

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

### NOVEMBER 10TH, 2019 // BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

*Ecclesiastes 8 is all about the reality of injustice and brokenness in this fallen world. How are we to respond to injustice and evil that we can't change?*

#### **EVIL & AUTHORITY (ECCLESIASTES 8:1-9)**

One of the repeated themes of the book of Ecclesiastes is that things "under the sun" don't work the way we think they should.

- Our world is broken and under the curse of sin, and because of this reality we see injustice and we see evil in all of its forms tainting every aspect of life.
- How are we to live our lives in the midst of the brokenness of an evil, fallen world?

It's through God's wisdom that we can navigate through the brokenness in such a way that our "faces shine" and "the hardness of our face is changed" (vs. 1).

- Just because the world is broken and corrupt, it doesn't mean we have to be.
- With God's wisdom and His redemption at work in our lives, we can be ambassadors of His Kingdom even in the midst of the brokenness.

One of the ways that evil and the curse of sin have affected humanity is through rulers, leaders, and those in positions of authority (vs. 2).

- The Bible is clear that a person's obedience to authority is linked to their faithfulness to God (1 Pet. 2:13-14), but what about bad or corrupt leaders?
- How are we to respond to those in positions of authority when we're not sure they're completely ethical or just? This is where wisdom is needed.

It most cases, it shouldn't be through direct and blatant disobedience (vs. 2).

- A citizen must be true to their oath of allegiance to our leader and to God, who's the source of all authority in the world (Rom. 13).
- Certainly there are times when it's right to "obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29), but in most cases, obedience to God looks like obedience to authority.

The easy answer is also usually not found in desertion (vs. 3a).

- Simply quitting or resigning might not be the best option because you might be the only ethical, God-honoring person in that environment!
- Certainly there are times when it's right to leave a position to maintain your integrity, but sometimes quitting is just the easy way out.

The answer is usually not found in overthrowing authority (vs. 3b).

- "Do not take your stand in an evil cause" most likely means, "don't participate in a plot to overthrow the king".
- Certainly there are times for a Christian to take part in civil disobedience, but a mutiny in an office may be just as corrupt as the leader it's attempting to overthrow.

The answer to dealing with those in positions of authority over you who may be corrupt is to understand that "there is a time and a way for everything" (vs. 6).

- What Solomon is commending is discernment, patience, and trust in God's wisdom to know the best course of action.
- Foolishness is impulsive and rebellion is self-serving, and God never honors either!

The truth is, God is the one truly in control, not our bosses or government leaders.

- Human beings don't have as much power as we sometimes think they do (vs. 8-9).
- So when we recognize that God is the one truly in control and He is the one who has put that person in a position of authority over me- I can rely on His wisdom and seek to discern the "time and way for everything".

#### **EVIL & INEQUITY (ECCLESIASTES 8:10-14)**

Another way that evil taints the world in which we live is that "righteous people get what wicked deserve" & "wicked people get what righteous people deserve" (vs. 14).

- There is more injustice in our world than we'd like to admit.
- In vs. 10 Solomon reported on a funeral he'd attended for a wicked man.

He notes that this wicked man had been a hypocrite who had played the religious game- going in and out of the holy place- and because of that fact they were somehow praised (vs. 10).

- In some very religious communities we tend to give those who are externally religious "a pass" on things like ethical business practices or kind character.
- Solomon says that this was a great vanity!

As he reflected on the matter, Solomon observed that this wicked man had continued in his sin because he thought was getting away with it (vs. 11).

- God is incredibly and He doesn't always judge sin immediately (2 Pet. 3:1-12).
- How a person responds to God's mercy determines whether that person will be saved.

Solomon concludes that the wicked will eventually be judged and the righteous will be rewarded (vs. 12-13), so it's better to fear the Lord and live a godly life.

- A wicked man may live longer than a godly man and appear to be getting away with sin.
- But the "end of things is better than the beginning" (7:8)- the last day, the day of judgment, is coming and eternity is a long time.

No matter how long or full the wicked man's life may seem to be, it's only prolonged like a shadow and has no substance (vs. 13).

- The wicked man's life being a "shadow" may be that it's a prelude to eternal darkness.
- What good is a long life if it's only a shadow going into the black of darkness forever?
- Injustice will happen in this broken, sin-filled world- but no-one will get away with anything because God is a perfect judge.

#### **EVIL & MYSTERY (ECCLESIASTES 8:15-17)**

There are some things that happen to us and around us in this life and we don't understand the purpose or the reason for them at all.

- Sin has distorted the way things are supposed to be, so even if we apply ourselves to understand all the mysteries of life, we "can't find out the work that is done" (vs. 17).
- There are some things beyond our understanding.

For example, exactly when and how a person dies is beyond our ability to understand.

- It's hard for us to understand why God allows disasters or tragedies to happen as well.
- We know He's good, in control, and He sees and hears our pain and cries for help.
- But often in the difficulties, frustrations, and pains of life in this broken world we struggle to understand the plans of God for us.

What are to do about life's mysteries and our uncertain tomorrows and our unjust todays?

- Solomon says, "I commend joy" (vs. 15).
- This isn't a fatalistic hedonism that just says to give up and just "eat, drink, and be merry".
- Instead, it's the gift of a positive faith outlook that God gives to His children to accept each day as a gift and know that He's given us "all things richly to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17).

This world is broken- so injustice, bad things, and absurd inconsistencies are going to happen.

- But there's only One who can change this world, and it isn't you.
- God is the one who will someday return and make all things right.
- Someday there will be no more funerals, tyrannical dictators, childhood cancer, and no more bullies and horrible bosses.

But in the here and now, this world is still broken and we're waiting for that ultimate redemption.

- So what can we do in the midst of brokenness?
- We rejoice in the fact that we have today and its good gifts!
- We rejoice in the fact that God's coming back to fix it and just because this world is broken and corrupt, that doesn't mean we have to be.
- We rest in Him and accept the world the way it is, knowing it won't always be this way.

God is the only One who can change the world, but if we have received Christ in our lives through faith, **we have His spirit** residing inside of us.

- So in the here and now, we can allow Him to use us to be instruments of His redemptive plan in our spheres of influence.
- The world will never be completely perfect until God comes back to make it so, but it can be made better through Godly men and women.

#### **THE HEARTBREAK KID (GEN. 37-50)**

##### **JOSEPH WAS THE VICTIM OF INCREDIBLE INJUSTICES THROUGH HIS LIFE**

- A dysfunctional family dynamic (Gen. 37)
- Brothers selling him into slavery (Gen. 37)
- Falsely accused of sexual assault (Gen. 39)
- Broken promises and forgotten in prison (Gen. 40)

##### **JOSEPH COULD'VE SPENT ALL OF HIS TIME, ENERGY, AND ATTENTION GROWING BITTER.**

- But instead, he chose to trust God's plan and he chose to make each environment he found himself in better.
- Even though it took a lifetime, God's redemptive plan worked itself out (Gen. 50:20)

Are you honoring God with **how you honor the authority** that He's placed over you?

Are you **embracing joy and the enjoyment of each gift** in each day that God gives you?

In the **unexplained injustices of your life are you still choosing to make this world better?** Or are you just **becoming bitter?**