

## THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

### "Does Education Really Satisfy?"

Ecclesiastes 1:12-18

#### Introduction

1. The writer of this book is Solomon. This appears clear from many passages of the book (1:1, 12; 2:12). Solomon states that he is the king over Israel in Jerusalem. He does this to show that he was over both Judah and Israel prior to the breakup of the kingdom.
2. He calls himself the preacher. This word means he was a debater or one who spoke to a group. As such, Solomon expresses himself on many subjects. The result of his thoughts is that there is nothing on earth which truly meets the needs of man. All is vanity (v. 2).
3. The opening verses of the book emphasize the restless motion of events on the earth. Man is transient (v. 4). Nature acts as a symbol of the same thing (vv. 5-7). The events of history also support this concept (vv. 8-10). The whole course of events as seen in the world indicate that the worldly things are a bubble. What is really needed is the eternality of God (12:13, 14).
4. The present section adds another dimension to Solomon's argument. He shows that human knowledge and wisdom are bereft of help. These areas of human endeavor will never satisfy. Here is how this is demonstrated:

1. By a tremendous INVESTIGATION vv. 13-15.

- a. Performed.

Solomon notes that he gave his heart to this effort. This was a personal investigation. This is no meager attempt. It involved his entire being. It is well supported by the two verbs which are given here. The verb "seek" comes from a root meaning to grind or test. It signifies to investigate an object in hand and to penetrate it. The verb "search" is rooted in a verb meaning to hold a survey over. It means to look around to bring about what is unknown or not at that moment comprehended. It is used of exploring a country. The verbs affirm a thorough-going intent for discovery!

- b. Evaluated vv. 13b, 14.

The investigation is done in relation to all that is under the sun. The means employed is stated: wisdom. This means there was an intellectual search. It was not something undertaken without effort. The sad result is that the research and observation does not produce the desired joy

and contentment of the human soul. Rather, there is a sense of terrible pain. It is really "sore trouble" or "sore evil." It is all to demonstrate to man that the earth is entirely unsatisfactory. Everything that is under the sun amounts to a striving after wind! Hence, his great discovery as a result of no minor investigation is that all is fleeting, fruitless, and without substance. The totality of human endeavor is a bubble!

c. Confirmed v. 15.

The anomalies and paradoxes of life are there to stay. There are no answers to the dilemmas of man. Further, as the proverb has it: "where there is nothing, there is nothing further to be counted." Seeing all the irregularities, all the wisdom a man has is of no avail. Solomon can bring no help. He is at an end of things! The cry here is that there is no solution to the enormous problems which are evident.

2. By a great POSSESSION.

a. Personally. The emphatic personal pronoun is added to show that Solomon spoke with his own heart. The fact is marked that he took time to view things from his own advantage point. He notes that he has had the experience of wisdom and knowledge. The former word relates to solid knowledge; it is mental ability. The latter relates to information which penetrates into the depths of the essence of things. It is that by which wisdom is acquired and by which it establishes itself with convictions. So, Solomon really had the proper equipment.

b. Comparatively. In relation to others, Solomon had more than all his predecessors. None other could compete with him in his possessions of wisdom and knowledge.

c. Relatively. By his possession of wisdom, Solomon made some comparisons. He distinguished madness and folly from wisdom. The former of these comes from a root meaning to cry out or rage. The latter has a root meaning to twist together and relates to the ideas of complicating and confusing ideas. He, therefore, strove to know the superiority of wisdom over these two items related to pleasure and ignorance. But nothing is shown to be firm. All is impeachable and perishable.

Conclusion The German proverb "Much wisdom causes a headache" is true. Wisdom does not limit itself to bodily problems but also to mental grief. The wise man discovers all the complexities of life and woes but is unable to change them. He longs to do something but can't. This brings more sorrow and sadness. Now what? God alone has the answers (Prov. 1:7; Col. 2:3).