

THE VANITY OF MATERIALISM

Introduction:

1. The book of Ecclesiastes records the “wisdom” of Solomon as he sought for meaning and purpose in life without the wisdom of God.
2. It was the great experiment of his life – and serves as a powerful warning to all mankind.
3. Without God, all is vanity and vexation of spirit...

- I. The Examination of Materialism (Ecclesiastes 2:12-23)
 - A. Solomon turned his attention to the many things he had done, built, and accomplished in his life as King.
 - B. Those who followed him could only hope to imitate or duplicate his great achievements.
 - C. Thus, he concluded that wisdom provided greater advantage and gain than folly.
 - D. However, this conclusion was rendered empty by the simple fact that same fate awaits both the wise and the fool – death.
 - E. This caused Solomon to hate life and all the work he had done in it.
 1. Life seemed pointless when everything one had accomplished had to be left behind.
 2. And, those to whom it was left might prove to be fools!
 - F. He concluded that the best one can do is to eat, drink, and find good in his work.
 1. This is very similar to the beliefs of the Epicureans.
 2. Their motto was: “Live in the shade” (Λαθε βιοσαζ).
 - G. However, in this sentiment Solomon also saw the hand of God – “for apart from Him who can eat or have enjoyment?” (ESV)
 - H. For a brief moment, the light of God shone into Solomon’s dark heart, and he acknowledged a moral order to the world – giving it meaning and purpose.
 - I. But, just as quickly the dark clouds returned, and Solomon concluded that all is vanity and vexation of spirit.
- II. The Examination of Wealth (Ecclesiastes 5:10 – 6:12)
 - A. The wealth of Solomon was vast and continued to increase during his reign as King over Israel.
 - B. Thus, he devoted his heart to examining wealth and its place in one’s life.
 - C. He concluded that wealth is also vanity.
 1. Man is never satisfied in gaining wealth.
 2. Increased wealth produces increased spending.
 3. Increased wealth produces increased anxiety.
 4. Wealth may become an idol through greed and a false trust.
 5. Wealth may be taken away easily.
 6. Wealth can not be taken with one at death.
 7. Wealth may produce anger, jealousy, envy, and destruction.
 - D. Thus, Solomon returns to his earlier conclusion that one should learn to enjoy life in its simple pleasures.
 - E. Still, those who possess wealth are not guaranteed happiness (6:1-6).
 - F. All share one common fate – a short life that leads to the grave (6:7-12).
 - G. Therefore, do not trust in wealth (cf. 1 Timothy 6:6-19).