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IDYLLWILD BIBLE SCHOOL - 1992

UNDER THE SUN - THEMES FROM ECCLESIASTES

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Study #1: Mortality

A very good morning to you, my beloved brethren and sisters. I bring with me the greetings of my own home ecclesia, the Shirley ecclesia in Birmingham, UK. and of course, many other brethren and sisters who are known to you, from the United Kingdom.

Our classes together this week on the book of Ecclesiastes, I hope you'll find of interest. Ecclesiastes is the sort of book where we sometimes just dip into it and take little bits out, and very rarely look at it as a whole. Now, I'm going to disappoint you because we're not going to look at it as a whole this week either, all we're going to do is to take themes from

Ecclesiastes. If you read any commentary on the book of Ecclesiastes, you'll find that the writers of those books say, 'it is a very difficult book to analyse, to pick up the thread of the argument', and I think the reason for that is because there are themes and these themes are interwoven in varying ways. So we're just going to go into the themes which will mean that each day we're going to go across the whole of Ecclesiastes, we're not just going to move through chapter by chapter, but we are going to try and find some of the important lessons which the writer under the hand of God, brings out for us.

It seems as well that Ecclesiastes is particularly appropriate for us to study when we're at bible school. Let me explain the reason for this: there are 5 books in the Old Testament, in the Hebrew bible which are called 'the Rolls': they come in that section of the Hebrew bible (the Hebrew bible divided into 3 parts) they come in that section which is called 'the Writings'. At the end of the Writings there are the Rolls, so there's the Song of Solomon, the book of Ruth, the book of Lamentations, the book of Esther and the book of Ecclesiastes. The Jews read these 5 books in association with 5 of their special days, so, for example, they read the Song of Solomon during the feast of Passover; you can see the application, can't you? where Passover was the work of the Bridegroom so He would be able to call the Bride to be united with Him, the Song of Solomon is a fitting book to read at that time. The book of Ruth is read at the time of Pentecost; the book of Lamentations, the lamentations of Jeremiah, is read on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Abib, to commemorate not to celebrate the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. and the Jews as they read through Lamentations remember that part of their history. The book

of Esther, of course, is read during the feast of Purim and it couldn't be read at any other time of year, could it? and the book of Ecclesiastes is read during the feast of Tabernacles, that time when the nation specifically remembered that they had been brought out of Egypt, not just in the same terms as the Passover was a recollection of that time for them, but to show that their present life is a life of probation, a life of wandering, a life now waiting for the return of the Lord. We are not yet at the time of the Promised Land, we are in our wilderness journey. The Jews leave behind their settled places, their houses, their cities; they make booths and they dwell in them. I'm not wishing to be rude about the accommodations I'm in, it's you who are more dwelling in booths. But you get the idea that when we come to bible school, we leave behind those things which are our normal way of life, and we come together and it helps us to take stock of our lives, that's why we're here! and that's why the nation dwelt in booths. It was to teach them, it was an annual event for them to take stock of their lives and what they were doing and to teach them that those things for the 51 other weeks of the year seem to be so permanent and steadfast, really aren't! they are not! It is necessary for us to re-evaluate our lives, and that's why bible schools are important, so that that evaluation can take place and so we can stand back and look at our lives anew and afresh, and begin to make some more resolutions about the sort of people we ought to be in all holiness and godliness, before the LORD God and His Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So Ecclesiastes is a particularly appropriate book for us to look at, and our subject for this morning, is run through the whole of the book of Ecclesiastes. We know, don't we? that we'll turn perhaps into Ecclesiastes to speak about **man's mortal nature**, that man is like the beasts that perish, and so we do. But there is rather more in Ecclesiastes than just a perishing nature, where the writer teaches us about our mortality. It's necessary for us to try and get an overall picture of what the book is about. Let's just say this at this stage as well, whenever the LORD God is mentioned in Ecclesiastes, it is **not** the covenant name of God that is used, never that at all, the covenant name never appears in Ecclesiastes, and that is teaching us something. This is a book which is certainly full of the people of God as we now come and re-evaluate our lives, but it's a book for everybody, not just those that are in covenant relationship with God; because it teaches man whoever he may be, about himself, and the less we know about ourselves we shall not recognize our need for salvation. Until we have that need then whatever we learn about the process of salvation will not touch our hearts. So first of all, man needs to be **open** before Him with whom we have to do, and that's one of the things that Ecclesiastes does for us, it strips from mankind all of our facade that we like to erect to show ourselves to be somebody. When all of that is taken away and ultimately we stand naked before God and recognize ourselves for what we really are, that man is indeed, like the beasts which perish.

So as we look at the book of Ecclesiastes, we discover that the language is all associated with man upon his earth. So look at verse 2 of Ecclesiastes 1, 'Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity. What profit have a man of all

his labour which he taketh under the sun?' and just 3 words for those 2 verses set the scene for us. The first is this word '**vanity**' (1892), the second in verse 3 is the word '**labour**' (5999), and third is not so much a word but a phrase '**under the sun**' (8478 + 8121), and the environment where the writer to the Ecclesiastes is speaking to us, is this phrase which he describes as being 'under the sun' or 'under heaven' or 'on earth'. The phrase changes as we go through the book, and associated with that environment are these characteristics of **vanity and labour**.

It's interesting as the writer starts now to develop his theme in Ecclesiastes 1, and he's speaking about man's time upon earth and being just fleeting, it's hardly there at all, his life is as a breath which just passes away. He uses to explain that, those things that we would have thought were the most permanent things in life, just look at verses 4 and 5. Verse 4 speaks about the passing nature of our life, 'one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever', now we would have thought that that would have been the contrast, we pass but the earth remains for ever.

But then he moves on in verse 5, 'The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose', and just in the language of that verse 5, is being expressed something about our own lives. The word that's translated 'hasteth' (7602) in verse 5, if you've got a KJV, you'll have in your margin that the Hebrew is the word 'panteth'; it's the word that occurs in Psalm 19 verse 5 to speak about a woman in childbirth, about her labour pains panting to bring forth a child. So you get the idea of one generation passing and another generation coming, but the very apparently interminable process of the sun rising, passing through the heavens and going down and the following day coming again, which we'd have thought would express permanence is, in fact, being used by the writer to describe to us, the nature of man, that his life is here but for a moment, and then passes away. But while he is on earth, he is like a woman in travail! Interesting, isn't it? in both Hebrew and English the word 'labour' bears two meanings, it means the work that we do and it's also associated with childbirth that a woman goes into, 'labour' to bring forth children. So we get this same idea that man's life is here for a short time, while he is here he's involved in labour (something that comes straight out of Genesis 3, 'in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread until thou return to the ground; dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return') and the idea of labour to bring forth the next generation, and the next generation shares the same characteristics as ours. So although those words were first spoken to Adam, they were true for Adam and for all his descendants.

Do you see the point the writer is trying to get across to us? The same thing with the wind, in verse 6, 'The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about toward the north; it whirleth about continually, the wind returneth again according to his circuits', as if all these other things which God has made are equally weary because they have got to continually and continually carry out their work. It's not expressing permanence as we might have thought, **it's expressing the futility of labour**; and that is our position upon

the earth. You know what it's like, you can get up first thing in the morning, you can put on a brand new outfit of clothes, and you come into the dusty environment here, and immediately they are sullied and need washing. So the cycle starts again. It's perhaps necessary for us, just to dwell on that for a moment and to understand it, that it's teaching us something about ourselves! It's rather interesting in Genesis 3, let's just turn to it, shall we? when the LORD God spake to Adam in verse 17 of Genesis 3 and said, 'Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and has eaten of the tree that I commanded thee saying, thou shalt not eat of it, cursed is the ground for thy sake', and I believe there are two meanings to that phrase. The ground is cursed because of what you have done, now that's the primary meaning, now let's forget the primary meaning when we also look at its secondary meaning. Because of what they had done, these were the consequences of their sin, but there is a secondary meaning - the LORD God never brings upon man anything **except it is also for his good!** if he will properly respond to it. The same is true about the curse upon the earth, it was brought upon man because man sinned, but it was there also to educate him, to teach him. The fact that we have to labour to eat food, teaches us that this is a period, a cycle of life, one generation another generation, one passing another coming, that our life is but a vapour and that we need each day to say, 'there is a priority in life which I must follow, and that priority is to seek first the kingdom of God; to learn about Him and to understand His ways. To honour Him in all that I may do, for I know not what tomorrow may bring; my life is a breath that could quickly pass away'. So for the sake of man, these things were done!

Well, turn back into Ecclesiastes, that's the first message of our mortality, and it's the message which the writer is introducing us to, but you see, there will be some who say to us, 'well, I look at the title of the book and I put my thumb over the last 3 or 4 letters of the title and it tells me that this book is not just for all mankind, but it is for the **ecclesia** or the **ecclesias**. Interesting isn't it? we can read the title as often as we like, it's like one of those little trick questions and it's only when we do put our thumb over the last 3 or 4 letters that you realize it's another word hidden there. Well, if that's how we think then we're wrong, it's not a very good title for the book, nor is verse 1 a very good translation of the person who wrote it, 'the words of the Preacher'. Certainly in verse 1 of chapter 1 that's just been brought straight across for us from the Latin Vulgate translation of the Old Testament, and if you're reading in another English version, you may discover that the translators have not bothered to translate the word at all, they've just Anglicized the Hebrew and said, 'the words of Koheleth (6953) the son of David, king in Jerusalem', no definite article, it's a name. But rather more than a name it's a title, Koheleth, it's the **assembler**, the one who calls an assembly, you can see where ecclesia stes comes from now, can't you? it's the one who assembles rather than the assembly itself. So this is written by the person who assembles.

I wonder who that person might be, 'the gatherer, the assembler'? Well, turn back to 1 Kings 8 because with any of these books, and Ecclesiastes is a good example of this,

we need to understand the background to its writing if we're going to also understand the message for today. I'm here in 1 Kings 8 verse 1, 'Then Solomon **assembled** the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel unto king Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David which is Zion; and all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto king Solomon'. So here is the assembler, the one who calls people to an assembly and you will have noticed the particular occasion when this assembly took place. They came to him to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David and they're going to bring it into the temple which Solomon has constructed, the temple which David was not allowed to build because he was a man of war. A man who had shed blood and Solomon who was peaceful, as his name indicates, was to be the one to build the house for the LORD. But notice the complete reading, verse 2, 'all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto king Solomon at the feast in the month Ethanim which is the seventh month'. No prizes for guessing which feast this was, this was the feast of Tabernacles, and it's probably from this verse that the Jews have got their idea, their tradition of reading the book of Ecclesiastes at the feast of Tabernacles. So we must also bear in mind, that not only was the nation in their booths which they constructed, but there was the second background to the book and that is, the house which Solomon built for the LORD God of heaven and Solomon had the honesty and the perception to be able to say, 'even the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have made'. But you see the difference that is being brought before the nation of Israel? They were dwelling in booths which expressed the passing nature of their lives, and for the LORD God of heaven had been made a house. No it couldn't contain Him, Solomon was right, there was no way that it could contain God, but it did express His permanence in contrast to the transience of their life; do you see how that is being brought before us?

But it wasn't just the people who Koheleth assembled. If you turn back 3 or 4 chapters to 1 Kings 4, Solomon also assembled other things as well; verse 21, 'Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life', and you can see the wealth of provision there was in Solomon's court if you cast your eye down verses 22, 23, and 24. Then verse 29, 'God gave Solomon wisdom and understand exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men: than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman (and they were two who together with Asaph, the 3<sup>rd</sup> had been selected by David to lead the song in the temple of the LORD; the prophesied by singing, they were wise men). These are the men, Cholcol, Darda and his fame was in all nations round about. He also **assembled** 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were a 1005 and he spake of trees from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springs out of the wall: he spake of beasts, of fowl, of creeping things, and of fishes. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom'. So Solomon didn't just assemble people, he assembled

information, songs, facts, and now in Ecclesiastes and under the inspired hand of his heavenly Father, he was now going to weave together these assembled pieces of information, to teach essential truths to the people of Israel, unto all peoples that would listen!

Interesting, isn't it? verse 29 of 1 Kings 4, 'God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and **largeness of heart**'. Today, if we speak of someone who is 'big-hearted', we're thinking of generosity, that's not what this phrase means and don't let's take that idea away as we read it. In fact, the phrase 'largeness' (7341) when it occurs anywhere else in the Old Testament is always related to inanimate objects. This is the only place where it's related to an animate object, to the heart, to the mind, to the conscience of Solomon. You'd see elsewhere that it would describe the breadth of the temple for example; something inanimate and it would describe its limits. It's used in the passage where Abraham was taken after he was separated from Lot, 'and the LORD God said unto him, Look from where thou art, northward, southward, eastward and westward; walk through the land in the length of it and in the largeness of it (the breadth of it). For all the land that thou seest to thee will I give it and to thy seed forever'. Interesting, isn't it? that therefore verse 29 of 1 Kings 4 now concludes that Solomon was given **largeness of heart** even as the sand which is on the seashore, another phrase that comes straight out of the promises to Abraham. We're being taught something about the wisdom of Solomon, that although Solomon had got all this information about cedar trees and hyssop and birds and fishes, and plants and flowers and rock formations, wiser than all the sons of the east; the wisdom was directed and it was directed because he understood the promises of God, those things which we know have their foundation principles in the promises which were given to Abraham himself. So here is the assembler, the one who called the assembly and he called it specifically as we've seen in that feast of the 7<sup>th</sup> month.

Well, turn back into Ecclesiastes! We've got these phrases, we've got the idea of labour, we've got the idea of vanity, all expressing the **impermanence** of man and the passing nature of his life. For a while, and at least up to chapter 7 of Ecclesiastes there is as it were, an artificial horizon introduced, so that Solomon is always looking at those things that are **under the sun**, and what we understand by the language which Solomon is using, is that these are the things that happen to man, all men, when they don't take God into account in their lives. It's as if heaven and the sun itself is blotted out for a while and we're looking at life without God; the life which is there for all men and women whoever they might be, that is why the covenant name of God is not used. It is only much later in the book that Solomon then lifts his eyes and he says that in chapter 9, 'to behold the sun'. When we read that verse it's perhaps worth our while remembering (we're reminded of it in our exhortation last evening) that you can spell 'sun' in two ways, **sun** and **son**, so when we lift our eyes to behold the sun, we are now beholding the LORD God and His purpose of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. The first part of the book in fact, the great majority of the book is life without that; men and

women in darkness scurrying around on the surface of the earth, apparently purposely.

Ecclesiastes chapter 2 verse 12, 'And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which have already been done'. Remember the phrase that Solomon uses, 'there's nothing **new** under the sun', that's why he uses the phrase 'under the sun', he's talking now about life without God, 'nothing new under the sun'. What can the man do that comes after the king? only that which has been already done. Wisdom excelleth folly as far as light excelleth darkness. The wise man's eyes are in his head, but a fool walketh in darkness, and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all', and he's speaking about **death**. Now where was it, do you think? as verse 13 starts, 'That Solomon **saw** these things', is he just speaking of his own experiences of life? or is he more accurately speaking about **his unique experiences of life**? experiences which only Solomon could have? He describes earlier in Ecclesiastes 2, all the things that he could do, and we shall be thinking on another day on 'experience', and here are things that Solomon experienced. But Solomon's experiences were of a different nature from ours, they were so extensive (I don't mean that he experienced things that we never experience) but the breadth of his experience was greater than any of us will ever have however long we may live, because of the power that was granted to him, and those things that were available for him to do which are not at all available for us; if you turn to chapter 3 of Ecclesiastes, what we're trying to find out is where Solomon **saw** these things. How he experienced that one event happens to all men!

Ecclesiastes 3 verse 16, 'Moreover I **saw** under the sun (there's our phrase again) in the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and in the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there'. Now where was there for Solomon uniquely a place of judgment and a place of righteousness? well, we know the answer, don't we? Solomon was wiser than all the other sons of the east, and to him were brought all the people for whom judgment needed to be made; he only merited one case, which expressed the wisdom of Solomon, you remember the two women, each having had a child and they brought one live child and one dead child before Solomon to decide, whose the live child should be! The place of judgment and the place of righteousness, and you know it's been said of the lower courts, 'all human life is there', and that was true for Solomon, he saw it all! Those things which he was not able to experience himself and we've already discovered that because of the wealth and power that was given to him, his experiences were greater than ours could ever be, in addition to that as if that was not sufficient. Now to Solomon was granted judgment over all the difficult cases that came up in Israel and of the surrounding nations, because people came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. They didn't just come to sit on the side benches and watch what he did, but they brought their problems too! and Solomon was able to see that in all these additional experiences of life, one event happens to all. It colours everything that we do and it's the face that **we die**, Solomon says how blessed are those who are young and in their youth, in other words, we need to learn from our

earliest days, from the earliest time possible, that our feet are on a path that leads inexorably to the grave, because that's going to affect the way in which we live, and until we recognize that, and it's the sad blindness of youth that we think we are immortal, once we recognize that, it's going to affect the sort of lives that we live.

But Solomon doesn't just talk about human kind as being **mortal**; as one event happening to us all! We often say that there are two things which are our inheritance from our father, Adam. One is our **mortality** that we naturally will end in the grave unless the Lord comes first, and the second thing is that we have **a leaning towards or are being tempted constantly to sin**. So far as I know, it's only in this writing of Solomon that a third quality is added. Turn back to chapter 1 and verse 17, 'I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly', there was perhaps a hint of this, you know, in the phrase which speaks of man being like the beasts that perish, not you'll notice, like the animals that perish, but man is like the **beasts** that perish. So there is a **bestial** quality in man if he's left to his own devices, if he doesn't lift his eyes above that horizon, if he's constantly on the earth and looks at those things that are under the sun, man is like the beasts that perish. Solomon now says that he wants to find out about this quality, amongst others, he wants to find out about this quality in man, this madness! I want to know wisdom and madness and folly, it's there again, you'll see, in chapter 2 verse 2, 'I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? and verse 12 of chapter 2, 'I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness and folly' as the verse we've already looked at!

Ecclesiastes 7 and verse 7, 'Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad: and a gift destroyeth the heart'. Verse 25 of the same chapter, 'I applied my heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly and of foolishness and madness'. Then a page further on, Ecclesiastes 9 verse 2, where he starts off by saying all things come alike to all, so he's got the idea here of our mortality. 'There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, death is no respecter of persons. to the good and to the clean and to the unclean. To him that sacrifices and to him that sacrifices not; as is the good so is the sinner, and he that sweareth as he that feareth an oath. This is an evil among all things that are done (where?) under the sun, (we've already discovered what that means) that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead'. Madness is in their heart while they live!

In the early 1940's, brother Islip Collyer wrote a series of articles which were published in the Christadelphian magazine on Ecclesiastes; it was not a summary of the whole book, it wasn't a coverage of the whole book, he just picked out one verse here and there and in brother Islip's remarkable way, drew out the teachings from that single verse. It might be worth your while sometime turning up the one where he spoke on this

verse here, Ecclesiastes 9 verse 3, and he just took the phrase 'madness is in their hearts while they live' and it appeared in the magazine in 1941 and he was writing in England at a time when the battle of Britain was taking place and cities in England were being bombed by the Germans. So he used as an example of madness in the hearts of men, he said, 'there is a madness in our world today'. You can imagine the sort of things that he was speaking of and he said, 'just occasionally there is a person, a glimmer of wisdom but even in that wisdom there is madness'. He said, 'I read in the newspaper the other day, a letter from a man who said, 'what a dreadful waste this war is; think of all the earth's resources and how they're being wasted; the amount of gasoline that's being used by these planes taking up their loads of bombs, transporting them across the ocean and dropping them on enemies' cities, and the enemy is doing the same, filling its planes' tanks with gasoline, filling its bomb hold with bombs, transporting them across the sea and dropping them on our cities! How much better it would be, and how much less our resources would be wasted if we sent our own planes up to bomb our own cities and the Germans send their planes up and bomb their cities'. You see, madness is in their heart while they live, and it's true, isn't it? every billboard that has an advertisement for cigarettes, is pressing you to buy the cigarettes, and it says, 'buy them!' and the sergeant general tells you that it will kill you! Madness is in their heart while they live, and it's this verse, on this verse that all advertising psychology is based, whether the people understand it or not, that's where it comes from, and all advertising is directed towards that quality which exists in each one of us, **that there is something which warps truth if we allow it to have free reign!** Madness is in your heart and madness is in my heart, it's there because we're sons of Adam; it can be controlled, but it cannot be controlled so long as all we do, is keep our eyes under the sun! It can only be controlled **if we lift our eyes above that horizon to understand the real truth of the word of God.** Madness and folly!

Well turn back to Ecclesiastes 1, and the passage that we've already looked at here, verse 3, 'What profit have a man of all his labour, which he taketh under the sun? One generation passes away and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever. The sun arises and the sun goes down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth toward the south, and turns about towards the north; it whirls about continually and the wind returns again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, hither they return again'. It's interesting that in two of these figures that Solomon uses, the one about the sun that we've already thought on, and the other about the water cycle and about the rivers are both used in other places in scripture, to teach about **the permanence of God**, and here they're being used to teach the impermanence of man. We know about the sun, rejoicing as a strong man to run his race, and that at each morning the sun is ready and willing to now bring blessing upon the earth of God's making. It's part of the work of God, and the water cycle in Isaiah 55, 'as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven and returneth not thither, but waters the earth making it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater;

so shall My word be, saith the LORD, it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that whereto I send it'.

So those two things which are used to express the majesty and the might, the power, the care, the compassion of the LORD God in heaven now being used by Solomon as well, to teach us about ourselves; that because the seas are never full, and constantly need filling, so we must recognize that we are never full. We constantly need filling, and like a sun timer, the sons of time are passing through, one generation passes and the top chamber empties and another generation comes, and the timer is turned over again, and the same happens. Unless we recognize these things and that **life is the time to serve the LORD**, to do His will and to learn His word, then we are like the beasts that perish; we will be just like the scurrying ants upon the surface of the earth. There seems to be some purpose to what they're doing, but their life is brief and they'll be taken over by the next generation. That must be how we appear to anyone who is able to look upon us from above! It's like the view from a plane when you can see all the traffic on the freeways, you can see the scurrying, the hither and thither, and how much of that we do, and yet the sands are running out all the while! Unless we ask ourselves the real direction of our lives, there's no point in it, none whatsoever, so the opportunity that we now have, in this week, is to stand back from ourselves, to stand back from our lives, to look at what we do with our time, and we shall spend the morning looking at that later in the week; to ask ourselves what we're learning from our experiences of life? and we shall look at that! To ask ourselves the effect of going into the house of God should have, and we shall look at that! and finally we shall come to the conclusion of the whole matter. It's this, 'fear God and keep His commandments because that is the whole duty of man', for there is no good our doing this unless we resolve that we are going to go away from this week, having not only examined ourselves but have chosen to do something about those areas where improvement is needed. For each of us, there are large areas where improvement is needed; so let's first of all, recognize our mortality! our leaning towards sin and our temptations which come upon us. The madness which is in our heart while we live, and determine that those last two things, we can do nothing about the first that's in the hands of our Lord and His Father who will change these vile bodies when He returns, we can do nothing about the first; but we can do something about the last two - we **can resist temptation** and we can **act less like beasts**, and let's resolve to do it, shall we? and in doing so, let us now just bow our heads and offer a prayer to our heavenly Father asking for His help.

LORD God, Thou who art in heaven, and we upon earth, we pray that ever so often our eyes, our thoughts and our intentions are earth bound. We might resolve this day to lift our eyes to behold the sun, those things of thy making, and the Son, the gift of thy provision, our Lord Jesus Christ, and through the strength that is possible for us, through His victory over sin and over death, and by our faithful acceptance of His work, might we the more clearly see our lives for what they are, and spend the remnant to thy

praise. Amen!