

How to Live East of Eden, Part 1: Understanding Qoheleth (The Preacher)

How do we live well in a fallen world? What should be the normal experience of life for a believer? Our teacher, Qoheleth -The Preacher, provides us with a no holds barred exploration into the frustrations of seeking to live lives of significance; lives that should be meaningful and substantial within a reality that refuses to be impressed or altered by human achievement

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1. Introduction

- A. Wisdom- The Leader's temptation is to simplify and answer the problems.
- B. Confessions of a cynic?- How does that square with the preacher's humble dependence on God (Ch 2:24-25; 3:14-15; 5:18-20 etc)
- C. Evangelistic tract for secularists?- All experiences 'under the sun' are empty and meaningless for the unbeliever. Yet the struggles expressed are clearly those of a God fearer on behalf of God's covenant people (eg Ch5:1-7)
- D. Two authors- one is dangerous? –Fox and Longman's idea of a Frame narrator introducing Ecclesiastes and concluding with a warning (Ch12:9-14)

2. Asking the right questions

- A. Is life meaningless? (hebel/mist/vapour/transient)- See 'readers'
- B. What profit is there? (Yithron/surpluss/net gain)- See 'readers'

3. Who is wise enough to answer?

- A. Seeing through Evangelical folk lore

B. An epitaph to the wisest of all men- ‘Meaningless’

OZYMANDIAS

I met a traveler from an antique land
Who said: “Two vast and trunk less legs of stone
stand in the desert . . . near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
‘My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works ye mighty, and despair!’
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch faraway.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

4. The limitations of wisdom

A. Questioning Israel’s wisdom tradition

B. Questioning our own wisdom traditions

C. Remaining hungry for godly wisdom- James 1:5-8- Doubting without sinning.

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