

WHEN LIFE DOESN'T SEEM FAIR

Ecclesiastes 4:1-8

7/12/15

OUTLINE OF ECCLESIASTES:

A. *The Prologue: Vanity Declared (1:1-11)*

B. *The Monologue: Vanity Described (1:12-12:8)*

- ❖ *The Reality of the Vanity of Life (1:12-2:26)*
- ❖ *The Recognition of the Sovereignty of God (3:1-15)*
- ❖ *The Reality of the Vanity of Life (3:16-4:16)*
 - *Why does injustice triumph? (3:16-18)*
 - *Why does life end as it does? (3:19-22)*

MAIN IDEA: The vanity of life can be seen when life doesn't seem fair.

I. THE VANITY OF LIFE: THE DESPAIR OF CRUEL OPPRESSION (Eccl. 4:1-3)

Why Does Oppression Go Unanswered?

A. *The confusion (4:1): The oppression is nearly unbearable!*

- The oppressor *prevailing*
- The innocent *suffering*
- The comforter *lacking*

B. *The conclusion (4:2-3): The situation is despairing!*

- Better to be *dead* than to be *alive* (4:2)
- Better to have never been *born* (4:3; cp. 6:3; Job 3:11-22)

II. THE VANITY OF LIFE: THE DRUDGERY OF HARD WORK (Eccl. 4:4-6)

Why Does Work Bring Such Conflict?

A. *The confusion (4:4-5): Neither extreme is acceptable!*

- The danger of fierce *competitiveness* (4:4)
- The danger of foolish *idleness* (4:5)

B. *The conclusion (4:6): Add quietness to your labor!*

- The *preferred* choice: a handful with *quietness*
- The *painful* choice: two hands full with *toil*

III. THE VANITY OF LIFE: THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF MATERIALISTIC PURSUIT (Eccl. 4:7-8)

Why Does Wealth Not Satisfy?

A. *The confusion (4:7-8): Endless work to acquire wealth does not satisfy!*

- A lack of *companionship*: no one with whom to *associate*
- A lack of *comfort*: no *relief* from labor
- A lack of *contentment*: no satisfaction from *wealth*
- A lack of *contemplation*: no thought of who will *inherit*

B. *The conclusion (4:9-12): Isolation is not the answer!*

- ❖ *When oppression comes, we must realize that there is a divine Comforter.*
- ❖ *When work becomes overwhelming, we must remember to include quietness.*
- ❖ *When we acquire wealth, we must recognize that it will not satisfy.*