

THE VANITY OF FALSE RELIGION

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 Investigation of Religion

- A. Having examined the fleshly and secular aspects of men’s lives, Solomon now turned his attention to the religious.
- B. Is religion alone – without God – enough to give meaning to one’s life?
 1. It should not come as a surprise that a skeptic would question such things.
 2. Even today, those who claim atheism, agnosticism, or skepticism are often adept at finding hypocrisy and shortcomings in those who claim to be religious.
- C. Thus, Solomon focused on evaluating religion.

II. The Vanity of Careless Religion (Ecclesiastes 5:1)

- A. “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God.”
- B. The phrase ‘keep thy foot’ means, “Watch your step!” or “Be careful!”
- C. One’s service and worship offered to God is a serious matter.
- D. Jacob illustrated the seriousness of coming to the house of God (Gen. 35:1-6).
 1. A place of dwelling and of worship
 2. Idolatry must be removed.
 3. Cleansing must take place.
 4. Proper attire must be worn.
- E. Becoming a Christian – a member of the Lord’s house (1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 4:17) – is a serious matter.
 1. Count the cost
 2. Consider the commands
 3. Commit to Christ
- F. Assembling for worship is a serious matter.
 1. Worship is not...
 - a. Something to be endured
 - b. Something to witness as a spectator
 - c. Merely a social gathering
 2. Worship must be offered to God (John 4:24).
 3. Worship must be offered in spirit (John 4:24).
 4. Worship must be offered in truth (John 4:24).
- G. There are many examples of those who did not take worship seriously and suffered because of it.
 1. Cain (Genesis 4:3-5)
 2. Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-4)
 3. Israel (Malachi 1:8)
 4. Vain worship (Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7)
- H. We must not be careless in the practice of our religion.

Ecclesiastes 5

- III. The Vanity of Ignorant Religion (Ecclesiastes 5:1)
- A. "Be more ready to hear."
 - B. Often, men are more eager to do something that they think is good or right rather than to listen to what God desires.
 - C. Thus, they offer up worship out of ignorance.
 - D. However, their ignorance is no excuse for God has revealed the truth!
 - 1. Those who rejected Jesus (John 5:39, 45-46)
 - 2. Those who worshipped false gods (Acts 17:22-23; Romans 1:18ff)
 - 3. The false worship of the Samaritans (John 4:22)
 - 4. The Jews after the captivity (Malachi 1:2ff "*Wherein?*")
 - E. We must not be ignorant in the practice of our religion.
- IV. The Vanity of Ritualistic Religion (Ecclesiastes 5:1)
- A. "Than to give the sacrifice of fools."
 - B. They cared only about the action of offering a sacrifice, not the attitudes of humility, submission, gratitude, and love that were to produce the action.
 - C. Saul thought that he could substitute ritual sacrifice for obedience (1 Samuel 15:3, 13, 22).
 - D. The worshippers of Baal practiced elaborate rituals in their religion, but all was in vain (1 Kings 18:22-28).
 - E. We must not be ritualistic in the practice of our religion.
- V. The Vanity of Hypocritical Religion (Ecclesiastes 5:2-7)
- A. Solomon wrote of those who would say one thing, but practice another.
 - B. One should always remember that God is greater and higher than man.
 - C. One must guard against rash or hasty words.
 - 1. In prayer
 - 2. In praise
 - 3. In promise
 - D. One must consider carefully a vow that is made to God.
 - 1. Matthew 15:7-9
 - 2. Matthew 7:21-23
 - E. We must not be hypocritical in the practice of our religion.
- VI. The Vanity of Lifeless Religion (Ecclesiastes 5:8-9)
- A. True religion must show itself in action!
 - B. True religion results in a change of heart and a change of life.
 - C. If one wants to practice true religion, he must do those things that are truly religious (cf. James 1:27).
 - D. God sees and knows all – and He will judge accordingly.
 - E. We must not be lifeless in the practice of our religion.