01-09-16b Ecclesiastes

Again, the end of verse 15, he goes as he came, he takes nothing from his labor which he may carry away in his hand. And verse 16 reiterates this, this also is a severe evil, it's labeled this way twice because this is the theme of the book, we're in the middle of the book, Solomon is summarizing what he's said so far and he says, if you spend your life on things that don't have an eternal weight, you've wasted your life. You're going to go into the next life just as naked as when you came into this life.

We've got a baby here in the room and it's a recent memory. You just don't come in with much, everything that you get is given to you and if you go into the next life and you've got no suitcase, you don't have an AWOL bag, you don't have a toothbrush, you have nothing, you're just like a newborn, what a tragedy. And here's the logic that's going to come in the next section because he says, just exactly as he came, so shall he go, and what prophet, what is the Yitron, has he who has labored for the wind? That's what Solomon opened the book with, Havel Havelim, vanity of vanities.

Where is the prophet? What prophet does a man have in the days that he lives under the sun? Well, it depends on what you labor for, it depends on what you focus on, it depends on what you ask for when you go before God. What are you asking for? Are you asking for God to accomplish eternal good or are you asking for God to solve earthly problems? Are you asking for God to glorify himself or are you asking for God to smooth my path and give me a more comfortable set of circumstances? Give me the things that I, you know, help the ones that I love, give me a gratified view of the world. It talks about the man who has labored for the wind, it says, all his days he eats in darkness, he has much sorrow and sickness and anger.

And you remember in our New Testament studies when we talked about the darkness which is outside, Jesus is going to greet many believers after the resurrection, they're going to be seeing people of faith, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all these others from the north, east, south and west sitting down to table with Jesus. Just a contrast of what we saw in Proverbs 23, if your goal is to sit down at the table with the Lord Jesus, these are going to be outside. And they're going to say, Lord, Lord, in your name did we not do all these wonderful things? And he's going to say, depart from me, you workers of iniquity, I never knew you.

You were busy with your agenda. You came down and offered sacrifices and hoped that God would accomplish your agenda. And they're going to arrive like the little baby, they're going to be in the darkness which is outside.

Solomon says, look, this is what ought to happen, this is the good thing, here is what I myself have seen, it's very emphatic in the Hebrew in verse 18. It uses the pronoun ani, here he says hine, behold, this is translated behold in a lot of other places. He says, behold, this is what I myself have seen.

What kind of eyes is he looking with? He's looking with the eyes of the wisest man that lived in Old Testament days. It is good which is beautiful. This is tov, T-O-V, or V in the Greek, tov.

One of the first, in fact the very first Hebrew phrase I learned in modern Hebrew was to say good morning. You say good morning by saying boker tov. And Glenn Carnegie said, it's an easy way to remember, it's kind of like broke your toe.

You know, broke your toe, well it's boker tov. Boker is morning and tov is good. Well, we've seen that good, that we measure as good, is not so good in Ecclesiastes.

We can think something is good and it's really not. But this says, behold, this is what I myself have seen, good which is beautiful, yafe, is the word for beautiful. It's used for comely young maidens, it's used in the Song of Solomon.

It's beauty, intrinsic beauty, it's valued beauty, it's uncommon beauty. Solomon says, good which is beautiful is to eat and drink and to see good in the labor in which he labors under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him for it is his allotment. It's a part of his inheritance.

This word for allotment is what was used to assign the tribes their land in the land of Canaan. This is your permanent possession. If God can give you not only to eat and drink, but to have the power, this is the verb shultan, sultan in Arabic comes from this, to have the power to partake in a permanent way, to make this your heritage, that's good that is beautiful.

You're doing the same eating and drinking that other people are doing, but you're taking away something permanent. This is good that is beautiful. Every man to whom God has given riches and wealth and given to him the authority, this is your shultan word, power, giving him the power to eat of it, to receive his inheritance, to receive his allotted portion.

Remember the land that was assigned in Israel is in perpetuity, the tribal areas are forever. This is the gift of God. He will not dwell unduly on the days of his life because God keeps him busy with the joy of his heart.

This is a joy that is transcendent. This is a joy that lasts. Well, chapter 6, the evil that Solomon saw under the sun and it is common, it is multiplied among men, is a man to whom God has given those same things, riches and wealth and honor so that he lacks nothing for himself of all that he craves.

This word here that says all that he desires, this is the word that was used of the Israelites when they wanted meat and God sent the quail. This is a word that means you have an almost physical desire for something, like a hunger. So God gives him everything that he's hungry for, but he doesn't give him the power to eat from it.

Why? Because his sights, his focus is all in this life, it's all under the sun. He says this is havel, it

is an evil affliction. It literally says it is an evil sickness, it's a grievous sickness.

Well, he goes on and we'll see when we get on down in chapter 6 that he compares the man in this condition to a miscarriage. And this is the point that we'll conclude with. Look at verse 9 of chapter 6, actually verse 3. Even if a man begets a hundred children and lives many years so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with goodness.

His soul, he's trying to cram these temporary things into his soul and not that good that is beautiful. And he has no burial. Burial in Israel meant you have a legacy, you've achieved something permanent.

This man accomplished a lot, but from God's point of view, there's nothing that survives him. There's nothing that memorializes him beyond his life. His life just vanished like a vapor.

I say that a stillborn child, this is the word that was used for miscarriage, is better than that man. For it, the stillborn child, comes in vapor. There's nothing that is more transient than a stillborn child.

It's seen, in those days it was seen by the midwife. A lot of times they didn't even show it to the mother. And the name that they had picked out for it was never applied because he didn't arrive alive.

Its name is covered with darkness. It departs in darkness. This is Koshek.

And his name is covered in darkness. Though it has not seen the sun or known, this has more rest than that man. And I'll do some corrected translation on that.

But this is the same logic we saw earlier. It would have been better to have never arrived here. Remember Job says, I wish that on the day of my birth I had been stillborn.

I wish I had not ever arrived. When he's wrestling with his situation. Well, it would be better, Solomon says, to have arrived stillborn than to have had the opportunities that we have as the people of God to seize and lay hold of eternal things and to miss it.

To concentrate even to become rich and yet not have the power to take that into the next life. To not have it be something permanent. So as we think about the events of this past week, I was thinking this morning there's probably not a pulpit in the country.

There's not a meeting of believers anywhere where the shocking events of this past week have not been referenced. There's probably a lot of application and a lot of thought and words talking about these things. But what it reminds me of is Revelation chapter 18.

Remember Babylon and it talks about how the people are standing afar off in ships. Why is that such a tragedy? It was a rich, this Babylon of Revelation 18 is a rich country. Turn with me as we

close to Revelation chapter 18.

Let's just look at that real quick because it's the very same idea. Revelation chapter 18. I want to be careful to tell you that I do not think Revelation 18 is a direct prophecy or that there's in any way a fulfillment of this and what has happened this week.

But you cannot help but notice the principle at work. After these things, this is Revelation 18, I saw another angel coming down from heaven having great authority and the earth was illuminated with his glory. He cried mightily with a loud voice saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit and a cage for every unclean and hated bird.

For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury. Many people see the disappearance of the United States prior to the events of the tribulation in what is said about Babylon here.

It is striking that in tribulational prophecy and in the events that are described in Ezekiel and Daniel and in Revelation there does not seem to be a, you can see Israel, you can see the king of the north and all of the other existing nations that revived the Roman Empire but you don't see anything resembling the United States. What happened to it? Well, there are many who think and I'm one of them that this is a description that the United States ends up being modern day Babylon and that prior to most of what happens in the tribulation it disappears and this is how. You can easily see a description of the United States because we are the dominant power in the world.

Everyone comes to us for these luxury goods. Our entertainment industry and so forth can easily be detected here. I heard a voice from heaven saying come out of her my people lest you share in her sins.

I would see that as a reference to the rapture. Come out of her my people lest you share in her sins unless you receive of her plagues. And this of course would put the squelch to those who think the church goes through the tribulation as well.

For her sins have reached to heaven and God has remembered her iniquities rendered to her just as she rendered to you and repay her double according to her works in the cup which she has mixed mixed double for her in the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously in the same measure give her torment and sorrow for she says in her heart I sit as queen and a no widow and will not see sorrow. Therefore her plagues will come in one day death and mourning and famine and she will be utterly burned with fire for strong is the Lord God who judges her the kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her when they see the smoke of her burning standing at a distance for fear of her torment saying alas alas that great city Babylon that mighty city for in one hour your judgment has come

and the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her for no one buys their merchandise anymore merchandise of gold and silver precious stones and pearls fine linen and purple silk and scarlet every kind of citron wood every kind of object of ivory every kind of object of most precious wood bronze iron and marble cinnamon incense fragrant oil frankincense wine and oil fine flour and wheat cattle and sheep horses and chariots bodies and souls of men every conceivable staple every conceivable luxury the fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you reminds us of Proverbs 23 reminds us of Ecclesiastes 5 and 6 the fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you and you shall find them no more at all it's like a vapor they're gone the merchants of these things who became rich by her will stand at a distance for fear of her torment weeping and wailing saying alas alas that great city that was clothed in fine linen purple and scarlet and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls for in one hour such great riches came to nothing every ship master all who travel by ship sailors and as many as trade on the sea stood at a distance and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning saying what is like this great city they threw dust on their heads and cried out weeping and wailing and saying alas alas that great city in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth for in one hour she is made desolate rejoice over her O heaven and you holy apostles and prophets for God has avenged you on her well whatever you choose to make of the literal fulfillment of that prophecy you can certainly see the appetites that are catered to in our nation the lifestyle that we enjoy and that we seek to preserve carries with it not only great blessings and great opportunities but also great risks if we do not hold a knife to our own throats if we don't remember that we come before God we should have our sights set on eternal things on pleasing God and on the fulfillment of His plan and purpose we can end up being born into the next life much as we were born into this one and it would have been better had we not even had this opportunity than to fail the grace of God by not recognizing the great grace and the great gifts and opportunities that God has given us. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father we do thank you that you have provided for our needs you have saved us by your grace you have sent your son the Lord Jesus Christ who even now sits at your right hand pleading our case before you. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will cause us to be ever mindful of who we are and why we are here that we will not be distracted and deflected that we won't wind up focusing on and pursuing earthly things that have no eternal value that we will not accumulate to ourselves things that can vanish in a moment. We pray that our souls will retain the treasure of your word that God the Holy Spirit will use it as a sharp sword to motivate us to enable us to become fruitful vines fruitful fields and that eternal fruit will be born in our lives that reflects your glory and the glory of our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray these things in His name. Amen.