

1. Teacher in Turmoil

a. Is Wisdom Worthless?

FIVE Books of OT – Job, Psa, Prov, Eccles, S of S > Called WISDOM BOOKS

Word WISDOM used more than 50 X's in Proverbs

Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them. Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. Esteem her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you. She will set a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendor. Proverbs 4:5-9

EMPHASIS of these 5 Books of OT > Wisdom is GREATEST TREASURE

Eccles written LATER: GLORY of ISRAEL Passed > Exile, Defeat, Humiliation

Long Ago Wise King SOLOMON Died APOSTATE > Mourned by 1000 Wives!

NOW Qohelet LAMENTS that WISE PEOPLE DIE JUST LIKE FOOLS!

I turned my thoughts to consider wisdom, and also madness and folly...The wise man has eyes in his head, while the fool walks in the darkness; but I came to realize that the same fate overtakes them both. Then I thought in my heart, "The fate of the fool will overtake me also. What then do I gain by being wise?" I said in my heart, "This too is meaningless" ...Like the fool, the wise man too must die!

Ecclesiastes 2:12-16

Never gazed BEYOND the Sun to KNOW God of GRACE and GLORY

b. Labor does not Last

WORLD wants to LEAVE LEGACY > IMPRESSIVE Buildings, MEMORIALS ADMIRE > TRUMP Tower and ROGER FEDERER Warm Up-Jacket> So....

I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. I made gardens and parks...I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the work into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless.

Ecclesiastes 2:4,18-19

No Matter HOW HARD you WORK, What you EARN is ENJOYED by Another

c. Time means Trouble

WISDOM Teacher needs to KNOW the RIGHT TIME for RIGHT ACTIONS

Bk of PROVERBS: **PRINCIPLES:** Wise KNOW when is Right Time & Situation

4 Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself.

5 Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes.

Proverbs 26.4,5

2 Verses SOME CLAIM show BIBLE CONTRADICTS ITSELF! Not at All!

WISE Person – Theme of Proverbs – KNOWS RIGHT Time for RIGHT Words

Qohelet acknowledges > There is RIGHT TIME > ORDAINED by GOD

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven

Ecclesiastes 3:1

Qohelet BELIEVES in SOVEREIGN GOD > Time in GOD'S Hands

But there is NO CHANCE of KNOWING PLAN or PURPOSE of this God

I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but *time and chance happen to them all. Moreover, no man knows when his hour will come: As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so men are trapped by evil times that fall unexpectedly upon them.* Ecclesiastes 9:11-12

Just ONE THING Certain about TIME > IT WILL END! VERY SOON!

For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten. Ecclesiastes 9:5

Qohelet SINGS the BLUES: Complains about LIFE, All is MEANINGLESS!

Can't Get No Satisfaction > empty WORLD'S PLEASURES, WISDOM, WORK

2. Worshipper who is Worried - (read text here 5.1-7)

So Now our Jewish SEARCHER Comes to the HOUSE of God > CHURCH!

Some Evangelical Commentators see PROFOUND Lessons for Church Behavior

Two Interpretations:

1. Qohelet is GRATEFUL Worshipper of God of BIBLE > Reverent, Thoughtful
2. Qohelet is GRUDGING Acknowledger of a God he does NOT Know or Trust

Favor # 2 > YET, IRRELIGIOUS WORLD can TEACH RELIGIOUS PEOPLE

First Heard Good News 16 yr. > Weekends = BEER and MARIJUANA
 Went to CAMP and Believed > NOW Jesus had to FIT into MY WEEKENDS
 PLASTERED on Friday and Saturday > PRAISE the Lord on SUNDAYS!
 Sometimes Jesus FOUND His Way into My Fridays & Saturday > I became
 DRUNKEN EVANGELIST > Led a Few Friends to FAITH while DRUNK
 Jim Kuch – Son of Mormon Bishop – Died of AIDS about 20 Years Ago asked:

‘If you REALLY Believe in JESUS, why are you DRUNK?’

God used Jim to make me GIVE JESUS – Whole Weekend – WHOLE LIFE!

WORLDLY WISDOM can HELP our CHURCH Behavior > Not Rocket Science!

WHY do you Come? Enjoy the AIR CON? Parade your RIGHTEOUSNESS?

HOW do you Come? > With your Saturday Night HANGOVER like ME?

HEART of Gratefulness for BLESSED WEEK > Ready to Praise Him?

WHEN do you Come? ON Time? What if Jesus were Here...and you were LATE?

BIG NEWS > HE IS HERE! And He wants your BEST esp in Worship

WHAT do you Come with? Tithes? Willing Heart? Encouragement? Teachable?

WHO do you Come For? Is it for GOD or YOURSELF? Your Name? Your Will?

Qohelet Not go to WORSHIP but to WATCH > Not to CONFESS but CRITICIZE

Paid CAREFUL Attention to DETAIL > NOT to DEVOTION

Goes to CHURCH to COUNT the HYPOCRITES > NOT Include HIMSELF!

Ch 5.1-7 Qohelet Considers > SACRIFICES, PRAYERS, and VOWS

Fake religion distressed him as much as proud wisdom, vain pleasure, abused justice, or hollow freedom.

David Allan Hubbard

a. Come but don't Commit

OPERATIVE Word for WORSHIP > '**NOT**' used 7 X's in 7 verses / DIVINE #!

v. 1 ...fools, who do **not** know that they do wrong

v. 2 Do **not** be quick with your mouth, do **not** be hasty in your heart

v. 4 When you make a vow to God, do **not** delay in fulfilling it.

v. 5 It is better **not** to vow

v. 6 Do **not** let your mouth lead you into sin

Common Sense View of Church > **Be Quiet, Be Discreet, Be Quick to Get Out!**

This writers target is the well-meaning person who likes a good sing and turns up cheerfully enough to church; but who listens with half an ear, and never quite gets round to what he has volunteered to do for God. Derek Kidner

v. 4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow.

- You know what? Uh...that...commitment back there was a mistake.
- I made a mistake. I...I married the wrong person, you see.
- Oops! I shouldn't have said that I'd rearrange my priorities and spend more time with such and such.
- I...I didn't think that through. It was a mistake to commit myself to this project, especially since it's so time-consuming and exhausting.

It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt.

Lisa Simpson of *The Simpsons*

FULFILL your VOWS // Do NOT TRY to CHANGE WIRING of Your Apt.

'DON'T get self FRIED MESSING w/something you know nothing ABOUT'

v. 5 It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it.

BETTER YET > Do NOT even MAKE a Vow > Common Pattern of Qohelet

I declared that the dead, who had already died, are happier than the living, who are still alive. *But better than both* is he who has not yet been Ecclesiastes 4:2-3

RELIGIOUS GAMES are for FOOLS: PLAY it SAFE! Be Low-Profile at Church!

v. 6 Do not let your mouth lead you into sin. And do not protest to the temple messenger, "My vow was a mistake." Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands?

Make a FOOLISH VOW you Will be CAUGHT by Your WORDS

MESSENGER?? > a Religious BILL COLLECTOR during time of Qohelet?
NO Biblical Examples of Such Office in Israel > maybe Priests? maybe Angels?

MISTAKE?! Do NOT Say that = INTENTIONAL Sin, eg. UNFORGIVABLE

v. 6 **“destroy the work of your hands”** > *Hey God! Do you see me!! In Church!*

Common IDEA – We **EARN POINTS** with God in **CHURCH** – EARN MERIT

Going into MEXICAN Restaurant does NOT MAKE you and ENCHILADA

Going into FASHION BOUTIQUE does NOT MAKE you a SUPER MODEL

Going into UNIVERSITY does NOT MAKE you a SCHOLAR

Going to CHURCH does NOT MAKE you a CHRISTIAN

MEETING JESUS makes you a CHRISTIAN > We can do that ANYWHERE!
WORSHIP God for what HE HAS ALREADY DONE > SAVED us in CHRIST

QOHELET, Like many CHURCH-Goers does NOT Understand > **Play it SAFE!**

Do NOT Raise your Hand > Might Get JOB you DO NOT WANT
Do NOT Stick OUT your NECK > Might GET your HEAD Chopped OFF!

*Member of ICF > As Youth Family Faithfully attended CHURCH in USA
When PRIEST spoke FINAL AMEN > His Father would BEGIN Stop Watch
How Quickly – Out Door – Into Car – Drive Home – Change Clothes – Front of TV*

b. Pray but don't Expect Much

v. 1 Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong.

They're so FOOLISH > Not even AWARE their SACRIFICES are EVIL to God

Qohelet was Familiar with STRONG WORDS of God from PROPHET ISAIAH

Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me...When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Isaiah 1:13-15

FOOLS in CHURCH think THEY'RE GAINING POINTS with God by Sacrifices

vs. 2 Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God.

One who talks, thinks, but one who keeps silent, thinks more.

a Luganda proverb from Uganda

v. 3 As a dream comes when there are many cares, so the speech of a fool when there are many words. >> ANALOGY to Command in vs. 2

HARD WORK so WEARYING > Loose touch with REALITY

// Similar LOSS of REALITY to THINK Many Words INFLUENCE God

PROVERB UNKNOWN Today > PT. is CLEAR ONLY FOOL Prays MUCH

False worship is as much an affront to Him as obscene insults are to a wife or husband. Better to bribe a judge than to ply God with hollow words; better to slap a policeman than to seek God's influence by meaningless gestures; better to perjure yourself in court than to harry God with promises you cannot keep.

David Allan Hubbard

v. 7 Much dreaming and many words are meaningless.

Common Theme: FANTASY > DREAMS and MANY Religious WORDS

...the dreams appear to be daydreams, reducing worship to verbal doodling.

Derek Kidner

HEY!!! Are YOU Daydreaming RIGHT NOW!?!??

ONLY a FOOL WOULD Speak MANY Words in RELIGIOUS Gathering

'HEY!! I RESEMBLE that REMARK!!'

3. Deity who is Distant

Reason Church DID not MEAN Much to Qohelet > God did not MEAN MUCH

Coming to HOUSE OF GOD > Entering HOSTILE TERRITORY

a. Heaven Above

v. 2 God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few.

God is IN HEAVEN > Emphasizing DISTANCE and perhaps DISINTEREST

ALL peoples "under the sun" or "under heaven" or "on earth" more than **35 X's**
LIMITED Horizon Line of HUMAN Search, HOPE is beyond our RADAR Screens

8 References to God in Chapter 3:

3.10 I have seen the burden God has laid on men.

3.14 everything God does will endure forever...God does it so men will fear him

3.15 God will call the past to account

3.17 God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked

3.18 God tests men so that they may see that they are like the animals

NOT a HAPPY CLAPPY Day at Church > Dreaded Visit to HOUSE of GOD

Better Keep MOUTH SHUT, HEAD DOWN, GET OUT FAST as Possible!

b. Hostile Territory

v. 1 Guard your steps when you go to the house of God > Walk on HOT COALS

Go into CHURCH like going into DENTIST'S OFFICE for a ROOT CANAL

v. 7 Therefore stand in awe of God. = FEAR GOD > define FEAR of God?

1. REVERENT TRUST: Biblical, HOLY AWE before Great & Gracious God

2. RAGING TERROR: Fright before Powerful, Dangerous, Unpredictable Deity

c. Uncertain End Life is UNCERTAIN, UNCONTROLLABLE, and then OVER!

HAUNTING Theme of Qohelet: DARK DOORWAY of Death > UNCERTAINTY

vs. 6,7 Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands?... Therefore stand in awe of God.

NO Hope or CONFIDENCE things will be PUT RIGHT in the END

Statements about END / FUTURE are RESIGNATION not AFFIRMATION
NOT Leading READER to Edge of Cliff and Handing PARACHUTE of HOPE
CLIFF > JUMP NOW or LATER > One way or Another > YOU ARE TOAST!

There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: righteous men who get what the wicked deserve, and wicked men who get what the righteous deserve. This too, I say, is meaningless. Ecclesiastes 8:14

Mediocre Living > Daily Grind > Doing Best, but NOT Know Enough

4. Savior who has Come

OT > HOLY REALMS > HOLY PLACES where GOD IS, Increasing Amounts

Tabern/Temple > Had HOLY Place and MOST HOLY PLACE > God's HOUSE

a. Words of Jesus

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem... Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. John 4:19-23

Woman hears PROPHET, Now She NEEDS a PRIEST

HE Knows She is a SINNER > perhaps He knows WHERE can FIND a SAVIOR?

FORGIVENESS was GEOGRAPHIC, Must Come to GOD in ONE, RIGHT Place

JEWS > TEMPLE in Jerusalem / SAMARITANS > Holy Site of Mt. GERIZIM

Jesus WELL AWARE of Samaritan Thinking > Spoke Woman's 'Language'

BUT Jesus did not PROPOSE Samaritan Religion as ACCEPTABLE Preparation

OT > HOLY REALMS / NT > HOLY RELATIONSHIPS: with God ANYWHERE

GOD'S NOW has BEGUN > Worship in CATACOMBS or CATHEDRALS
INFO-TECH Parks or APARTMENTS > GATHERED in HIS NAME!

NT Worship of God is NOT matter of GEOGRAPHY but of GRACE

COME instead GRACIOUS SAVIOR, ANYWHERE in World He Made & Rules

b. Work of Jesus

And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. Matthew 27:50-51

CURTAIN hung to KEEP PEOPLE AWAY from God in Most Holy Place

God DESECRATED His own Temple > torn from TOP to BOTTOM > HE did it!

OPEN arms of Jesus ready to EMBRACE > Open WIDE to WHOLE WORLD

1st PRIORITY for People of God NOT Come to CHURCH > Come to CHRIST

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body
Hebrews 10:19-20

Coming to Church > Makes you WHATEVER you CAME IN AS!

Greedy? Happy? Mad? Glad? Sad? Loving? Hating? Impatient? Unfulfilled?

BICF – this Service – SURELY MY SERMONS > CANNOT CHANGE YOU!!

COME to Jesus > WHO you can MEET Right Now in Service – by Word & Spirit

CAN Make you NEW > RENEWED > and FOREVER NEW in Him!

Access to God is through the body, or human nature, of Jesus that he offered up in death to God as a sacrifice for sin. The temple veil that was torn from top to bottom, as if by an unseen hand, made it clear that people could enter God's presence with boldness and confidence through him... This way will always be open and never be closed because the one who died has atoned for sin and is forever alive. Hywel R. Jones

c. Worship of Jesus

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. Isaiah 6.1-4

Ask OT "Most EXALTED Vision of God in ALL Scripture" > soon hear Isaiah 6

Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him. John 12:41

When ISAIHAH saw GOD High and Lifted Up: Holy, Holy, Holy
I believe He saw JESUS, JESUS, JESUS

If Q. was that SERIOUS to FEAR God he DID NOT KNOW

How MUCH MORE we who KNOW HIM should Watch our WALK with HIM

No amount of emphasis on grace can justify taking liberties with God, for the very concept of grace demands gratitude; gratitude cannot be casual. Derek Kidner

If you HAVE NEVER COME to Jesus > Missed Point of Coming to CHURCH

Today you can come boldly to the throne of grace through Jesus Christ and find grace to help your need. You do not have to make a pilgrimage to present your sacrifice. You do not need to change your race. All that you have to do is abandon your efforts at salvation and come alone by faith in Him who declared Himself to be the way, the truth, and the life. James Boice

INSTEAD of DREADING your Visit to CHURCH > It can be GREATEST JOY!

I Pray we HAVE the REDEEMED HEART of Psalmist as we Worship JESUS

I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD." Ps 122:1

5:1 Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong.

2 Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few. 3 As a dream comes when there are many cares, so the speech of a fool when there are many words. 4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. 5 It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it. 6 Do not let your mouth lead you into sin. And do not protest to the [temple] messenger, "My vow was a mistake." Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands? 7 Much dreaming and many words are meaningless. Therefore stand in awe of God.