

Ecclesiastes

Avon Heights, 4th Quarter, 2009

LESSON #2:

"Here Today,
Gone Tomorrow"

Sun. Oct. 11th

Reading:

- **Eccl. 1:1-11**

Extra Reading:

- **Ps. 39:4-6**
- **Ps. 90:9-12**
- **Jas. 4:13-17**
- **Excerpts on back**

"Vanity of vanities, All is vanity..." **Eccl. 1:2**

"Everything is transitory and therefore of no lasting value. People are caught in the trap of the absurd and pursue empty pleasures. They build their lives on lies." (The New American Commentary, p. 283, Duane A. Garrett)

"Here Today, Gone Tomorrow!" **Eccl. 1:1-11**

I. Life is Fleeting -- Eccl. 1:1-7

1. With what question does Solomon wrestle?
2. What cycles does Solomon use to illustrate the unchanging sameness of nature?
3. Looking from Solomon's standpoint "under the sun" (*vs 2-3*), what areas of your life do you see as "empty"/meaningless?
4. What "advantage" do you have in all your work? (*vs 3*) What can we do to cultivate a healthy work mindset?
5. Does the Bible emphasis on the fleeting nature of life humble you? (*see Ps. 39:4-6; 90:9-12; Jas. 4:13-17*). Why does the Bible put such emphasis on the brevity of life?

II. Life is Disappointing -- Eccl. 1:8-11

1. What is the human response to the unchanging cycles in nature?
2. Has man ever added any "new thing" to the cycles in nature?
3. Viewing life from Solomon's perspective of human power and wisdom, Is he giving us an accurate picture of life "under the sun?" Is this the picture you are seeing in your life "under the sun?" (**Consider also Jer. 10:23; 1Cor. 1:20-21**)
4. Complete this sentence: Seeing Solomon's point about the temporary nature of satisfaction, fortune and fame should cause one to . . .

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EXCERPTS: from SEARCH FOR MEANING by Victor Frankl (Part 1: "Experience in a Concentration Camp")

NOTE: This is the story of a man who "became a number" when subjected to the "incredible attempts to dehumanize man at the concentration camps of Auschwitz and Dachau. . ." Every possession was taken away to the point that he had nothing but "his own naked self" (minus every hair) and the "ability to choose his attitude" while being reduced to a number. Here are some excerpts from his story... (BJS)

...the reader learns what a human being does when he suddenly realizes he has "nothing to lose except his so ridiculously naked life."

...In the concentration camp, every circumstance conspires to make the prisoner lose his hold. All the familiar goals in life are snatched away. What alone remains is "the end of the human freedoms" except the ability to "choose one's attitude in a given set of circumstances."

...every man was controlled by one thought only: to keep himself alive for the family waiting for him at home. ...this was an unrelenting struggle for daily bread & for life itself. . .

...None of us had the slightest idea of the sinister meaning behind the little movement of a man's finger pointing now to the right and now to the left, . . Then it was my turn.
... For the great majority of our transport (about 90%), it meant death. Their sentence was carried out within the next few hours.

...No one (of those who were left) could grasp the fact that everything would be taken away. . . all we were left with, literally, was our naked existence.

...the first night at Auschwitz we slept in beds which were constructed on tiers. On each tier (measuring about six and a half to eight feet) slept nine men, directly on the boards. Two blankets were shared by each nine men.

...the thought of suicide was entertained by nearly everyone. . .

...The prisoner of Auschwitz, in the first phase of shock, did not fear death. Even the gas chambers lost their horrors for him after the first few days -- after all, they spared him the act of committing suicide.

...there was a boundless longing for home and family.

...Apathy, the blunting of the emotions and the feeling that one could not care any more, were the symptoms arising during the second stage and eventually made him insensitive to daily and hourly beatings.

...The religious interest of the prisoners, as far and as soon as it developed was the most sincere imaginable. . . most impressive were improvised prayers or services in the corner of a hut.

...I was struggling to find the reason for my sufferings. . .