

Living with a "Heavy Burden" & the "Curse"

Ecclesiastes 1:12-18

I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.
[13] I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. What a heavy burden God has laid on men! [14] I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

[15] What is twisted cannot be straightened;
what is lacking cannot be counted.

[16] I thought to myself, "Look, I have grown and increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge." [17] Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind.

[18] For with much wisdom comes much sorrow;
the more knowledge, the more grief.

THE HUMAN AUTHOR / His Qualifications

- Who is probably the human author? [His name is not mentioned, but v. 12 and v. 16 give us some clues. (See also v. 1.) Ultimately, only one person recorded in Israel's history was qualified to write this - 1 Kings 3:5-15.]

- What was his goal or task (v. 13a)? _____

- How was he qualified for this task (v. 16)?

- What did he accomplish; what did he discover (v. 13-15)? _____

ABOUT THIS "HEAVY BURDEN" (v. 13b-15) - related to what happened in Genesis 3.

- Who sinned - people or God? (Genesis 3) _____
- What do we (the human race) deserve? (Romans 6:23; compare to Genesis 2:16-17; 3:2-3) _____

Before you complain about this "burden," consider this: If we got what we *fully* deserve, it would be a whole lot worse than just a "heavy burden"!

It may seem that eating a piece of fruit (Genesis 3) is a small matter, but our willingness to disobey in even a *small* matter shows how serious sin really is. If it had been an enormous gigantic mammoth-sized test, then we might have had an excuse for failing it!

- What does Luke 16:10 tell us? _____

**We were all part of Adam and Eve, even though we were not consciously aware of it.
Every time we personally choose to sin,
it is the same as expressing approval of what happened back then.**

THE VALUE OF WISDOM (v. 17-18)

- Does merely understanding the right answer give us the meaning we desire (v. 17-18)? _____
- When we study the book of Ecclesiastes, we discover that wisdom *is* the best choice. But even wisdom is not the final answer. For that, we have to look to the God who made us - the God who is the *source* of meaning!

MORE ABOUT THIS "BURDEN" - the "CURSE" of Genesis 3

Everything that is a part of this "burden" - an ultimately meaningless life, trials and difficulties, injustice and evil - began back in Genesis 3, when sin entered the world. Our present existence is influence by that sin and the resulting "curse" that came because of it.

This "curse" is something we *cannot* get around. Pretending it doesn't exist doesn't cause it to cease. We, the human race, get to experience the consequences of *our* choices - and these consequences affect *all* of creation.

There are two important facts we need to know about this "curse":

- 1) The full effects of the "curse" have been restrained, because of God's grace (undeserved kindness). Though *bad* things are going to happen, we also get to experience *good* things. We deserve an *immediate* judgment of death - *both physical and eternal* - but final judgment has been postponed.
- 2) This postponed judgment means there is hope for us! As long as we are alive (which is something we don't deserve), we have the opportunity to look for the true God. He is the one who can bring meaning into this present meaningless life - and also into our life in eternity! *This postponed judgment means that God gives us the opportunity to change!* Though most people will never take this opportunity (Romans 1:32; 2:14-15; Luke 13:23-24), you can do so - if you are willing!

What are some of the things we discover in the following verses?

- Matthew 5:45 (last half of the verse); also the surrounding verses, which tell us to follow his example _____

- Acts 14:15-17 _____

- Acts 17:24-31 (especially v. 27, 30-31) _____

- What is the intended purpose of God's kindness? Romans 2:4 (especially the last half of the verse) _____

- [The rest of the book of Ecclesiastes also tells us a lot more about these issues.]

When Jesus returns, this "curse" will be removed. The resurrection will occur, and those who have trusted in God will be changed. The results of this change? Just as our change into *sin* affected all of creation, so also our change into *sinlessness* will affect all of creation. What do the following passages tell us about this matter?

- Romans 8:19-21 _____

- 2 Peter 3:10-13 _____
