

Today's Quick Word Ecclesiastes 1:14

By Bruce Christian

ECCLESIASTES 1:14 I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

In the Book of Ecclesiastes, the phrase 'under the sun' occurs 27 times, or with a frequency of 1 verse in 8. Solomon seems to use this phrase to describe the worldview that today we would call 'secular humanism' - an attempt to find meaning in life and the Universe without any reference to the existence of a Divine Being.

For Solomon, of course, this 'Divine Being' is none other than the Sovereign LORD God who is Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. We know him as the One who has revealed himself clearly and unambiguously, not only in the wonder of his Creation (see Psalm 19:1-6), and by means of infallible propositions in his written Word, the Scriptures (see Psalm 19:7-11), but ultimately and supremely in the incarnation of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (a revelation hinted at and anticipated in Psalm 19:12-14, a millennium before it happened!). This God is the One who is the source of all Life, who has established a loving, redeeming covenant with all who belong to him, who

is able to forgive sin on the basis of his grace alone, and who is faithful to all his promises!

Because of this, and because of this alone, Solomon, the 'son of David, king of Jerusalem' (1) can conclude that if this God is denied, rejected and left out of our calculations - which is the 'under the sun' worldview - then everything is 'meaningless, a chasing after the wind'. How sad it is today that so many involved in rigorous scientific and philosophical pursuits make this fundamental mistake and thereby suffer the consequences in terms of finding satisfying answers to the 'big' questions! And how much sadder it is that this erroneous, misleading and unsatisfying worldview has made its way, like a deadly virus, into all our secular education systems.

Let us never forget the great privilege we have, by God's grace, in being able to teach and nurture our children in a worldview that is 'above the sun,' that is NOT 'meaningless and a chasing after wind,' and that acknowledges the God of Creation and Redemption, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Today's Quick Word Leviticus 20:7-8

By Bruce Christian

LEVITICUS 20:7-8 Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the LORD your God. Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the LORD, who makes you holy.

The Apostle Paul reminded the Christians in Corinth that God the Holy Spirit had done something quite amazing and awesome in bringing them to put their trust in Jesus: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation..." (2 Corinthians 5:17-18). So, just as in the OT God had set apart his 'holy' covenant people to receive his special blessing AND to be a blessing to others (Genesis 12:2-3), we also are 'made holy' (lit. 'sanctified') in order that we might be the channel through which he will BRING OTHERS into this reconciled relationship with him.

To achieve all this effectively we, like Israel, need to be DIFFERENT from the people among whom we live and bear witness to God's amazing grace. Jesus made this very clear to his disciples, and to us through them, by referring to all who follow him (as described in The Beatitudes) as 'salt' and 'light'. Salt and light, of course, are two mediums which can only fulfil their usefulness insofar as they are DIFFERENT from their surroundings (Matthew 5:1-13, 14-16)! For Israel to live as the LORD's 'holy people', they had to be proactive in addressing

their lifestyle (cf 'consecrate yourselves', 'BE holy', 'keep my decrees and follow them'). Sadly, the relevance and importance of all this is borne out in Israel's history, where they continually and persistently allowed the surrounding culture to influence them to such an extent that they became an embarrassment to the LORD their God (see Ezekiel 36:16-23)!

In the light of this (cf 1 Corinthians 10:6-12), we need to examine ourselves to see whether we are doing all in our power to live 'holy' ('set apart', 'different') lives in contrast with the general culture within which our God has placed us as witnesses/ambassadors - reading his Word daily and allowing it to reshape us in the image of Christ. "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12). "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The verses that follow today's verses in Leviticus 20 refer particularly to infanticide (cf abortion), sexual relationships outside the 'ONE MAN + ONE WOMAN' provision of marriage, as well as pagan 'spiritualism' - and these are all areas that give us a powerful opportunity to be DIFFERENT ('holy') today.

Today's Quick Word Psalm 27:4-5,14

By Bruce Christian

PSALM 27:4-5,14 One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock. ... Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.

For David, as he writes this psalm, his 'house of the LORD'/'temple' was the tabernacle structure that represented God's presence among his people. This 'Tabernacle' would later be replaced by the larger and more permanent 'Temple' built by his son, Solomon. For us, however, both of these physical structures have now been permanently replaced by the TRUE 'temple' which they only foreshadowed - ie none other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself (see John 2:19-22).

This psalm, of course, (like many other psalms) therefore points to, and has its true meaning in, Jesus. In this way, the imagery throughout the psalm becomes much richer and more meaningful for us. It is in Jesus that we truly 'gaze upon the beauty of the LORD' (cf Hebrews 1:3), and HE is 'the rock' who gives stability to our lives (Matthew 7:24; 16:18), and the One

in whom we can take refuge from all the current 'storms' of life (Colossians 3:3).

"Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly while the nearer waters roll, while the tempest still is high; hide me, O my Saviour, hide, till the storm of life is past; safe into the haven guide, O receive my soul at last. Other refuge have I none, hangs my helpless soul on thee; leave, ah leave me not alone; still support and comfort me." (Wesley).

With all the things that are happening around us today, threatening our health and economic stability on an unprecedented scale, our prayer, therefore, should be that of the Apostle Paul, that we might "be found IN [Christ]" (Philippians 3:9), the 'Rock of Ages'. Jesus could well have been thinking of this psalm when he said to his disciples: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33). Let us 'be strong and take heart' and 'wait' for the LORD to meet our needs and answer our prayers in HIS way for HIS glory.