

THE VANITY OF PLEASURE

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 Pleasure (Ecclesiastes 2:1-11)
 - A. Having failed to find meaning and purpose in science or philosophy, Solomon turned his attention to pleasures of the flesh.
 - B. He determined to test himself with mirth – gladness, glee, joy, or pleasure.
 - C. He found that a life devoted to laughter and mirth is foolishness and empty of accomplishment.
 - D. He experimented with wine – giving his flesh over to intoxication – while seeking to remain in control by his wisdom.
 1. His goal was ‘scientific’ in nature, to determine what was good for men in this life.
 2. However, it was still sin (Proverbs 20:1; 31:4-5; Ephesians 5:18; etc.).
 3. And, Solomon was walking a dangerous path – one from which many have not been able to return.
 - E. He turned to pleasures acquired by material wealth – expensive hobbies.
 1. Architecture – design and development
 2. Agriculture – vineyards, gardens, orchards, and irrigation; also, cattle
 3. Management – multitude of servants
 4. Art – silver, gold, precious treasures, musical performances
 - F. Finally, he declared that he acquired whatever his heart desired!
 - G. As he looked back over all these sources of pleasure, Solomon concluded that they were vanity and vexation of spirit.
 - H. They produced no profit, gain, nor advantage to life “under the sun.”
- II. The Folly of Pleasure
 - A. It should be noted that none of these things (except intoxicating wine) were inherently sinful.
 - B. On the other hand, neither were they inherently spiritual.
 - C. Pleasures of the flesh fail to bring contentment because they do not satisfy the soul of man.
 1. Hedonism seeks happiness by fulfilling all the desires of the flesh.
 2. Yet, Jesus declared, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).
 3. Man is more than a body of flesh; he is a spiritual being (2 Cor. 4:16).
 4. At death, the physical body will return to dust; but the spirit will return to God (Ecclesiastes 12:7)!
 - D. Pleasures of the flesh fail to bring contentment because they come with consequences (Galatians 6:7-8; Hebrews 11:25; 9:27).
 - E. Pleasures of the flesh fail to bring contentment because they tend to domination and destruction (Romans 6:12, 21, 23).
 1. Consider Israel (1 Corinthians 10:1-14).
 2. Consider the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-17).