

ECCLESIASTES

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Ecclesiastes chapter 1 as we begin a new book and we continue our study through the Word of God. As we will see as we go through this book, King Solomon is the writer. I realize that today many deny that fact; they feel it was written as to deceive people into thinking Solomon wrote this book. How sad, do we really think God is going to deceive us or allow a forgery to come into His Word? In fact, it was until the seventeenth century that most Jews and Christians did not believe that Solomon wrote the book of Ecclesiastes. We will deal more with the authorship of this book as we get to the first verse of Ecclesiastes.

Solomon became King of Israel at a young age, maybe around 20 years old, and in II Chronicles 1:7-12 we are told, **“On that night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, ‘Ask! What shall I give you?’ And Solomon said to God: ‘You have shown great mercy to David my father, and have made me king in his place. Now, O Lord God, let Your promise to David my father be established, for You have made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. Now give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this great people of Yours?’ Then God said to Solomon: ‘Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked riches or wealth or honor or the life of your enemies, nor have you asked long life - but have asked wisdom and knowledge for yourself, that you may judge My people over whom I have made you king - wisdom and knowledge are granted to you; and I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings have had who were before you, nor shall any after you have the like.’”**

And as you read the Scriptures you see the wisdom of Solomon as he reigns as King over Israel. The only problem was that he did not apply that wisdom to his own life and he sought to find satisfaction apart from God. That is interesting to me because we usually fail in areas we are the strongest because we don't see our need for God. In areas we are weak; we are praying and seeking God to help us so we don't fail. Solomon failed and he failed big time as we will see as we go through this book. You see, if you are living your life apart from God then you are not wise, in fact you are a fool!

Solomon said this in Proverbs 26:12, **“Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”** And David said in Psalm 53:1, **“The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity; There is none who does good.”** Now you may be wondering why I am focusing so much attention on living apart from God and the reason is simple. That is what we see here in Ecclesiastes!

As we go through this book we are going to see this phrase, **“under the sun”** used some twenty-nine times. That truly is the key to this book and if we understand that then we will understand what Solomon is saying. Solomon is telling us what life is all about from an earthly perspective apart from God and it is not good. Thus, we see the word **“vanity”** used some thirty-seven times because life apart from God is empty!

And here is where people get into trouble; we see this with cults who will use this book to prove their doctrines, especially those doctrines that deal with death and the afterlife. They will take verses from this book to prove soul sleep after death and the annihilation of the wicked dead. And the problem here is that they forgot to use the key to unlock the door of what is going on in this book and remember what that key is, “under the sun.” This is man’s wisdom under the sun and therefore is not a valid source of proof texts for doctrines of the Christian faith. You have to look at the totality of the Scriptures.

Now some may wonder how this book can be inspired if it contains things that are not true. That is a great question and I do believe this book was inspired by God to show us what life is like apart from Him, there is no satisfaction to life, you can have it all and have nothing at all! And the conclusions you come to apart from Christ are wrong many times. Dr. Chafer put it like this, “Inspiration may record the untruth of Satan (or of men) but it does not vindicate the lie or sanctify it. It secures the exact record of what was said – good or bad.” (L. S. Chafer, Systematic Theology, 1:83).

Let me share one more thing with you before we get into this book and I do realize this was a long introduction, but I think we need to understand where Solomon is coming from or we are going to come to some very wrong conclusions. William MacDonald wrote the following regarding the book of Ecclesiastes,

At one time in his life, Solomon set out to find the true meaning of human existence. He was determined to discover the good life. Richly endowed with wisdom and comfortably cushioned by wealth (1 Kgs. 10:1q4-25, 2 Chron. 9:22-24), King Solomon thought that if anyone could find lasting satisfaction, he was the one.

But there was a self-imposed condition to Solomon's search. He was going to do this on his own. He hoped that his own intellect would enable him to discover fulfillment in life, quite apart from divine revelation. It would be the exploration of a man without any help from God. He would search "under the sun" for the greatest good in life.

- William MacDonald, Believer's Bible Commentary, p. 877

Tragically, as we are going to see, all his pursuits will leave him empty and it is not until he comes to the end of his journey that he finds the true meaning to life and he says, "**... Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is the whole duty of man.**" Ecclesiastes 12:13. You see, apart from God you will never find the meaning to life; you will never find satisfaction because there is that hole in your heart that only God can fill. You can try to fill it with other things as Solomon did but they just don't fit and you will find yourself empty.

With that said, let's begin reading in Ecclesiastes chapter 1, starting in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

ECCLESIASTES 1

VERSE 1

1. First of all we see that the writer of this book calls himself a “**Preacher**” and don’t let that confuse you. In the Hebrew it is QOHELETH, (ko-heh’-leth) and the Greek word is EKKLESIASTES, which means “one who calls an assembly” and that is what the Septuagint or the Greek translations of the Hebrew Scriptures calls this book. Thus, Solomon is calling us to listen and heed his words, the things he has found through his lifelong endeavor to find the meaning of life. He has been there and done that. He has learned those lessons, now may we learn from his mistakes, may we learn from the things that he learned so we don’t go down that same path.

2. Now we touched on who wrote this book and like I have said there are many out there that say Solomon did not write this book and I have to disagree. Not because I am so smart but because of what this verse says, “**the son of David, king in Jerusalem.**” Some say that this can mean grandson or even some other later descendant of David and from that position it makes sense. Maybe he did not write it.

But all you have to do is go down to verse 12 and you can see that this is speaking of Solomon. This verse says, “**I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.**” Notice, “**king over Israel**” and after Solomon the Kingdom was divided into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah and thus, this has to be Solomon!

3. I believe that the book of Proverbs or the book of wisdom was written very early on in Solomon's life. It focused on applying the truths of God to our life. Now if the book of Proverbs can be called the book of wisdom then the book of Ecclesiastes can be called the book of a fool, for its focus is earthly based instead of being heavenly based, and thus, his conclusions are of this world, and not of God.

VERSE 2

1. You really do not need to wait to the end of the book to find out the conclusion that Solomon came to in regards to life apart from God because he tells us right here and he says that it is all **“vanity.”** And don't come to the wrong conclusion here, this word speaks of emptiness, futility, vapor, a grasping for the wind! He uses this word some thirty-seven times in this book and it is not just empty, it is not just emptiness, it is all empty, it is all emptiness, life has no real substance, no real significance apart from God!

Paul put it like this in Romans 8:20, **“For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope.”** In other words, when sin entered this world through Adam the whole creation was subject to vanity, to futility. And as you look at people today and observe their lives apart from God you see the emptiness that is within them and they try to fill it with all kinds of things and in the end it is all vanity! The only solution to that problem is Jesus who can give us meaning to life and He can give us that abundant life but it is only found in Him!

2. Now for Solomon, the wisest person who has ever lived, a man who had an encounter with God on two occasions, a man who built the Temple of God to worship the true and living God, how can he come to this conclusion about life? The answer is given to us in verse 3.

VERSE 3

1. Have you ever run on a treadmill before? If you have you know that you can go long distances and go nowhere! That is life, filled with activity but it progresses nowhere. You go to work to provide for your family, to buy things. And since those things don't seem to satisfy, you work more so you can buy more things and you are moving fast and you are going nowhere and that is life, that is what Solomon is feeling and that is what many are feeling today. There is no real direction, no real sense to life.

2. We have seen that Solomon sees life as empty and now we see the reason for this, his perspective is an earthy one and thus, he uses the phrase "**under the sun**" some twenty-nine times in this book. You see, instead of looking at life from a heavenly perspective he is doing it from an earthly one, which is not accurate as we will see.

Remember what Jesus said in Mark 8:36-37, "**For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?**" That truly is man today, trying to gain the whole world to find satisfaction and in the end he ends up empty as he is grasping for the wind. You will never find that satisfaction you are looking for with an earthy perspective!

Paul gives to us the perspective we are to have as he wrote in Colossians 3:2, “**Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.**” Life may seem pointless because it is quickly passing. But as you surrender your life to the Lord, as you walk in His ways there is tremendous joy, tremendous satisfaction as you serve the King of kings and Lord of lords! Make no mistake about it, all human endeavors lack ultimate value and thus, life should be enjoyed in the fear of God. We should live our lives with the perspective that this life is a gift from His hand! You need to have a correct perspective!

3. And notice the other point that Solomon is making here. He is speaking of laboring to the point of exhaustion and yet there is no real profit from it, nothing to gain from all that hard work, at least nothing to gain apart from Christ.

H. L. Mencken said, “The basic fact about human experience is not that it is a tragedy, but that it is a bore. It is not that it is predominantly painful, but that it is lacking in any sense.” Outside of Christ that is true, but in Christ Paul said, “**Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.**” I Corinthians 15:58. True joy, satisfaction, fulfillment is not found outwardly, but inwardly as we cultivate a relationship with God, and that joy is the thing that then overflows in our lives and touches the lives of others. This is what Solomon learned, that under the sun, looking at life from an earthly perspective is empty but looking at life through a heavenly perspective brings great joy, abundant life, everlasting life that is only found in Christ!

4. Now Solomon is going to give to us an illustration of vanity, what it looks like and he is going to do this by looking at nature interestingly enough.

VERSE 4

1. I know, not a very uplifting book but that is the point here, that apart from God in your life, life is empty. And what we see here is that Solomon is saying that you are here one minute and you are gone the next. Life just passes us by. It is kind of a fatalistic approach to life, that death is the inevitable end to everything. I look at my own life and I can't believe where the time has gone. I am 54 years old and some say that it is middle age, really? I am not going to live to be 108 years of age! My life is well half over and where did it go? And for all of us, all we need to do is walk through a cemetery and we will see where life is going. I know, depressing but that is only true apart from Christ because in Christ we know that when these bodies go back to the dust of the earth we go to be with the Lord!

Let me share this with you and it is kind of funny in a strange way and yet very sad. But it does drive home the feelings of man today. Listen to what taxi driver Jose Martinez has to say about life. "We're here to die, just live and die. I drive a cab. I do some fishing, take my girl out, pay taxes, do a little reading, then get ready to drop dead. You've got to be strong about it. Life is a big fake. Nobody gives a - -. You're rich or you're poor. You're here, you're gone. You're like the wind. After you're gone, other people will come. We're gonna destroy ourselves, nothing we can do about it. The only cure for the world's illness is nuclear war - wipe everything out and start over."

It kind of sounds like Solomon and the tragedy is that many feel the same way as Jose Martinez, there really is no point in life and he is missing the point. In Christ there is a point, there is direction for our lives, there is hope, there is great joy, there is satisfaction!

Of what Solomon wrote here, Maclaren wrote, “He looks out upon humanity, and sees that in one aspect the world is full of births, and in another full of deaths. Coffins and cradles seem the main furniture, and he hears the tramp, tramp, tramp of the generations passing over a soil honeycombed with tombs.” “That is the point of Solomon here.

2. Now please understand that when Solomon speaks of the earth abiding forever he is not teaching doctrine but he is comparing it to the brevity of life. I think the Scriptures are very clear that God is going to create a new heavens and a new earth.

We are told in Psalm 102:25-26, **“Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, And they will be changed.”**

Also, Peter said in II Peter 3:7, 10, **“But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. . . . But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”** I guess we can say that ***THE BIG BANG IS COMING!***

VERSE 5

1. Solomon is saying that just as the sun moves in a cycle, so man also has a cycle to his life.

Now as some read this they would love to say that Solomon made a scientific blunder because the sun does not move, the earth actually does. We need to understand that Solomon is using a

figure of speech and not making a scientific proclamation. The sun does appear to rise and set

and what does the weatherman say, “Sunrise will be at 6:10 am and sunset will be at 8:50 pm.”

Did he make a scientific blunder? Not at all and neither is Solomon, he is using poetic language and is not stating a scientific principle here.

Now I also need to make this point. Did you know that the Sun orbits the Milky Way galaxy? It does and astronomers have calculated that it takes the Sun 226 million years to completely orbit around the center of the Milky Way. So in 6 to 10 thousand years that the earth and the universe have been in existence it hasn't made much of an orbit! “Are we there yet?”

VERSES 6-7

1. In these two verses Solomon speaks of the wind and the rivers and they too have a course that they run. And what Solomon is showing us is that even nature is caught in this monotonous circuit that seems to go nowhere.

VERSE 8

1. Does this sound like man today? Life is full of labor, it is wearisome and words can't express how bad it is. We see things and we are not satisfied. We hear things and we still are not satisfied. Man tries to fill his life with more and more and he feels less and less satisfied, less and less complete outside of God. It is just the monotonous cycle of life that is never satisfied outside of Christ.

I like what Paul has to say regarding satisfaction and what we can be satisfied in as long as we are walking with the Lord. He wrote in Philippians 4:11-13, **“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”** Our contentment is only found in Christ and thus, as we walk with Him we know that whatever we are going through He is with us and we can rest in that! For those living outside of a relationship with Jesus, their contentment is found in things and they are never satisfied as Solomon has said and will continue to say!

Maclaren put it like this, “What is the difference between a squirrel in a cage who only makes his prison go round the faster by his swift race, and the man who lives toilsome days for transitory objects which he may never attain?” It is the old treadmill picture!

VERSES 9-11

1. In other words, history just repeats itself. There is nothing really new under the sun, from an earthly perspective. We just see the cycle of life that keeps repeating itself over and over again.

2. But that is not true for the Christian. There are many things that are new when we come to Christ. And the reason is simple; we don't live under the *SUN* but under the *SON OF GOD!* Let me just share a few of the new things we have in Christ.

- A new name (Isaiah 62:2, Revelation 2:17)
- A new community (Ephesians 2:14)
- A new help from angels (Psalm 91:11)
- A new commandment (John 13:34)
- A new covenant (Jeremiah 31:33, Matthew 26:28)
- A new and living way to heaven (Hebrews 10:20)
- A new purity (I Corinthians 5:7)
- A new nature (Ephesians 4:24)
- A new creation in Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 5:17)
- All things become new! (II Corinthians 5:17, Revelation 21:5)

3. Solomon is not necessarily speaking about technology even though we have records of past civilizations that were supposed to be primitive and yet have done brain surgery, dentistry, made batteries that still work today, built pyramids, there is Stonehenge. And think about this one. The Mayan's solar year was calculated out to be 365.2420, only recently have modern astronomers been able to calculate the solar year to be 365.2422, and-so-on. Yes they missed the target with the end of the world but they got the solar year right.

But like I have said, Solomon is not speaking of technology but he is primarily speaking of life's experiences' and saying that they are not new.

4. And if that is not bad enough he then tells us that this generation has forgotten about the last generation and the next generation will forget about what we have done. Think about it. How many of you can name the last 4 vice presidents of the United States? How many can give the details of World War II, which was only some 74 years ago? Who won the Heisman trophy three years ago? Who won the Academy Award for best actor last year? How easily we forget. And there is the reality of all this. A nation that does not remember its past is prone to relive its mistakes and the same is true for individuals! Man works hard, yet it never seems to make a lasting difference and all is simply forgotten.

5. Listen to what J. Vernon Mcgee wrote regarding this section of Ecclesiastes,

You see, this man Solomon is making tremendous experiments, and he is making them in the laboratory of life. He is trying everything that is available to man. In his day and position he was able to go into any field that he chose. Not many men today would be able to do what Solomon did. He first gave himself to the study of the laws of nature, as we have seen, but he found nothing he could learn in nature or in science which was new in the sense that it would bring new life to him.

- J. Vernon Mcgee, Thru the Bible Vol. III, p. 110

And the conclusion to all of this study of nature you might say is, **“Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; ‘Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.’”** Ecclesiastes 1:2. And he is not done in his pursuit of happiness, satisfaction in this life. Next he will seek after wisdom and philosophy and knowledge!

VERSES 12-13

1. Like I said in our introduction, this has to be Solomon for he was a son of David and the only son that reigned in the united Kingdom of Israel. Under the reign of Solomon' son Rehoboam the nation was divided!

2. Why in the world did the wisest man in the world seek after wisdom? Because when he was wise it was the wisdom of God that was applied to his life. Now notice where he is looking for wisdom, "**under heaven**" or we would say apart from God and you will never find wisdom there!

I don't mean to offend any philosophy majors out there, but what a waste of time! Sorry, but think about the philosophy of this world and how it is always changing, depending on what man wants. And Paul even comes against this in Colossians 2:8-10, "**Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.**"

Solomon was trying to be wise apart from God and it was not going to happen and man is still trying to do that today and it still won't work! Our completeness is found in Christ and not the philosophies of this world!

3. Listen to what Malcolm Muggeridge said regarding the philosophies of this world and what it does to us, what it has to offer us. “Education, the great mumbo-jumbo and fraud of the ages, purports to equip us to live, and is prescribed as a universal remedy for everything from juvenile delinquency to premature senility. For the most part, it only serves to enlarge stupidity, inflate conceit, enhance credulity [have a tendency to believe too readily] and put those subjected to it at the mercy of brainwashers with printing presses, radio and television at their disposal.” I think he nailed it. Not that education is wrong, but it needs to be done in Christ and not apart from Him, all of our lives should be in Christ and not under the *SUN!*

4. What Solomon is doing here is seeking out some reason for his existence. Why he is going through all this pain, all this work, if it is all for nothing. He first takes a philosophical approach to life, what he sees going on around him, and his conclusion is not good and we will see that as we read on.

VERSES 14-15

1. Solomon is once again speaking of the futility of life. Man has all these answers to life's problems and yet they don't take care of them. Remember years ago how they would have this primal scream in therapy or you would have a blow up doll that resembled one of your parents that you would smack around the room. How is that working today? You don't even hear about it because mans' wisdom is foolishness and it keeps changing!

God has deliberately built a system of life that seems meaningless and empty, it is vanity without the understanding of a living and active God to whom we must give account. Pascal said, "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the human heart." Augustine said, "You have made us, O Lord, for Yourself, and our heart will find no rest until it rests in You."

Why are people so restless today? Why are people running to and fro to find a way to straighten out their lives? Because it is the Lord alone who can do that and if you don't come to Him you will not find the answers you need for life. How sad to see people trying to fill that void in their hearts with anything and everything except the Lord and in doing so they will never be content, never be satisfied outside of Him! Some of you may remember that old Doris Day show where she would sing, "Que sera, sera, whatever will be will be . . ." That is basically what Solomon is saying here!

VERSES 16-18

1. Wisdom was not all he thought it would be. Education was not all he thought it would be. Make no mistake about it, Solomon was a brilliant man. You can see for yourself in I Kings 4:32-33 that Solomon wrote 3,000 Proverbs, of which we have about 1/4 of them. We have one of his 1,005 songs he wrote, the Song of Solomon. And he wrote 2 or 3 Psalms, 72, 127 and maybe 128. He also was very intelligent in the sciences. He studied trees - dendrologist, animals - zoologist, birds - ornithologist, insects - entomologist, and fish - ichthyologist. He put forth a tremendous effort to learn.

And in the end he found out that **“this also is grasping for the wind.”** Now let me say this. Wisdom is not wrong, education is not wrong. It is wrong when we try to do this apart from Christ because only in Christ will we find the fulfillment that we are looking for. Solomon ran the gamut of human experience and came up empty and that is a good lesson for us to learn, true satisfaction is only found in the Lord!

Henry Martyn sought and won top honors at Cambridge University and yet, after all of this he said, “I was surprised to find I had grasped a shadow.” J. W. Jowett noted, “His eyes were now lifted far above scholastic prizes to the all-satisfying prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” That is where true satisfaction is found!

2. And think about this. If education was the key to the meaning of life, then our college campuses would be bastions or fortresses of peace and contentment and they are not! What they have found out is what Solomon found out, “The wiser you are the more worries you have; the more you know, the more it hurts.” Thus, ignorance is bliss? Well, not exactly. You see, in Christ we can give to Him the pain, the hurt, we can give it all to Him and find that peace and that rest that we need and the world is looking for!

ECCLESIASTES 2**VERSES 1-3**

1. Nature did not do it for Solomon. Philosophy did not do it for Solomon. Wisdom did not do it for Solomon. Education did not do it for Solomon. Thus, it is time to party! That has to be the answer. Go and have a great time with laughter, drinking, find out what the “**sons of men**” are doing under heaven for pleasure because that has to be the answer! But in the end, that was not the answer, it too was empty!

2. Now in reading that don't come to the conclusion that God does not want us to enjoy life, that is not true. God does want us to enjoy life but that joy comes from Him. David, in Psalm 16:11, gives us the truth of the matter. He said, “**You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**” God will show us the path of life we are to take and thus, as we walk down that path, as we are in His presences, we will find not only fullness of joy but pleasures forevermore! That is what Solomon was looking for under the sun and he will never find it there!

VERSES 4-8

1. Pleasures did not do it for Solomon and thus, he moves on to great accomplishments like houses, vineyards, gardens, orchards, waterpools, servants, possessions of herds and flocks, silver, gold, singers, musical instruments. Some feel that this word for musical instruments carries with it the idea of wives and concubines, which he had 700 wives and 300 concubines and that did not bring satisfaction to his life either. He had it all.

Just listen to what he had, what it took just to provide for his household each day according to I Kings 4:22-23. And as I share this with you keep in mind that a kor was about 6½ bushels. It took 30 kors of flour or some 200 bushels a day to feed them. There were 60 kors of meal or 400 bushels of meal. They needed to feed his household 10 prime oxen, 20 commercial oxen and 100 sheep plus deer, gazelles roebucks, and fatted fowl.

Not only that but gold was so common that if something was made of silver it was thought of as worthless. He had a throne made of ivory and then covered it with gold! And even that did not satisfy him so he began to import various animals and materials to try and fill that void in his life. In I Kings 10:22 we read, **“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.”** (Monkeys should be translated peacocks). And that was still not enough, he wanted more and more, he was not satisfied with all these things.

2. Look at the restlessness of Solomon. There was no contentment in his life. He tried building up his empire, and his empire was truly magnificent. But because of his pursuit to find the meaning of life, contentment, it caused a heavy tax burden on the people. The same is true today, those that are restless, their actions, behaviors affect family and friends; they become burdened down by this. We have not learned the lesson and we are looking for this highway to happiness in wine, women and song, all kinds of possessions and in the end it is just vanity!

Alexander the Great experienced the same thing when, at 33, he wept because there were no more worlds for him to conquer. You will not be satisfied with a little more money, with a different lady, with a higher career move, or the next educational degree. It's all empty and I realize that this is depressing so far but keep in mind that this is under the sun and not in Christ. It is our choice where we want to live!

VERSES 9-11

1. Look at all that Solomon accomplished and you would think he would be satisfied in life but he wasn't! As he looked back on what he had done, where his career was taking him you might say, he found himself empty. All he worked for, all he tried to obtain was nothing. The flesh is never satisfied, it always wants more, bigger, better, and-so-on. Have you ever desired something so bad that once you obtained it you wondered what all the fuss was about? There is no complete satisfaction outside of Christ. In a sense, this mentality, this lifestyle, is like the emperor's new clothes. He is strutting around totally naked and it took a child to see his folly. How many today are running around spiritually naked thinking they have it all?

Ralph Barton saw the folly of his life as this top cartoonist wrote, “I have few difficulties, many friends, great successes. I have gone from wife to wife, from house to house, and have visited great countries of the world. But I am fed up with devices to fill up twenty-four hours of the day.” You see, pleasure and possessions fail to meet our needs apart from Christ. It is only in Christ that we are satisfied and content in whatever state we are in!

2. Stanley Jones wrote of this fictional character in his book, *Growing Spiritually*. He wrote regarding this character that he only had to wish for something and he obtained it, “He wanted a house and there it was with servants at the door; he wanted a Cadillac, and there it was with chauffeur. He was elated at the beginning, but it soon began to pall (dark covering) on him. He said to the attendant, “I want to get out of this. I want to create something, to suffer something. I would rather be in hell than here.” And the attendant answered, “Where do you think you are?” (Stanley Jones, *Growing Spiritually*, p. 4).

Think about that one for a minute. Our society today is like that. They have more things than they can ever imagine and they are not satisfied. Materialism has them in this bondage and it is like hell, trying to satisfy that human hunger and you can never find that satisfaction. Think about millionaires or billionaires or movie stars and all the money, all that they have and do they seem happy to you? Does their life seem to be filled with contentment? No it doesn't, and the reason is simple, you can't find contentment apart from Christ and if you could then the people of this nation and this world would be content and they are not!

VERSES 12-17

1. Solomon accomplished so much in his life, had it all, he did it all and there was no one who could surpass all he accomplished in his lifetime. Then what was the problem? He was completely empty on the inside. He is even looking towards death and he sees no advantage in the death of someone who is wise and someone who is a fool.

What a stark contrast between his words in the book of Proverbs and what he has to say here in Ecclesiastes. In Proverbs we read, **“The LORD will not allow the righteous soul to famish, But He casts away the desire of the wicked. . . . The memory of the righteous is blessed, But the name of the wicked will rot. . . . The fear of the LORD prolongs days, But the years of the wicked will be shortened. . . . The righteous will never be removed, But the wicked will not inhabit the earth.”** Proverbs 10:3, 7, 27, 30.

What changed for Solomon? What happened to his perspective of things? Solomon at one time was one of the wisest men in the world but he now has his eyes so far off of God that he sees no difference in the death of a person who is wise in the Lord and one who is a fool outside of the Lord.

Asaph had the same problem until he had fellowship with God and saw the proper perspective of things. In Psalm 73:27-28 we read of his view of this situation after he spent time with the Lord. He said, **“For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry. But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, That I may declare all Your works.”** Solomon needed to get back to the Lord, to focus back on the Lord and find his satisfaction in the Lord!

2. Listen to what this former athlete had to say about the fame he had achieved and if you think you are missing something apart from Christ, listen carefully. He said, “The greatest thrill of my life was when I first scored the decisive goal in a big game and heard the roar of the cheering crowds. But in the quiet of my room that same night, a sense of the futility of it swept over me. After all, what was it worth? Was there nothing better to live for than to score goals? Such thoughts were the beginning of my search for satisfaction. I knew in my heart that no one could meet my need but God Himself. Soon after, I found in Christ what I could never find in the world.” Like Solomon life was empty until he came to Christ. May we learn that lesson!

VERSES 18-23

1. Sounds like Solomon is depressed. What do you think they would do for him today? They would put him on antidepressants. Do you think that is what Solomon needed? Absolutely not, he needed the Lord and the Lord was allowing him to go through these times so that he would return to Him! This is not a quick fix but it will be a permanent fix for Solomon while the solutions to our problems from the world tend to be short-lived and we have to get more of this or less of that or whatever to fix or try to fix those issues that are really matters of the heart and only God can fix!

2. Look at Solomon’s concern here. Solomon was concerned that all his work was going to be in vain, all he accumulated, the gold, silver; all those material possessions would be taken away in his death if the next person who inherits the kingdom is a fool! This did come to pass when Solomon’s son, Rehoboam became King. Rehoboam was a fool and instead of meeting the needs of the people, giving them some tax relief, he was going to make life even harder for them.

Because of that the nation was divided into 2 kingdoms. The Northern Kingdom of Israel was under the leadership of Jeroboam, 10 of the 12 tribes siding with him. And the Southern Kingdom of Judah was under the leadership of Rehoboam, 2 of the 12 tribes siding with him, that is Judah and Benjamin. And Shishak, King of Egypt came against Jerusalem and took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, the Kings home, even the gold shields that Solomon had made. So Solomon was right, all his labor was in vain, for a fool, his son, gave it away. As Psalm 49:10 says, **“For he sees wise men die; Likewise the fool and the senseless person perish, And leave their wealth to others.”**

3. Now for us as Christians, we can leave something more valuable than money or possessions to our children and that is a godly heritage! We should use our money for building up the kingdom of God. Martin Luther wrote in his last will and testament, “Lord God, I thank You, because You have been pleased to make me a poor and indigent man upon the earth. I have neither house nor land nor money to leave behind me. You have given me wife and children, whom I now restore to You. Lord, nourish, teach and preserve them, as You have me.” We are not told how his children responded to that but the reality is, he left them what was most precious to him, his faith in the Lord!

4. Now here’s the thing. For those that are out there wanting to experience life. Grab for all the gusto before it’s too late. Don’t waste your time. Solomon had it all and did it all. Most if not all of us will never experience all that Solomon experienced in his lifetime. And we would be wise to learn from his mistakes instead of finding out the hard way. These things never truly satisfy.

His conclusion of life was this, "***LIFE STINKS!***" And yes, I would have to agree when you look at it under the sun. That is from an earthly perspective. But get re-focused and look at things from a heavenly perspective, with eternity in mind, and you will have a whole different perspective on things. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:33 a proper way to approach life. He says, "**But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**" Don't let this life consume you with all its problems, give it to the Lord and rest in Him!

VERSES 24-26

1. This is important for us to understand and we see here the first of Solomon's conclusions. Accept what God has given you, be content with it. If you are not content, if you are restless, you are going to run to and fro trying to grasp for more, and like grasping the wind, you will come up empty. Have you ever tried to grasp the wind? If you did how did that work out? It didn't, the wind always seemed to elude you and that is true with life, you will not find satisfaction apart from being content in what God has given to you. As Proverbs 19:23 says, "**The fear of the Lord leads to life, And he who has it will abide in satisfaction; He will not be visited with evil.**"

2. Let me close this evening with this invitation to you from God. In Isaiah 55:1-3 we read, **“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you; The sure mercies of David.”**

How can you buy without money and without price? Because it has already been paid for us by Christ and the reality is all we must do is receive that free gift into our lives by faith! Jesus said in John 3:16, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”** I do realize that people want to work their way into heaven, buy their way in you might say. But listen to what Jesus said is the work we must do to get in and yes I said work. In John 6:29 Jesus said, **“... ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.’”** Thus, all that the Father tells us to do, like hear and obey His Son, we must do and that means that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and it is where we find true satisfaction in life, that abundant life, in Christ! Never forget that!