

LIFE UNDER THE SUN



STUDIES IN ECCLESIASTES

30 September 2018

הַבַּיִת

“...in our present era, to be spiritual is simply to ‘accept what rings true to your own inner Self.’”

— Brett McCracken, quoting Charles Taylor

Ecclesiastes Part 8 - “God’s Gift of Worship”

Introduction: What is worship?

Qohelet’s Consideration of Worship—Ecclesiastes. 5:1-7

The Imagery: _____ →

- For an OT Israelite, temple worship was the ultimate expression of their love for God and their recognition that God had spoken and that they were responsible to respond in faith and in accordance with the Word of the Lord.

1. True worship involves recognizing the Creator/creation _____.

Ecc. 5:1— *Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil.*

“Guard”— שָׁמַר (*shamar*) — To hedge about, to guard; generally, to protect, attend to. To be circumspect, take heed, to keep oneself or something; to observe, preserve, or regard.

- ⇒ There is to be a posture of _____ before God.
- ⇒ We do not _____ God, He forms and shapes us.

Proverb of Warning: *For a dream comes with much business, and a fool’s voice with many words.* (5:3)

2. True worship _____ a person’s behavior.

His Example: _____

Ecc. 5:4-5— *When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.*

- ⇒ People are to know the _____ and to conduct themselves accordingly.

Proverb of Warning: *For when dreams increase and words grow many, there is vanity; but God is the one you must fear.* (5:7)

“fear”— יָרָא (*yare’*) — To fear, stand in awe of; to reverence.

- Note how the first phrase of 5:1 and the second phrase of 5:7 form an inclusio that relates all else in between to worship.

Observation: To fear God means that we guard how we _____ before Him.

Qohelet’s Warnings about Power, Possessions, & Wealth—Ecclesiastes 5:8-17

1. The reality of systemic _____ should not surprise us.

Ecc. 5:8-9—⁸ *If you see in a province the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and righteousness, do not be amazed at the matter, for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them.* ⁹ *But this is gain for a land in every way: a king committed to cultivated fields.*

Observation: The abuse of power is related to the failure to recognize God as the highest _____.

2. People have a tendency to find their _____ and _____ in their wealth and possessions.

Ecc. 5:10-11—¹⁰ *He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity.* ¹¹ *When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes?*

Observation: _____ often results from finding your security in wealth and possessions.

Ecc. 12b—...but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep.

3. The love of wealth and possessions is a form of _____ worship.

Ecc. 5:13— *There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt,*

- The term translated ‘kept’ is the same word used translated ‘guard’ (*shamar*) in 5:1. →

Ecc. 5:15-17—¹⁵ *As he came from his mother’s womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand.* ¹⁶ *This also is a grievous evil: just as he came, so shall he go, and what gain is there to him who toils for the wind?* ¹⁷ *Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger.*

- ⇒ The harsh reality is that, just as we came into the world (with _____), that is how we leave the world.
- ⇒ The _____ of our idols to produce lasting meaning and gain becomes a major source of our frustration, disappointment, and even anger in this life.

Qohelet’s Exhortation—Ecclesiastes 5:18-20

1. He once again exhorts us to _____ life.

Ecc. 5:18—*Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot.*

2. He calls on people to _____ the power, wealth, and possessions that God has entrusted to them.

Ecc. 5:19—*Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God.*

- ⇒ The true worship of God guards us from worshipping the _____ that He has given to us.

3. He gives us a vision of life where a person is _____ in God and the things He gives.

Ecc. 5:20—*For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.*

Worship, Idolatry & the Wisdom & Work of a Greater King

1. We often fail to guard our steps before God because we bear the fallen image of our first father.

Gen. 2:15—The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep (*shamar*-Heb./*phulasso*-Gk.) it.

2. We are prone to think we are truly worshipping God when in reality we are prone to be idolaters.

Mark 10:20-22—²⁰ And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept (*phulasso*) from my youth.” ²¹ And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” ²² Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

3. We must be on our guard against our tendency towards idolatry, particularly in relation to our wealth.

Luke 12:15-21—¹⁵ And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard (*phulasso*) against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” ¹⁶ And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, ¹⁷ and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ ¹⁸ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.’ ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’” ²⁰ But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ ²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

4. We need to be cleansed from our idolatry and kept by Christ.

Jude 24-25—²⁴ Now to him who is able to keep (*phulasso*) you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵ to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.