

# ECCLESIASTES

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May 9, 2014

Probably the overriding thing that has spawned tonight's study is a reflection on life itself. We know that life as we know it, as mankind, is a finite kind of thing. In other words it has definable limits—there's a beginning and an ending for all men.

Most of us have seen physical life come to an end. Maybe we haven't seen it with our eye, but we've been aware of it within our own family, when death strikes a family. Perhaps we've lived through the loss of a child, a sibling, an aunt or uncle, or maybe grandparents—whatever the case may be. Each of these things is a most sobering event—a sorrowful thing, for sure.

But to lose a parent—especially if you've been blessed with a truly loving parent, someone who fears God, it leaves a person with the most sober of thoughts. I recently lost my father—my siblings and I did—and there's always that sense of sorrow, certainly, but at the same time, it's kind of bittersweet in that we know the resurrection lies ahead. And that's a good thing.

But the sobering thing is to reflect on the man that you've known since infancy. As children we view our parents as being able to do anything, don't we? You see that person go from boundless energy that they once had, able to do tremendous tasks, whatever the case may be. But as the years go by, gradually the scene shifts, doesn't it? That physical strength seems to give way and that ability they once had begins to wither away. And eventually they die.

That should cause any of us to really think about life and what its purpose really is--because we have a finite life; we have a beginning and an ending.

Solomon thought a lot about it and it's recorded in the book of Ecclesiastes. Tonight I'd like to reflect on the first two chapters of Ecclesiastes and then draw some conclusions of what we can learn from these two chapters of the book of Ecclesiastes. So let's begin in Ecclesiastes chapter one, and verse one.

**Ecclesiastes 1:1** *The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.*

Now the "Preacher" can't refer to anyone other than Solomon. David did have other sons—we know he had many sons—but there was only one who was king in Jerusalem, and that was Solomon.

Before we go any further into this book of Ecclesiastes, it can be very beneficial to us to recap some of Solomon's history—what he was like, his personality profile, the works of his life etc.—because it's all going to illuminate for us what he has to say in these first two chapters of Ecclesiastes. So let's go to I Kings to begin with. We see here that Solomon is of a very young age, and loved God, very much like his father before him.

**I Kings 3:5** *At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask! What shall I give you?"*

How many of us would like to have that question asked. There's probably a reason why God asked that question, because He already anticipated the answer that would come. He knew something about this young man—He knows something about each of us. We know that God continually weighs our minds, so he did with Solomon. I can't speak for God, but I think it's safe to say, that He wouldn't have asked such a question as this of someone who was obsessed with anger, with money, or sex, or whatever. I don't think God would have asked that question.

But He did ask that question of Solomon at this point in his life.

**I Kings 3:6** *And Solomon said: “You have shown great mercy to Your servant, David, my father, because he walked before you in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.*

**Verse 7** *Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in.*

This is an interesting statement that Solomon makes: “I am a little child.” But the fact is Solomon *wasn't* a little child, in terms of age. He was an adult—a young adult, a mature person.

In chapter 2 and verse 9, David said of his son, talking to his son, “You’re a wise man.” He didn’t say “You’re a wise boy.”

But in this stage of his life, as a young adult, he already attained a lot of wisdom from God, because I’m sure the thing that has been occupying his mind is what came out when he answered this question from God. So he has already prayed about God giving him wisdom and understanding and knowledge etc., in his life prior to this time.

But the thing that we really want to look at here and to bear in mind is that Solomon’s self-description here is not really about him being a small child. *It’s about the attitude.* He had that attitude, or state of mind of a small child. That attitude was one that *yearned to learn to think like God.* That’s what Solomon wanted to do.

And of course, it’s not surprising when we consider his father. What did God say of David? He said that David was a man after His own heart, in other words a man after His own mind. He wanted to *think like God thought.* And so that is what we see here, reflected in Solomon. And we would say that Solomon had a good teacher, obviously.

**Verse 8** *And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted.*

**Verse 9** *Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?*

**Verse 10** *The speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing.*

**Verse 11** *Then God said to him: “Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice,*

**Verse 12** *behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you.*

**Verse 13** *And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days.”*

So God was incredibly pleased with the request this young man—this young adult. And so He gave him more than he asked. He gave him riches and honor.

But what I want to hone in here, brethren, is the incredible level to which He fulfilled the actual request. He asked for wisdom and understanding to aid him to discern between good and evil among the people. And what did God give him? Just what it says here: “that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any

like you arise after you.”

So this put Solomon in a unique position. There would never be another person like him in terms of wisdom and the ability to discern, except for Christ Himself. And we know that from Matthew 12:24. Christ spoke of Solomon at that point and He said, “Behold, a greater than Solomon is here.” So He was referring to Himself. But Solomon was ahead of anyone in the past, or at the time, anyone ahead of us. So we obviously cannot take lightly anything that this man says.

Now let’s go back to Ecclesiastes chapter 2. We’re going to look at some of the works, the things he completed. This is going to give us a more complete picture of this man that we’re considering and the words he speaks.

- Ecc 2:4** *I made my works great; I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards.*  
**Verse 5** *I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.*  
**Verse 6** *I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove*  
**Verse 7** *I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me.*  
**Verse 8** *I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, and musical instruments of all kinds.*  
**Verse 9** *So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me.*

So Solomon, with this gift that God had given him did many works. In the eyes of what we would call professional people, people who are expert in their own work, these are amazing things that Solomon was able to do! He could design. He could direct the building of structures and the artistry, or whatever the case may be. Solomon had this ability.

Let’s go to I Kings chapter 10. We’ll pick it up in verse 10. This is the account of the Queen of Sheba visiting Solomon.

- I Kings 10:10** *Then she gave the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold, spices in great quantity, and precious stones. There never again came such abundance of spices as the Queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.*  
**Verse. 11** *Also, the ships of Hiram, which brought gold from Ophir, brought great quantities of almug wood and precious stones from Ophir.*

And so King Solomon is acquiring precious materials from all over the world, from all kinds of different places, wherever those precious things are found, that’s where he got them.

As to what is the almug tree—we don’t exactly know. The commentaries are uncertain on that particular thing. Obviously we can conclude that it was a wood of tremendous value and a precious wood, because Solomon built with precious wood, and with gold and with silver sometimes.

- Verse 12** *And the king made steps of the almug wood for the house of the LORD and for the King’s house...*

For those of us who have seen very masterfully built steps, we can picture in our minds that this would have been a beautiful thing, even though we can’t know what it was, we can imagine how beautiful this would have been.

Continuing in verse 12,

**Verse 12** *...also harps and stringed instruments for singers. There never again came such almug wood, nor has the like been seen to this day.*

**Verse 13** *Now King Solomon gave the Queen of Sheba all she desired, whatever she asked, besides what Solomon had given her according to the royal generosity. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants.*

Now notice verse 14:

**Verse 14** *The weight of gold that came to Solomon yearly was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold.*

That's about 25 tons of gold annually that Solomon was receiving into the coffers of Israel. If you multiplied that by \$2000 an ounce, that would be an astronomical figure in today's terms.

**Verse 15** *Besides that from the traveling merchants, from the income of traders, from all the kings of Arabia, and from the governors of the country,*

**Verse 16** *And King Solomon made two hundred large shields of hammered gold; six hundred shekels of gold went into each shield.*

**Verse 17** *He also made three hundred shields of hammered gold; three minas of gold went into each shield. The king put them in the House of the Forest of Lebanon.*

**Verse. 18** *Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with pure gold.*

Two very precious commodities used in conjunction—we can only imagine the tremendous beauty in that.

**Verse 19** *The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round at the back; there were armrests on either side of the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the armrests.*

**Verse 20** *Twelve lions stood there, one on each side of the six steps; nothing like this had been made for any other kingdom.*

And we can add safely that nothing like has been made since, for any other kingdom.

**Verse 21** *All King Solomon's drinking vessels were gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. Not one was silver, for this was accounted as nothing in the days of Solomon.*

Today, silver is counted as a precious commodity, but in Solomon's time it was accounted as nothing because of the volume of gold that they had.

**Verse 22** *For the king had merchant ships at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the merchant ships came bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and monkeys. [some translations say peacocks in place of monkeys]*

These were wind-driven ships that came in about every three years. We know now that it takes a wind-driven ship about three years to circumnavigate the earth. The commentaries don't suggest this, but I think it's a very reasonable speculation, when you consider Solomon's wisdom, and you consider the wisdom of those he worked with, those he employed, Solomon wasn't looking for the lowest bidder, he was looking for the best. I think we can reasonably assume that Hiram's ships that were trading for Solomon could conceivably have gone around the earth in search of wealth.

- Verse 23** *So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom.*
- Verse 24** *Now all the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his heart [or into his mind].*
- Verse 25** *Each man brought his present: articles of silver and gold, garments, armor, spices, horses and mules, at a set rate year by year.*

So there was this continual flow coming into the country. When you couple the wisdom that God had given this man—the ability, the knowledge, the understanding—with all the richness that is coming into the country, you could see with that mind he could devise just about anything—any structure.

I Kings 6 and 7 describes many of the structures that Solomon built—these were just some of them. It says it took him about seven years to build the House of the LORD. Inside the House of the LORD there were various types of precious woods; there were carvings; there was gold. And I'm sure the same is true of his own house which took him thirteen years to build.

It says there that he also built the House of the Forest of Lebanon, the hall of pillars and the hall of the throne of judgments. All these would have been works of art—beautiful to behold. And we can imagine what his vineyards, his orchards would have looked like. It would have been majestic and very artistic as well—and no doubt very productive with the system of irrigation he had devised to keep them watered.

He had flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, probably not just common stock, but he would have had cattle with the highest pedigree, the best that money could buy.

According to I Chronicles 27, Solomon put wise men in charge of these various assets—whoever was the best with shipping, like Hiram. And he had someone else to do the farming, someone else to maintain the livestock, etc. And in his wisdom, everything flourished.

He had the best musicians of the day. It would be interesting to know what the best musicians of the day produced for music. But that's what he had—the very best of entertainment. So he had virtually everything—everything that a person could desire on a physical level!

Let's go back to I Kings 4. The wisdom God gave Solomon wasn't just in amassing wealth—it wasn't just in building structures, which is a marvelous ability—but he also understood natural things. He wasn't like so many of us today who go to college and get a degree studying a specific thing. We might have someone who becomes a doctor—a podiatrist—they just deal with the feet. Or an optometrist—they just deal with the eyes.

Solomon had specialized ability in virtually every area of life. This was the gift that God had given him. And so he understood natural things—moral things, spiritual things, deep things which don't even enter the minds of most men. It was God's gift to him.

It's comforting to us to know that God offers us that same wisdom. James says that God gives wisdom liberally to all who ask for that wisdom, knowledge and understanding. So that is something we need to do for ourselves.

God gave Solomon largeness of mind, the ability to comprehend far more than what meets the eye. He wasn't a shallow thinker. Probably most of the things he understood—that he was able to discern—have only been *reinvented* by what we call modern man.

**I Kings 4:30** *Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt.*

**Verse 31** *For he was wiser than all men—than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations.*

**Verse 32** *He spoke three thousand proverbs [you could probably give a sermon or sermonette on every single proverb that he has written], and his songs were one thousand and five.*

So he had tremendous musical-poetical ability. But this next verse is one I think is fascinating, because it is a little different. It explains the other side. He had tremendous grasp of many, many things.

**Verse 33** *Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish.*

So Solomon understood the herbal kingdom. He understood the animal kingdom. He had this wisdom in the natural world. It says he spoke of these things. In other words, he could expound on these things; he probably taught some of these things. He could teach anything about the cedar of Lebanon on down to the hyssop that sprang out of the wall. We don't really know what hyssop was. Some speculate that it might have been a kind of mint. But the point is that he understood the full spectrum from the biggest to the littlest of the plant world. He was the first naturalist, aside from our Creator.

One of the things we know about herbs is that they have long had medicinal value. There has been a resurgence and an interest in that form of medicine today and many people are going back to that now.

But's listen to what Gill's commentary says about Solomon's knowledge of the herbal kingdom:

*“Suidas says it was reported that Solomon wrote a book of medicines for all diseases which was fixed to the entrance of the temple, which Hezekiah took away, because sick people applied to that for cure of their disorders and neglected to pray to God.”*

If this is true, it means that Solomon had a grasp of knowledge that has been largely lost to the world and probably only a fraction of what he knew is actually alive and functioning today.

Now, concerning the animal kingdom, this is what Gill said about that:

*“He understood the nature of all sorts of animals in the earth, air and sea and discoursed of their names, kinds, qualities and use, [he spoke about these as well, perhaps he taught about these] with the greatest ease and perspicuity [so he is very, very fluent in this knowledge]; the Jews fancy that Aristotle's **History of Animals** is his, which that philosopher came upon, and published it in his own name.”*

If that is true—if this historian is correct--that's an amazing thing, isn't it? Aristotle is viewed by many in the world as having been a great intellect, and yet, perhaps he simply took Solomon's work.

There are other things we could point to, and probably will, that show just how far ahead of his time he was because of the gift that God had given him. This is just helping us to get a profile of the man. Our point so far is that Solomon was totally unique in wisdom and ability. He was ahead of everyone.

Now let's go back to Ecclesiastes chapter 1. Understanding just this little bit that we've looked at about the ability that God has given Solomon—covering so many arenas of life. He says this:

**Ecclesiastes 1:2** *“Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher; “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”*

He says it once, he says it twice and then he emphasizes it a third time. This is a very well emphasized thought

from Solomon!

The word “vanity” comes from the Hebrew word, *hebel*, and it’s a hard word to define with just one English word. There are other words that are used synonymously and some are used in Scripture. The words “emptiness” and “meaningless” are often used. Figuratively “vanity” means something transitory and unsatisfactory. Concretely, it means a puff of air, a puff of breath, or a puff of wind. In other words, something that can’t be grasped, something you can’t take a hold of.

Vanity is used 39 times in the book of Ecclesiastes, and what Solomon has said here in verse 2 is one of the major themes of the book: *“Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”*

If a man were to live his life as an animal—in other words, on a purely physical level—without any vision of the future or of what lies beyond, then this theme is absolutely true.

**Verse 3**      *What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?*

We all work. Some people work with their hands. Others work with a computer—I guess that still utilizes the hands as well. Either way—no matter how we work—we all have to pay our dues, don’t we? We work to learn something—study, which may take years—and then we work at that thing we learned in order to make a living—to pay our bills—and then at the end of our life, we can’t take it with us. We see Solomon is painting a picture here.

**Verse 4**      *One generation passes away, and another generation comes; but the earth abides forever.*

It’s like clockwork. We look at the generation of the Second World War—the “great generation” it’s been called. Essentially most of those have gone away, most of them are under a gravestone—the vast majority. And each of those, with all of their life’s experiences will quickly fade from the memories of this newest generation. And that’s the way it will continue to be as time goes on. That’s just how it works.

Countless generations are in the crust of this earth—whether under water, or in the soil.

**Verse 5**      *The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it arose.*

It just keeps doing what it does. And mankind is no different—that’s the point he’s trying to make—than these repetitive cycles of nature. We’re no different from that.

We appreciate what God gives us through the sun. We appreciate the warmth and the fact that it causes things to grow when there’s moisture. But the fact is that the sun is just an inanimate object, and we’re compared to it. It’s just a thing. We’re people; we do things; we have creative minds, and here we’re being compared to the sun which is inanimate. Our life is being compared to its rising and setting. That’s pretty humbling.

**Verse 6**      *The wind goes toward the south, and turns around to the north; the wind whirls about continually, and comes again on its circuit.*

**Verse 7**      *All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; to the place from which the rivers come, there they return again.*

Here Solomon is ahead of his time. He is describing what we know as the jet stream—that’s we call them. Solomon knew about the jet streams way back in his time. That’s why we say it is very conceivable that Hiram was circumnavigating the globe in search of wealth.

Solomon knew about these things plays a part in the cycle of water. The rain comes down and it evaporates

back up. Then the wind carries it back up over the land and it falls again. It's a repetitive, repetitive cycle. The oceans never overflow, everything works.

So what Solomon understood was 'way ahead of the rest of us. And there's nothing new under the sun. These things Solomon knew, we know today—mostly—maybe we don't know everything he knew.

But our minds are just like these physical laws that Solomon is talking about—they're repetitive. Our generations are repetitive. The only difference is that eventually we die. These cycles just keep going. The sun keeps rising and setting; the water keeps evaporating and being carried back, and so on and so forth.

**Verse 8**      *All things are full of labor; man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing [I can relate to that—it's very true. We like to see things & enjoy beauty; we like to hear things—it's all the same].*

**Verse 9**      *That which has been is what will be; that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.*

**Verse 10**     *Is there anything of which it may be said, "See this is new"? It has already been in ancient times before us.*

If we weren't thinking, we could conclude that Solomon is wrong in this, because a lot of things have changed—mainly in technology. Look at the technology that David used to defeat Goliath. He took a rock and a sling and destroyed the enemy.

What is a rock launched from a sling—literally, in principle? It's a projectile, isn't it? It's the same thing as an arrow from a bow. It's just a projectile. A bullet from a rifle, or a nuclear device launched from its launching pad—it's the same thing; it's just another projectile. And all these things have the potential to kill—just a different technology. But nothing's changed.

The thoughts that drive the use of these things all arise in the human mind. It's repetitive, isn't it?

What about Cain. He was the first man to murder in that he killed his brother, Abel. Perhaps he used his fists; maybe he used a rock; maybe he used a club. It makes no difference. That pattern has just been repeated, repeated and repeated through the generations just like the rising and the setting of the sun. It's all happened before.

Pick any subject. There's nothing new—on a physical level. There is on a spiritual level, but not on the physical level.

**Verse 11**     *There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come by those who will come after.*

If it weren't for the Scripture, there would be little known of Solomon today—the wisest man aside from Jesus Christ to ever walk the face of this earth. If it weren't for Scripture, what would we know of Solomon today? Almost nothing.

If, in fact, Aristotle did claim a work that was actually Solomon's, his statement is verified. He's forgotten. Once we're dead, we're gone. We can be brilliant, as Solomon was, or extremely talented, have something exceptional, and then just fade from the scene.

**Verse 12**     *I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.*



**Verse 13** *And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised.*

When Solomon says “all,” he was setting his heart to search out wisdom concerning all that was done under heaven. That means both good and evil. So verse 13 says a lot. Solomon is determined to search out both good and evil and, of course, he did it in a very arrogant way.

In Proverbs 1, when Solomon was a younger man, he had said, and rightly so, that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom—that is the beginning of Godly wisdom. And later in this book of Ecclesiastes, he makes four references to the fear of God. So he still knows it, but it doesn’t have a lot of impact in this part of his life. As a matter of fact, it has no impact whatsoever.

Probably the wisdom he’s referring to here amounts to the best reasoning and the best conjecturing that come out of a think tank—that can come out of a human mind. And, of course, he’s referring to his own mind. But if we look at how self-focused he was from here and through most of chapter 2, we have to come to that conclusion. There are lots of “I’s,” lots of “me’s,” and lots of “my’s” in these verses. It’s all about Solomon.

One commentary says this, “The occupational hazard of the wise man is to walk by calculation rather than by faith.” This is a pretty profound statement, and fitting for Solomon. We could add some clarity to this statement: “The man who is wise in his own eyes”—we could say it that way, “The man who is wise in his own eyes walks by calculation—by his own thoughts—rather than by faith.

**Verse 14** *I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind.*

**Verse 15** *What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be numbered.*

What he is referring to here is that some things in life are impossible to do, or to undo, depending on what the case may be. Some situations cannot be straightened out. In chapter 7 and verse 13 here in Ecclesiastes, Solomon states that it is God Who makes things crooked. And that is a fact. God is the Master Potter and He will re-shape us during the course of our lifetime.

Think of the apostle, Paul—a very well-known case—he wanted to be healed. But God’s answer was “No,” so there was no way for this thing to be straightened out—this crooked thing that came into Paul’s path. There was no way for that thing to be straightened out *from the perspective of self-will*. But of course it was resolved in Paul’s life because he accepted God’s Will.

God puts crooked things in front of us. There are blessings and cursings that come into play in life. Some of these things we bring on ourselves. Sometimes God opens doors and shuts doors. He makes it possible for some things to work and other things not to work.

But a mind that is functioning on its own, as Solomon’s was at this point, can be very frustrated—incredibly frustrated—by not being able to change things. Not being able to hang on to it, squeeze it down and hold it and make it what he wants it to be. It’s like trying to grasp the wind. And this was Solomon’s mind at this point in his life. He was an environmentalist. He had the first wind-driven mind.

**Ecc 1:16** *I communed with my heart, saying, “Look, I have attained greatness, and have gained more wisdom than all who were before me in Jerusalem.”*

We see the “I” aspect here—“I” have attained greatness, and “I” have gained wisdom. His focus is all on Solomon.

**Verse 16** *“...my heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge.*

**Verse 17** *And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind.”*

How could he know? He could only know madness and folly by *doing* those things.

**Verse 18** *“For in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.”*

What we see here is that Solomon is well on the slide downward, he was well underway. And what he is doing—as he says in verse 16, he’s communing with himself, he’s talking to himself, he’s reasoning with himself, because self has become the source of wisdom. That’s the problem that Solomon has at this point.

He’s become “somebody.”

Of course, he’s done some amazing things, and some very good things. But what has happened to that adult, who once said to God, “I’m a little child.” What happened to that man?

Previously he was talking with God—communing with God—in order to gain wisdom and understanding and knowledge, but now it’s completely reversed. He’s communing with himself. He has become his own source. There’s a great lesson in that for us that we want to think about.

**Eccl 2:1** *I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure;” but surely, this also was vanity.*

**Verse 2** *I said of laughter—“Madness!” and of mirth, “What does it accomplish?”*

**Verse 3** *I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their life.*

So here he’s looking for something meaningful, and so he’s looking one place after another place and after another—he looks for pleasure, laughter, wine, excessive drinking, etc. Just as he’d sought fulfillment in all the extraordinary works we talked about earlier, now he’s seeking fulfillment in these other things. He’s a man in search, eager to search but not finding the answers.

**Verse 10** *Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. [in other words, whatever he wanted went for it] I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor; and this was my reward from all my labor.*

Now let’s go to I Kings once more—I Kings chapter 11.

Solomon did many things and he didn’t withhold himself from anything, and that’s what’s described for us randomly in chapter of 11. The man went “hog wild” – the hog being an unclean animal, he went wild.

**I Kings 11:1** *But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites,*

**Verse 2** *from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, “You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love.*

Why was he doing this? Because he valued the reasoning of his own mind. You see that's the problem—that's where he's at now.

**Verse 3** *And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart.*

**Verse 4** *For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David.*

**Verse 5** *For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.*

He's going after the worst of the worst.

**Verse 6** *Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as did his father David.*

**Verse 7** *Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon.*

**Verse 8** *And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.*

**Verse 9** *So the LORD became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the LORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,*

**Verse 10** *and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the LORD had commanded.*

Solomon had resorted to reasoning, to communing with his own mind. He had become his own source of wisdom at this point. So Solomon's wisdom had been corrupted through this reasoning of self. His wisdom had been destroyed. He had put his faith in himself. And, very clearly, we understand that is what Lucifer did—he put his faith in himself, too. And that is what corrupted his wisdom.

Quite naturally, there was not lasting meaningfulness in any of this that we just read here in this chapter for Solomon. This did not fill the man. He was an empty man in search of some kind of fulfillment.

It's kind of like the demon world. They go about looking for a place to go. They're transitory—just like grasping for the wind. On top of this, think about the example Solomon set for Israel, which was horrific. It was a horrible example.

Back to Ecclesiastes chapter 2.

**Ecc 2:11** *Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done and on the labor in which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun.*

We talked about all the mighty works he had done. They were meaningless to him in retrospect. There was no real fulfillment. Yes, he had done marvelous things, built tremendous structures, artistic things. And yet it meant nothing. There was no fulfillment or peace of mind.

**Verse 12** *Then I turned myself to consider wisdom and madness and folly; for what can the man do who succeeds the king? Only what he has already done.*

**Verse 13** *Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness.*

**Verse 14** *The wise man's eyes are in his hear, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I myself [there we go again, I myself—my perception] perceived that the same event happens to them all.*

**Verse 15** *So I said in my heart, "As it happens to the fool, it also happens to me. And why was I then*

*more wise?” Then I said in my heart, “This also is vanity.”*

**Verse 16** *For there is no more remembrance of the wise than of the fool forever, since all that now is will be forgotten in the days to come. And how does a wise man die? As the fool!*

So Solomon is here describing his own corrupted logic. In terms of death, there is no difference between the wise and the fool. Everyone’s going to die a physical death—very true. And they’re both going to be basically forgotten when they die after a period of time.

So what’s the difference? The difference is that that is the reasoning that caused Solomon to live on his impulses. His thinking is so completely selfish that the future—the vision of the future—had totally escaped him. There is something that awaits the wise, but that had escaped the man because he is not communing with God. He’s communing with his own mind. He is following his own reasoning.

**Verse 17** *Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind.*

**Verse 18** *Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me.*

Some people think that it’s wonderful to leave something to the one that comes after them. But not Solomon.

**Verse 19** *And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity.*

**Verse 20** *Therefore I turned my heart and despaired of all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun.*

**Verse 21** *For there is a man whose labor is with wisdom, knowledge and skill; [now he’s referring to himself] yet he must leave his heritage [that is, his inheritance] to a man who has not labored for it. This is also vanity and a great evil.*

**Verse 22** *For what has man for all his labor, and for the striving of his heart with which he has toiled under the sun?*

**Verse 23** *For all his days are sorrowful, [why is that?] and his work burdensome; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity.*

This is a man who really, truly, at this point in his life, hated life. Why is that? We just read it: because of all his labor, great works and wealth is going to go to someone else. Someone else was going to inherit it. Again, I ask, what’s wrong with that? He knew death was a certainty, that someone else would inherit. But what’s wrong with someone inheriting it?

What really drove this hatred that Solomon had for life? It ties back into the inheritance, the legacy. He didn’t want to leave his legacy behind. Solomon had become so big, he wanted to be “Solomon, the Great,” forever, at this point in his life. That’s what he kept striving for—something bigger, something greater. And it left him utterly empty, because he didn’t have the power to live forever. He knew that it was going to somebody else and he despised that thought, because it was his.

Now Solomon did come to himself, which is an amazing thing. And he didn’t write this to discourage anyone who would read it. When we understand what the man is saying, he wrote it for our benefit. There was tremendous purpose in it. Here’s what one commentary said:

*“Kings in the ancient Near East often promoted their greatness by celebrating their deeds in royal inscriptions. Seow notes that these texts were meant ‘to enhance respect for the king and memorialized his achievements forever.’*

*“Some kings also left autobiographies [and this section in Ecclesiastes begins in much the same way as these compositions]. Solomon comes to mind as we read these verses, but rather than his accomplishments proving his unsurpassed greatness as far as satisfaction, fulfillment and the meaning of life are concerned, he finds that they are all vanity.*

*“Solomon was the example par excellence of wisdom, success, and accomplishment, though here Solomon is probably a paradigm for humanity and represents any person who tries to find meaning and fulfillment in a life that is not centered in God.”*

This is a pretty profound conclusion that this author came to—very well put. In other words, Solomon is here admitting his sins and explaining how futile and empty a life it really gave him, how it corrupted his wisdom. It was written, brethren, for our benefit. That’s why God caused this to be in the Bible so we can benefit from it.

Solomon was greatly gifted by God, but so have we been gifted by God, through the Holy Spirit. God has given us a power source with which we can overcome anything in life. To grow, develop, to learn to think just like Solomon at one point in life wanted to learn to think.

When Solomon was as a “little child,” in his own words, he flourished and did good things. But when he began to follow his own reasoning, his life went flat, just like a flat tire—the air went out of it. It left him unsettled, and it left him, as according to his own words, hating life.

We have to ask ourselves a very good question. When we go through something like this and think about it: “Are we allowing God’s gift to us, to cause us to flourish?” Are we allowing that so we can have an abundant and a meaningful life, regardless of the crooked places that God allows in our growth process? God does allow crooked places, no question about that, but are we living an abundant and meaningful and purposeful life?

The apostle Paul, as referred to earlier—God told him “No” on that one particular occasion. So what did Paul do? It wasn’t just one crooked place in Paul’s life, there were many, many difficult places in his life. Paul pressed on. He lived this life to the full. He pressed toward the goal of the upward call of God in Christ and he never lost the vision of the future, which is to become an immortal member of God’s family—God’s own family. It never escaped him temporarily, that we know of, as it did for Solomon. We understand that life has tremendous meaning.

Solomon is despairing, he’s explaining what went wrong in his life, in these first two chapters. Life has tremendous meaning, not just for us, but for those in the future, as we know from looking forward to the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment. We are going to have the chance to retrain mankind, so that they can begin to walk in the light, that they can have peace and exude love and all of those things to live the “give” way of life.

Life also has great meaning for those who are going to succeed us when we die. Our life should have had impact on somebody who’s coming along behind us, because of how we lived in our span of time, because we lived with purpose. Let’s go to Proverbs, chapter 13. This was from Solomon at an earlier time in life, when he understood this inheritance thing.

**Proverbs 13:22**      *A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children...*

A good man is somebody who’s wise—a Godly person, in other words, they have Godly wisdom. And they benefit their children; they leave an inheritance to their children or to their children’s children. Certainly Solomon could have been referring to a financial inheritance, because that’s a wonderful thing when we can

leave some wealth to our offspring or grandchildren. That's fine. But some people don't have anything to leave, physically speaking. Does that make them negligent or inferior in some way?

Let's go to Psalm 119. We'll let David explain it. Because this is what matters—what David is going to expound here.

**Psalm 119:111** *Your testimonies I have taken as a heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart.*

Your testimonies—God's testimonies, he has taken as a heritage forever. What are testimonies? They are declarations or affirmations of truth, in other words, the truth about God's way of life. And of course, heritage means an inheritance—that is what he is talking about.

So the inheritance David's writing about is the truth about how to live a godly, meaningful and purposeful life. And it doesn't require physical, but rather spiritual, wealth. That's what it takes. In other words, it's how we live our lives. Do we live our lives with purpose? Do we set the example that we should be setting? Do we have that keen desire to instill in our offspring the things that we have come to learn. Or if we don't have our own children, we can teach others. We can be an example. We see that frequently—almost continually—within the church today, teaching the children of others.

What does it do, brethren? It breathes life into life. It makes life so worth living! It's like passing on an inheritance—a spiritual inheritance. And that's what a wise man does. He leaves an inheritance to his children and to his children's children.

Let's go to Romans chapter 8. This is the end product of what we can assist God in giving. When we think about this, it pales into complete insignificance the great physical works that Solomon was able to do—it virtually makes them look like nothing.

**Romans 8:14** *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*

**Verse 15** *For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by which we cry out, "Abba, Father."*

**Verse 16** *The Spirit Itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,*

**Verse 17** *and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

So the end product is becoming a part of God's immortal family. That's the inheritance that we can all pass on. That's the purpose of life, to pass on God's way of living, which means that we commune with God, not with our own reasoning or our own minds.

Brethren, the family of God is the centerpiece here—that's where light is, that's where truth is, that is where love and peace is, and that is where deep meaning and satisfaction and purpose exists forever.

Let's go back to Ecclesiastes 2 and complete this chapter. This shows what Solomon was coming back to near the end of his life. He was coming back to what we've just described—the real, true values of life, the real purpose of life.

**Ecccl 2:24** *Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw was from the hand of God.*

So now he's bringing God back into the picture. This is his reasoning now: "This is from the hand of God, this is good to eat and drink and to enjoy the good from our physical labor during our physical time.

**Verse 25**     *For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment more than I?*

Now, "more than I" is not really the correct wording there. It should read "without Him." Numerous translations render it that way and when we look at the context, it's obvious. It should read, "*Who can eat or have enjoyment without Him in their life?*"

Joy and purpose are found in a humble, God-centered life.

**Verse 26**     *For God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy...*

There is *pleasure* in this way of life that God gives us, when we seek wisdom and knowledge, when we're communing with Him. So he says (verse 26),

*God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in His sight; but to the sinner He gives the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to him who is good before God. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.*

So there's joy, brethren, and there's purpose and fulfillment that God gives to those who have that same attitude that Solomon had as a younger adult—that "little child" attitude that Solomon started out with. Living any other way will not fill us. Living any other way is simply vanity and it's like we're trying to grasp the wind.

Hopefully that can be of benefit to us. There are a lot of lessons we can reflect on from the book of Ecclesiastes and those are some of them. That brings this to a conclusion this evening.