

VOC - March 2015: *Ecclesiastes*

1. The quest for wisdom

Dear Listeners,

This month I would like to speak to you about the gospel as it is revealed in the book of *Ecclesiastes*. It's a book that's quite different from all the books in the Bible. It's a book in which many of you might recognize yourself. Or maybe you will recognize the world around you the way the author, who's called the Preacher, presents the world as it appears to us. If you've ever read this book in the Bible, you may have wondered how it is possible that a Preacher comes to the conclusion that everything is vanity, tiresome, senseless, etc., or so life seems to be to him in this world "under the sun." You would almost think that the Preacher is an unbeliever crying out in great despair at times. And yet, that's not at all how you must see him! Rather, the Preacher wants to point you to the one who is *above the sun*: God! He wants to show you that everything in this world and life under the sun cries for the Christ!

The Preacher was a man who in the tradition of *Solomon* was looking for wisdom. In his search for wisdom, however, he is *different* from all other wise men, philosophers, and the like. He is a wise man, a teacher in Israel, who turns to *God's people* with the wisdom he received. Just like *Solomon* before him, the Preacher looked around in life, experienced the many aspects of life, and used his observations and knowledge to *share* his wisdom with his people. As the Preacher admits, this is not an easy feat! It's a heavy task for a man to search for wisdom in the midst of this world! Everyone looks to such a wise man for answers concerning the misery in life, the brokenness in life, the hunger in the world, the tyranny of the dictators, and the decline of our culture. In the midst of *that reality*, the Preacher wanted to use the *wisdom of God*, the wisdom which God showed in creation, for which he had to search! That's why I said already: in the midst of this quest for wisdom the Preacher cries for the Christ! If He would not come who is the *power and wisdom of God* (1 Cor. 1:24), what would be the sense of all things?!

"All things are vain," that's the Preacher's conclusion upon his quest to make sense of this world. Vanity is emptiness, senselessness! Just imagine: after all his experiences, observations, considerations, in his quest for wisdom, his *conclusion* is: *useless*! Vanity of vanities, all things is vanity, i.e. the *epitome of vanity*! That's his conclusion after his research of every aspect of life and at the end of his entire book! So *what's the use*? That's what the Preacher says time and again. After a whole life of sweating and toiling, *what's the use*? That's what he concludes regarding the life *under the sun*. Indeed, that expression is the *key*: in this life "*under the sun*" there is little that seems to make sense, little that's new, little that changes over the generations – everything keeps going the way it has for centuries. *Tiring*! *Wearisome*! Indeed, not only the Preacher comes to this conclusion; the apostle *Paul* in the NT does too: the whole creation is subjected to futility; it groans in pains of childbirth, be it in hope [Rom. 8:20]. It cries for the birth, the birth of whom? Of the child *Jesus*

Christ, the seed of the woman that was promised! He was promised to deliver us from this futility, from this vain life, this broken life due to sin and death!

It's important, dear listeners, to note that the Preacher presents himself as one who stands in the *tradition of Solomon*, the son of *David*. Remember David, the king after God's heart? Remember how King David changed the world, the life of the people of Israel, after the years under the judges, under the kingship of King Saul?! When the Preacher presents himself in the tradition of the wisdom of Solomon, however, the son of David, he at the same time reminds his audience of the many *promises* the LORD gave to David the king! The LORD gave him many promises! One of his descendants would sit on his throne *forever*. A shoot of his stump would have the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, and the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of God [Is. 11:1-2]. Now Solomon received much already of the fulfilment of these promises; he *foreshadowed* the coming of the Prince of Peace in his kingdom of peace; yet he only was the *type* of the Messiah in whom the *whole promise* would come to its perfection.

The Messiah would be the *true* Prince of Peace, the son of David, whose kingship would be a kingship of peace for all those who would *believe* in Him. He would be king in Jerusalem, Zion, the city of God, the centre of God's people, of their worship, religion, godliness, yes of the OT church! Now, as Head of the church of all times and all places, He will be seen on the throne in the *New Jerusalem* forever! That's the gospel: for He Jesus, the Christ, the Son of David, who is the Son of God, will know all the answers to all the questions about this life with its vanities and futilities. Just like the Preacher, He also asked questions, yes the main question: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Then He knew the main answer to all the questions; namely, that God demanded that He pay the price for man's sin and guilt and satisfy God's wrath! And He did, when He cried out: "It is finished!"

When you end up with Him, dear listener, and find your life in Him, your life, your work, and your service won't be in vain when it's done *in the Lord*! For He came to *deliver* all of life from the bondage to futility, and to set His people free in the glorious liberty of the children of God! Today, we may know the answers the Preacher could not know yet; today, I may show you the way out of all misery and futility: believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, and in Him your life will be delivered from vanity and be made fruitful for the honour and glory of God! Till next week and thank you for listening.