

Having A Basic Understanding of Some Old Testament Truths

Part 195 – Vanity Of Pleasure Through God Giveth Good (Ecclesiastes 2:1-26)

1. As Solomon looked at how he had anything he wanted (pleasure, laughter, wine, houses, vineyards, pools, trees, servants, cattle, treasures, singers, labor, etc.), did he conclude that these things were profitable?

No. He concluded they were unprofitable, vanity, and vexation of spirit: *“(1) I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. (2) I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? (3) I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. (4) I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: (5) I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: (6) I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: (7) I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: (8) I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. (9) So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. (10) And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. (11) **Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun**” (Ecclesiastes 2:1-11).*

- Before we even enter into this study, let’s remember that the hope we now have in Christ did not exist under the Old Law in which Solomon lived (**John 1:17, Acts 13:39, Galatians 2:16, and II Thessalonians 2:16**).
- Certainly, Solomon is not saying that joy is fruitless (**Psalms 144:15, Proverbs 16:20, Proverbs 17:22, Proverbs 18:14, and I Peter 1:8**).
- The point Solomon is making is that anything that is of the earth is really profitless in the greater scheme of things (**Proverbs 23:5, Proverbs 27:24, Matthew 6:19-21, and Luke 12:13-21; cf. I John 2:15-17**).

2. As Solomon beheld wisdom, madness, and folly, how does wisdom compare to folly?

Wisdom excelleth [has more gain] than folly: *“(12) And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done. (13) Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness” (Ecclesiastes 2:12-13).*

- Wisdom: **Proverbs 4:5-7, Proverbs 16:16, Ecclesiastes 9:16, and Colossians 3:16; cf. I Corinthians 3:19.**

3. Do a wise man and a foolish man have the same ability to see things clearly?

No: *"The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all"* (**Ecclesiastes 2:14**).

- **Proverbs 14:8, Proverbs 17:24, Ecclesiastes 10:2-3, and Matthew 23:16-22.**

4. What do the fool and the wise man have in common that caused Solomon to hate life?

Death that renders all labor ultimately vain: *"(15) Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity. (16) For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool. (17) Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit"* (**Ecclesiastes 2:15-17**).

- Wise or foolish, death is inevitable (**Psalms 49:10, Psalms 89:48, Ecclesiastes 3:20, and Hebrews 9:27**) unless Christ comes first (**I Thessalonians 4:13-18**).
- Measuring these things in carnal terms, there is nothing greater for the wise than for the fool (**Ecclesiastes 6:8**).

5. Why did Solomon hate all of his labor?

He hated all of his labor because he was going to leave it to another man: *"Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me"* (**Ecclesiastes 2:18**).

- It is not that you cannot enjoy the fruit of your labor (**Ecclesiastes 5:18**).
- However, as we partially addressed in question one, the benefits of your labor is temporary (**Psalms 39:6 and Ecclesiastes 5:13-14**).

6. Is it possible that all you work for will later belong to a fool?

Yes: *"And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity"* (**Ecclesiastes 2:19**).

- We can see this with Israel. The child of Israel inherited a land (**Exodus 32:13 and Deuteronomy 32:8-9**), but the foolishness of generations that came later had that land taken from them (**II Chronicles 36:14-21**).
- For 10 tribes their foolishness had their inheritance permanently taken (**II Kings 17:23**). Judah was able to be restored, but only because the Lord had made a promise (**II Kings 19:34; cf. Hebrews 7:14**).

7. Why did Solomon want to cause his heart to despair all of his labor?

Because someone who didn't work at all can end up with it: *"(20) Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun. (21) For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil" (Ecclesiastes 2:20-21).*

- Without a hope for life eternal, life is miserable (**I Corinthians 15:17-22**).

8. What do you really get from all your physical labors?

Nothing in this world: *"(22) For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? (23) For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity" (Ecclesiastes 2:22-23).*

- *"Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble" (Job 14:1).*
- Even when you gain everything in this world, you cannot take it with you in the life to come (**Psalms 49:17** and **I Timothy 6:7**).

9. Should we enjoy the fruit of our labors or save it all for the future?

Enjoy it: *"(24) There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. (25) For who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto, more than I? (26) For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit" (Ecclesiastes 2:24-26).*

- **Deuteronomy 8:18**, **Ecclesiastes 9:7-9** (not alcohol; **Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-35**), and **I Timothy 6:17**.
- Under the Old Law, wherein rewards were given and taken in this life (see notes on question #6), the wicked lost the fruit of their labors (**Proverbs 13:22**).