

**"Meaningless, meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless!"** Ecclesiastes 1:2

These words were written 3,000 years ago. Yet they are as up-to-date as today's newspaper. The Teacher looked at life apart from God and concluded that life was meaningless. Contemporary philosophers have said the same thing. They too have looked at life. They have said that God is dead, or at least, irrelevant, and they too have concluded that life is meaningless and without purpose. There is no rhyme or reason to our existence, they tell us.

In the words of the inimitable 'Lou Grant' of the old Mary Tyler Moore show, "You're born; you die; and everything in-between is just filler". What a dreadfully pessimistic view of life. The point is, however, that the Biblical perspective is that this is an accurate assessment of existence without God!

Let us get back to the Teacher. He was probably King Solomon, and the book of Ecclesiastes, from which our opening words are taken, is his inspired reflection on life. Ecclesiastes is one of the most fascinating books in the Holy Bible! Solomon devoted himself to study and to explore all that is under heaven. He devoted himself to understanding what life is all about.

"I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the days of their lives", he says (Ecclesiastes 2:3).

We began with his conclusions. Let us see how he arrived at them.

### **INTELLECT**

"I devoted myself to study", says Solomon (1:13). He explored wisdom and knowledge. I thought to myself, "Look, I have grown and increased in wisdom more than anyone before me....I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge" (1:16). He was not unlike those today who live for an academic career and the accumulation of a veritable alphabet after their names. Degrees are the thing, they say! And this is what they live for.

What is Solomon's conclusion?

"Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind. For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief." (1:17,18)

Isn't that the way it is? Does a "PhD" really bring happiness or contentment? Hardly! Perhaps you are able to articulate your misery more eloquently, but education brings no lasting peace.

### **PLEASURE**

Next, Solomon turns to pleasure. In fact he says:

"I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure!" (2:10)

He built gardens and parks. He amassed silver and gold. He acquired men and women singers. He also gathered a harem and gave himself over to the pleasures of the flesh (2:4-8). And what is his

conclusion?

"Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after wind, nothing was gained under the sun." (2:11)

Can we not say the same? Have celebrities and rock stars not said the same? Having given themselves over to pleasure, have they not also found it to be an empty thing?

### **WORK**

Now what about work? Solomon turns to work and again he finds the same thing:

"What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labours under the sun? All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest!"(2:22-23).

(How well we know that!!) And what happens to all that you get? What happens to that great business empire you build?

"I hated all the things I toiled for under the sun", says Solomon, "because I must leave them to the one who comes after me; and who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool" (2:17-19a).

So, intellectual pursuits, pleasure and work are explored and everything is meaningless, says the Word of God!

### **ADVANCEMENT**

Climbing to the top of the corporate ladder. Ah! There is a worthwhile pursuit! Not so, says Solomon.

"I saw that all who live and walk under the sun followed the youth, the king's successor!" (4:15).

The wisest man in all the world says that there is always someone who will do a better job, or offer a better service and is prepared to take your place. In the flash of an eye your white collar, executive position can become redundant, and you are left scrambling. All of this "getting ahead" is meaningless, says Solomon.

### **RICHERS**

"I've been rich, and I've been poor; and believe me, rich is better!" The words of Sophie Tucker strike a responsive chord in many hearts! Rich is better, by far, and so in pursuit of the Almighty Dollar we work long hours, neglect our families, burn ourselves out, and break our backs for money that we have no time to spend. We need the money for the children, for the Jacuzzi, for the BMW; and we must have more! Solomon says:

"Whoever loves money never has money enough; Whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless." (5:10)

Truer words were never spoken.

This, then, is Solomon's view. The wisest man other than Jesus Christ Himself concludes that life

## **Is that ALL There is ?!**

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without God is meaningless.

The history of man is littered with wrecks of men who testify to the emptiness of all things. Though dead, they still speak and their lives cry out to us of the meaningless of life without God. Howard Hughes, Elvis Presley, Janis Joplin, Napoleon, Nietzsche. Brilliant, talented, creative, even revolutionary lives, yet empty without God.

Our own lives speak to us also, though we usually attempt to drown the sound in the deafening roar of furious activity. Yet in the rare quiet moments, perhaps in the lonely hours of the night, we wonder: Is that all there is? Is there nothing more? Perhaps we have achieved much of what we sought, but the anticipation far exceeded the actual event, and we have been left with a nagging emptiness. Is that all there is? Is there nothing to satisfy the soul?

The great theologian Augustine knew all about this. He says to God: You made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you! The Son of God Himself speaks to the issue: What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul (Mark 8:36)?

### **THAT IS NOT ALL THERE IS!**

The Bible brings us good news. Solomon says that the conclusion of the matter is this: "Fear God and keep His commandments" (12:13). Return to God. Seek the forgiveness of God. Seek to know and serve God in reverence and love.

How may I know God, you may rightly ask! The Biblical answer is clear and unequivocal: Jesus Christ! He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:7). He is the Saviour of the world! He is the Son of God who came to die for sinners, and He is able to save them from their sin; and it is sin that is at the root of our trouble! It is rebellion against God that is at the bottom of our turmoil. It is because of sin that we are separated from God. And it is our wickedness that is going to bring the wrath of God upon our heads if we do not flee to Christ.

Friends, we urge you to listen to the words of God:

Seek the Lord while He may be found; Call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way And the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, And to our God, for He will freely pardon! Isaiah 55:6,7

Listen also to the words of the Lord Jesus:

Come unto Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:28,29

May God bless His Holy Word to your souls.

Additional reading material is available free of charge. Please request John Blanchard's excellent booklet ["Ultimate Questions"](#)