

Getting the Most Out of Life

Ecclesiastes 1:1-8

Ecc 1:1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. 2 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher; "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." 3 What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun? 4 One generation passes away, and another generation comes; But the earth abides forever. 5 The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, And hastens to the place where it arose. 6 The wind goes toward the south, And turns around to the north; The wind whirls about continually, And comes again on its circuit. 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. 8 All things are full of labor; Man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, Nor the ear filled with hearing.

Out of all the things that we read this week, the one that probably bothers us the most is the book of Ecclesiastes written by reportedly the wisest man in ancient days.

But although Solomon was so wise what is he trying to tell us in this little book.

It appears that Ecclesiastes was written toward the end of Solomon's life. He had done everything that he wanted; nothing has he withheld from himself. And what he has found is that nothing in this life can give us the satisfaction that we are looking for.

- I. Happiness is not to be found in gaining wealth.
 - A. 1 Kings 10:14-29 14 The weight of gold that came to Solomon yearly was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold, 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.
 - B. A talent was about 93 pounds; at today's prices about 1.5 billion dollars. Remember he didn't have congress so that money would go a long way.
- II. Happiness is not found in accumulation of things.
 - A. 16 And King Solomon made two hundred large shields of hammered gold; six hundred shekels of gold went into each shield. 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.
 - B. 18 Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with pure gold. 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. 20 Twelve lions stood there, one on each side of the six steps; nothing like this had been made for any other kingdom.
 - C. 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. 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. 23 So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom.

D. 26 And Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen; he had one thousand four hundred chariots and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king at Jerusalem. 27 The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and he made cedar trees as abundant as the sycamores which are in the lowland.

E. 28 Also Solomon had horses imported from Egypt and Keveh; the king's merchants bought them in Keveh at the current price. 29 Now a chariot that was imported from Egypt cost six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse one hundred and fifty; and thus, through their agents, they exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria.

III. Happiness is not found in pleasure.

A. Ecc 2:1 I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure"; but surely, this also was vanity. 2 I said of laughter--"Madness!"; and of mirth, "What does it accomplish?" 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 lives. 4 I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. 5 I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. 6 I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove. 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. 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. 9 So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. 10 Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. 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. 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.

IV. Happiness is not found in position, power, or prestige.

A. 24 Now all the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart. 25 Each man brought his present: articles of silver and gold, garments, armor, spices, horses, and mules, at a set rate year by year.

V. The conclusion of the matter.

A. Ecc 12:1 Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them":

B. 6 Remember your Creator before the silver cord is loosed, Or the golden bowl is

broken, Or the pitcher shattered at the fountain, Or the wheel broken at the well.
7 Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God
who gave it.

- C. 13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His
commandments, For this is man's all. 14 For God will bring every work into
judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.

VI. The Psalmist perspective

- A. Ps 1:1 Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands
in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2 But his delight is in
the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night. 3 He shall be like
a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose
leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper. 4 The ungodly are
not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the
ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the
righteous. 6 For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the
ungodly shall perish.