

5. A Summary note:

The language is strong and, as noted, earthy. The challenge of the major themes is to be certain we put the affairs of life into proper sequence. Obviously many people do not. Not all have the benefit of the review that was available to the writer of this book but for those of us still having such an option, it is well advised to keep things in proper order.

D. The Development of Special concepts in Ecclesiastes

There are a number of "hard texts" in Ecclesiastes which must be understood in the light of the concept they are treating. This is where I think good works like the "Pilgrim Bible" and others have often failed. They have noted hard verses in the book and, rather than putting them into solid context and concept, have concluded that they were erroneous in their teaching. I do not claim to be wiser than others in this regard but I remember noticing in chapter 12 that the gathered words were those of "one Shepherd" and I found it difficult to imagine that they would be less than true. Epistemology, of course, is quite another matter and we cannot develop it in detail in this course. But if we begin with our original working hermeneutic and if we continue that through the unity of Scripture, we should come out with the broad idea that the teachings of the Biblical books will harmonize not only in conclusion but also in procedure. In that light we will look at the concept of the value of life as seen in Ecclesiastes.

The question will be one of what life means...what is the good of having it? what purposes may be served by it? is it all vanity and vexation? To approach this subject we will again collate a number of Scriptures that touch on various areas of life and living and seek to make the proper adductions from these. We will put this into the perspective of negative and positive teachings.

1. Negative aspects of the living process and life itself.

- a. It is not stable and this instability causes anguish. Everything we know is subject to change and loss sustained in areas we cannot help or control.

Scripture:Observations

1:2-7

The spectre of death seems to hang over everything we know in life. We do not know

2:16-17

how or when it will all end...we know that it will. At the moment of greatest achieve-

8:8

ment we might have "the rug pulled out from under us" so to speak. Furthermore there

9:11

seems to be nothing we can do to quench this instability. Even our righteousness does not guarantee much. Therefore this existence for which we are best informed is transient and the dissatisfaction this produces is considerable.