

The Hebel of Injustice and Oppression

Ecclesiastes 3:16-4:3

Introduction

1. Review of Solomon's message so far.
2. Review of hebel (God's curse).
 - a. No ultimate satisfaction.
 - b. Brokenness in the world.

Text

1. V.16—The observation of injustice and unrighteousness.
 - a. (“place of justice” and “place of righteousness”).
 - i. Reference to government.
 - ii. Solomon sees wickedness.
 - b. Judicial sentiment.
2. V.17—First response.
 - a. God will judge.
 - b. Meant to provide wisdom, but also hope.
 - c. Final pronoun, “there,” in reference to the eschaton. As such, do not be surprised that wickedness still remains.
 - d. The wisdom of Solomon is that we must be a forward looking people.
3. Vss. 18-21—Second response.
 - a. Solomon still left wondering why God has allowed wickedness to remain.

- b. Answer: God wants to show us what we're really like.
 - i. Compares us to the beasts.
 - ii. Psalm 49:12, 20.
 - iii. Purpose: two-fold.
 - 1. Injustice is what we see among the beasts.
 - 2. The wicked should learn from the beasts—as they die, so also shall you. Therefore, live with reference to judgment.
 - c. V. 21—Enigmatic question best understood rhetorically.
 - i. Functions as a commentary on how many never consider what happens in death, namely, judgment.
 - ii. Ultimately, God has allowed wickedness to remain so that he'll be shown to be just in his judgments.
4. V. 22 – Solomon's Conclusion.
- a. Enjoy life! For this is man's lot.
 - b. The ability to find joy in the midst of wickedness comes from faith in what's to come.
 - i. This leads to temporal rest, and therefore, joy.
 - ii. This is especially true since no one knows what the future holds—no one can control it.
5. 4:1-3—Solomon's deals with the issue of oppression, which is just another form of injustice.
- a. Should not derive any theology from v.3. It's simply the emotional overflow of a man under the sun.
 - b. Draw attention to structure.

Conclusion:

1. Solomon's wisdom for navigating the hebel of injustice and oppression must begin by acknowledging that it will always exist. Therefore, stop trying to fix what God has made bent.
2. Remember Jesus as sufferer of injustice.
3. Remember Jesus as forgiver of injustice.
4. Learn to find contentment in the details of life.