WALMSLEY BIBLE STUDY – ECCLESIASTES SESSION 2

2. LIFE UNDER THE SUN #1; Chs 4 to 7: Hardships & Companions; Poverty & Wealth; Suffering & Sin

Chapter 4 vs 1-3 **The Oppressed**

Q 1: This observation is timeless, sad to say. What is different today about historical times? Do people care any more today than yesterday? What does Jesus have to say about this situation? What is our duty?

A time to preach the Gospel to a Pagan, hedonistic Society =example – the Antioch Fellowship Movement's work in going where people are rather than expecting them to come to church. New ways, new opportunities. Pressure Groups for Change to more sensible living. Not a simple issue to understand. 'The Poor (and Oppressed) are always with us' said Jesus – not that we are to be complacent, but always active and ever mindful. The oppressor is usually the winner – same today as it has always been, except our collective actions ought to prove that wrong, today?

Chapter 4 vs 4-16 **Folly of Toil with Greed, Envy and Avarice**

Q 2: What are the messages from this section? What does Jesus have to say about these matters? Why is advancement meaningless? What would it mean for humanity if there were no 'strivers' and 'opportunists' in the world? How does that fit in with Jesus' message to us? Vs 13-16; what does this say about political leadership?

Many people have to toil hard and long just to survive – and some do not even manage that. Others toil to amass wealth, and many toil for a simple living. What is meaningful, and not vain, is toiling and being satisfied, and happy. We are called to help the oppressed, help the downcast, act and work together in teamwork – John Donne – 'No man is an island entire of itself .. we are all part of the Main..' Our leadership should encourage and embody these precepts, and not self-greed and avarice. But we need Entrepreneurs, Strugglers, Opportunists – to refresh our thinking and our abilities to live together in harmony and happiness.

Chapter 5 vs 1 – 20 **This is what is Wise, this is what is Good, this is what is Proper.**

Q 3: look at each of the 3 sections of this chapter: 1-7; 8-17; 18-20. Summarise the positive aspects that the Preacher is advising or observing. What parallel verses in the NT can you recall? The Words of Jesus & Apostles?

Wisdom is in humility and in contentment with our lot. Wisdom is not caring about how people see us or how we dress or comport ourselves. Rather it is having joy in life, in creation, and in being aware of our surroundings and how we fit in to things. 'Consider the lilies of the field, they neither toil nor spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not apparelled like these'. 2 Cor. Ch 1 vs3-12 – Paul was saying how the church in Corinth shared with him in bitter and sweet experiences, and how that supported all. Today, everything is instantaneous – instant gratification – instant response-we are SO impatient and lacking calmness and reason. Jesus tells us not to hanker after the things of this world –'store not up treasures on earth where moth and rust doth corrupt...'!

Chapter 6 vs 1-12 Another Evil – Wealth, Possessions, the Serendipity of Life, the certainty of the end.

Q 4: What is the Preacher actually referring to? Is it the fact of having wealth, or the expectations that come with it? Do you have examples in history or present of the Folly of which the Preacher is referring? What should be our attitude and lifestyle in such a position?

Fewer words, more Good Deeds! Do not promise what you cannot or do not wish to keep! That is wickedness! If we Do promise, make sure we have the resources to ensure its being carried out. – 'Counting the Cost to build a Tower' – Jesus' parables. Do not act precipitously, in haste, or in pique. Consider well, and plan accordingly. All of this is true personally, corporately and Governmentally. There are many examples of starting a promise, which is not managed properly as the years go on – NHS, Railways, even the UN; or even the grand churches built for our forebears, which now are millstones around our necks.

Chapter 7 v 1 to Chapter 8 v1 True Wisdom

Q 5: List the things that the Preacher considers to be True Wisdom, and why so. Is the Preacher advocating pessimism as a way of life? If not, what? What parallels in the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles can you recall?

WE NEVER GOT THIS FAR! PLEASE LOOK FOR YOURSELVES IN THE MEANTIME.

Q 6: Ch 7. 20: cf Rom 3 10-31; Isaiah Ch 53. What is the culmination of this verse in Ecclesiastes? Do you think that the Preacher is being Prophetic and Messianic, or just Fatalistic?

Q 7: Ch 7 v 27 to Ch 8 v 1: Summarise the True Wisdom found by the Preacher. What is meant by the v 28? Is this Misogynistic or overly Patriarchal, or is there an underlying message? cf: Gen Ch 3, Rom 5 v 12.