

“What Is Life All About?”
Ecclesiastes 1:1-11; 12:13-14

For many people in today’s world life is characterized by emptiness. They have never been able to answer with any satisfaction the basic questions of life – such questions as:

Who am I?

Why am I here?

What am I supposed to do?

What is my future beyond this life?

Is history a never-ending meaningless cycle or does history have a purpose?

Is there really a God who cares for me?

It is certainly not wrong to ask questions and to search for answers. God made us with inquiring minds. And modern man is not the first to ask the questions listed above. The Bible – the Holy Spirit inspired Word of God – gives examples of people who asked questions and searched for answers. One such person is the inspired writer of the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes – the person who identifies himself in the book as “Preacher.”

In the opening verses of Ecclesiastes chapter one the inspired writer asked one of the basic questions in all of life. In so many rambling words revealing a confused and empty life he asks the question: “Is there really any meaning in life or is all life characterized by emptiness?” And then after setting forth the basic question the writer uses the rest of the book to tell about his earnest, intensive search for a satisfying answer to that question. In several ways he tries to find real meaning in life. For example:

1. First, he tries human wisdom. In chapter 1 verse 13 he writes: “I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven.” In chapter 1 verse 17 he writes: “I gave my heart to know wisdom.” In chapter 2 verse 12 he writes: “I turned myself to behold wisdom.” In chapter 7 verse 25 he writes: “I applied my heart to know and to search and to seek out wisdom and the reason of things.”

Here is the clear picture of a determined man – a man determined to turn all his attention in the direction of seeking human wisdom. He is searching for meaning in life and in his search he seeks human wisdom.

What did this man accomplish? He gained wisdom. He became one of the most educated men of his day. He discovered that human wisdom is helpful, but in passage after passage he declares that human wisdom alone is not the answer to the basic question: "Is there really any meaning in life?" After all his seeking and searching and learning, he discovered that his mind was expanded and literally stored full of human knowledge and wisdom, BUT HIS HEART WAS STILL EMPTY.

2. Second, the writer of Ecclesiastes testifies that in his search for meaning in life he tried human success. He dedicated himself without reservation to being a success – to being successful in the eyes of his fellow travelers along the pilgrimage of life. And the Book of Ecclesiastes reveals that the man achieved his goal of being successful. He went all the way – got all the things he wanted. In the eyes of his fellowman he was on top of the world. He had it all – all but what he really wanted. He wanted real meaning in life BUT HE DID NOT FIND MEANING IN SUCCESS ANY MORE THAN HE DID IN HUMAN WISDOM.
3. Third, in his earnest, intensive search for meaning in life the writer of Ecclesiastes tried pleasure. In his quest for pleasure he went all the way. He pulled out all the stops. He lived like he wanted to live – according to his own rules.

What did he discover about pleasure? He came to the realization that the life of human pleasure, in the final analysis, is a hollow, empty life. He discovered that pleasure is not the end. Human pleasure will not bring genuine satisfaction to man's burning desire for real, abiding meaning in life.

And so after trying human wisdom, success, and pleasure, the writer of Ecclesiastes is right where he started in the first place. He has not yet found what he is searching for – real meaning in life. But in the last two (2) verses of the book, he puts it all together. He shares with his readers the fact that there is one way – only one way – to know what life is really all about – only one way to find real, lasting meaning in life. In chapter 12 verses 13-14 he writes: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work unto judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Since the writer of Ecclesiastes was inspired to write this book, God has acted in an even greater manifestation of His love in helping people find meaning in life. Over 2,000 years ago God sent Jesus Christ and Jesus said: "I am come that people might have life – real life – and have it more abundantly." Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me." For us today it is God's plan that we find real meaning in life by being right with God through faith in Jesus Christ who took our place on the cross and died that we might be saved.

Here is life – REAL LIFE. It is found in Jesus Christ.

Reverend Phillip R. Morrow Sr.