

INTRODUCTION

- Ordinarily during this time I will preach a sermon (study/deliver). Instead of this, today we will study a sermon. It is the longest single sermon in the Bible. It was written by the wisest man apart from Jesus Christ. Do you know where it is?
- v.1 The author is "the Son of David, King in Jerusalem." While not explicitly named, because of the style and similarities with Proverbs, it is taken to be Solomon.
- v.2 The left bookmark and 12:8 the right bookmark. "Vanity of vanities" – (Heb. Hebel) vapor, breath, emptiness. Hebraism meaning the utmost of emptiness. He assigns this to "all." He is beginning and ending with what appears to be a pessimistic view of life. What we find between the bookmarks are the reasons he has come to this perspective on life. We obviously don't have time to thoroughly study the book in this hour, but I intend to consider some of the main points and how he came to that conclusion.
- vv.3-11 He was provoked to go on a kind of philosophical quest about life by the ongoing cycles found in nature, how things continue. In contrast to this continuance is what appears to be the brevity and vanity of human life.
- vv.12-18 Seeing that God had given him great wisdom (2Chronicles 1:10), he set himself, probably in the later years of his life, to reassess the meaning of life. Perhaps this was provoked by what is commonly called a "mid-life crisis." This is something that God intends for good, as a perhaps evaluates who they are, what they hope to accomplish, with the recognition that their time is limited and ½ way over. It can be a time of utter folly, or a time of renewed commitment.
- In these verses we see a couple of the phrases and themes that are used frequently throughout the book. "Under the sun" (v.14) is used 27 times in the book. This essentially means life in this world, things as we now see them and know them.
- At this point in redemptive history, the fullness of the doctrine of life after death and the promise of things to come is not yet fully revealed. There are certainly hints (even in this book) and a longing for something else, but it is only like the time light of the dawn as compared to the New Testament's full sun. Most of his evaluation of life focuses on this reality, that life basically ends at death. At this point Jesus hasn't been raised from the dead to demonstrate that He is king of another world.
- Another phrase used here is "the wind." It is used 10x throughout the sermon. It is an analogy for life, that in pursuing things it is like chasing the wind. You can't catch it, and if you did what would you have?
- v.17 Feeling a kind of despair rising out of these realities, Solomon sets himself on a search to reexamine and try to make sense of life. He was going to pursue this with everything with in him, and with all his resources. This is important, because he had everything at his disposal. Remember that he was king of Israel, and there was nothing existing in the world that he couldn't have.
- The rest of the sermon could be summarized under three major headings, and are found in ch.2.

I. THREE MAJOR POINTS OF HIS SERMON**A. He Pursued Pleasure**

- 2:1-10 As we see what he pursued, we should take notice that he doesn't pursue utter wickedness and debauchery. Rather, he pursues things legitimate, things given by God for enjoyment. Some examples are found in ch.2 (wine, houses, fields, etc.)

B. Things are to Be Enjoyed for What They Are

- vv.24-26 There is not utter despair, but actually and encouragement for the right use of things. The biblical view isn't to despise things that have come as God's good gift, but not to accept the gifts in a way that forgets the Giver. Another example is found in 9:9-10, where man is encouraged to enjoy his wife and the labor of his hands.
- Yet, even in doing so, there is a great frustration.

C. No Matter What, Death is a Reality

- vv.11-16 No matter what, and how life is enjoyed, it comes to and end. He also touches on this in 3:20-21 and 6:6. This includes the frustration that you can't keep what you get. Even when you have it, it doesn't satisfy (1:8). We are restless, always looking for the new movie, video game, computer technology, holiday, weekend. These things are temporary, and we are made for more than this (v.11).
- Not only this, but no matter how successful and prosperous, one can only enjoy it for a brief time. It gets passed on to another, and a person has no control (2:19).

II. HIS CLOSING APPLICATION – 12:13-14**13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:**

- He is now going to summarize, make simple, boil it right down to its bare necessity. What is life about, a life not lived in vanity?
- Notice that he makes this application particularly to the young 11:9-10 and 12:1. This is also my burden as selected this passage to preach today. I have a particular burden for those of you who are young, particularly from teenagers to early 20's. You are at an age and usually disposition of mind where the world and the possibilities of life are opening before you. You are beginning to gain independence like you have never known, moving into adulthood.

- There are two great dangers I believe you face. One is utter rejection of the truth of the Word of God. This is through the pursuit of sin, rejecting a life of worship and obedience to God to live a life of self-defined morality.
- The second great danger is a life of "goodness" apart from God. It isn't the love of things that are blatantly sin, but simply a love for the things that are temporary. One thing I am not satisfied with (and I hope no parent is) is to have "good" young people. Good children can go to the same hell just as much as the infidel and utterly wicked. Our desire and prayer and labor should be for godly young people. There is all the difference between heaven and hell in that

A. HIS TWO-FOLD EXHORTATION – v.13

- 1.) **Fear God** – live in holy reverence of the living and true God. Live in His presence, as the God who is there. This is the disposition of heart out of which the second thing flows.
 - Fearing God is more than a "negative" (don't do this, this, and this), but a positive. It is to love God with all you are. It is a life of worship, and adoration, and prayer and trust. This is what I wonder is missing in some of you.
- 2.) **And keep His commandments** – learn what His Word says, and seek to keep it with all your heart. It is because His law is holy, just, and good. It is a reflection of His character, and the definition of true moral beauty.
 - This is more than keeping your parents commandments, keeping within the bounds of cultural goodness or traditional morality. This is a knowledge and love for what God reveals in His Word.

For this is man's all.

B. THE REASON GIVEN – v.14

For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.

- In the end, after all is said and done, this is the one unchangeable, inescapable reality. You and I will face God to give an account of what we have done with this life.
- What will be judged? Every work. Everything we think (secret thing), say, and do.
- The standard of that judgement is whether it is good or evil. After all of the discussions, lectures, and books of post-modernism have been written, and eventually turned to dust, God's truth will stand. Even the endless machinations of so-called experts, scholars, and academics who deny that there is ultimate truth and good will themselves stand before this God. There will be no debating, and every mouth will be shut except God's.
- The **first commandment** to obey if you are not a Christian is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. No amount of commandment keeping apart from Christ's work will be sufficient. Receiving the free gift of Christ absorbing God's wrath against you, and giving you His righteousness is the only thing that will
- The two great commands are to love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, then to love your neighbor as yourself.
- No matter who you are, what you past, upbringing, etc. these things are universally true. Whatever the particulars of your future vocation, family situation, further education, geographical location, etc.
- This is my exhortation, fear God and keep His commandments. This is your all. This is what life is ultimately about. This is the main desire and motivation for everyone who is born again. Without the pursuit of these things, whatever one's church experience, claims to salvation, confidence that they are saved, it is all vanity without the reality of these two things. Do you evidence them?