



Behold Wisdom and Madness



Ecclesiastes 2:11 – 26

~ Our Spiritual Safari is considering the Alice in Wonderland of Scripture in the Book of Ecclesiastes. Our first few reports took us straight down a rabbit hole; into a world of unfamiliar sayings and sights. In this book of the Bible, things are not what they appear to be at first glance. We're considering the world of a man who was living only for himself, and asking, "... *what is the purpose of this life?*" In our last report, we saw Solomon give himself over to pleasure. He said that whatever his eyes saw, and he desired, wasn't kept from him. When Solomon saw something he wanted – he got it, friends; it doesn't matter who or what it was.

Most people would presume a man in Solomon's exalted position would be quite happy. Well, for some reason, the so-called "*privileged*" are not the happy ones in this world. They're as miserable as King Solomon was at the time in which we are studying. Solomon was beyond privileged; but he wasn't happy. The statistics I have seen regarding suicide indicate that it is generally not the poorer class taking such actions; but the rich man — who seems to have everything in this world — who takes his own life — usually from frustration and boredom. See, they've come to the same conclusion Solomon did....

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.

~ That was King Solomon's conclusion of life in a nutshell. Those who make the same experiment Solomon made — on any scale — come to the same horns of their dilemma; saying all is vain and empty and a complete waste of time. Without God, life is meaningless, friends. Our existential being is a huge bunch of absolutely nothing. So, leaving behind wisdom, science, philosophy and pleasure, Solomon moves on to '*rapacity*' — for lack of a



better word. Materialism is living for the here and now — living for the moment and in it, as they say. Today, we have what is called the “*now generation*” – and God says “.... *now is the accepted time and now is the day of salvation.*” In that sense, I belong to that generation; but that’s not quite what they mean. They mean living for self. They’re selfish, self-centered, self-serving, self-absorbed, self-righteous and self-governed. All of that is rooted and wrapped in materialism; and there are a whole bunch of people living that way who are calling themselves “*Christians.*” It's shameful....

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.

14 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.

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.

18 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.

19 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.

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.

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.

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.

~ No man has ever had the resources King Solomon had – past, present, or future. If you repeat the things Solomon did, you'll find that they are so monotonous they bore one to tears – possibly to death. Now, surely it is better to be wise than to be foolish; education is certainly better than ignorance. I think most people would agree with that; and, although Solomon said exactly that, notice the conclusion he came to subsequently. It doesn't matter how smart we really are – we never get very far away from being a fool in terms of wisdom. Both of those types of people are

ultimately carried out in a box and placed in the ground – or somewhere – exactly the same way.

I find it interesting that modern man, with all of his knowledge, scientific findings, technological inventions and advances in medicine, cannot find a way to, at least extend, human life for a substantial period of time.

Personally, I would think a smart person could find another way out of this world altogether. They tell me that man is living an average of thirty years longer over his lifetime than just a couple centuries ago. Well, I just laid thirty years down next to eternity, and my estimation is that we haven't even added five seconds to the clocks of our life with modern medicine. Frankly, man just hasn't done well here on earth. Not at all.

I don't care how high your intelligence quotient is, or how many doctorate degrees you wallpaper your office with, my friends, you know nothing of this world that will ease the terror in your time of dying. You're going straight to the morgue and into a casket or crematorium – and nothing is going to slow it down from happening. The reality of his vanity led Solomon to hate his life! It was an empty, meaningless and purposeless existence. Of course, there have been many great men of knowledge who have passed through this world — and they have contributed certain inventions and luxuries that make life a little better and easier for everyone — but they have all passed through the doorway of death like anyone else has — or soon will. We never really discover anything that does us much good. Solomon says he hated his boring life; that it had become burdensome and cumbersome to him. I'm sure it became an ordeal just to get out of bed. And that's exactly how it is for multitudes of people today, too.

There are many museums and homes of famous industrialists, inventors and musicians open to the public today. I encourage people to visit those places as they are worthwhile experiences. What we generally find is that, for all of the accomplishments and contributions to society, most of the lives of famous people don't work out well. I have been to some of those historical places, and not one has ever given me the impression that a fulfilling and satisfactory life was lived there. Those people are eventually bored with and burdened by their luxury, fancy stuff, clothes, women, and

money. Further, the inventions and accomplishments anyone has ever made would have eventually been made by someone else if they hadn't made them. This life is utter vanity, friends. Personally speaking — and I have some experience with money — I have to tell you: Solomon was succinct when recording the observations he made in this section of Scripture!

The wealthy man wonders and worries constantly about leaving his work and wealth to another individual. They strive their entire lives to accumulate what ultimately doesn't amount to much, if anything; and then they are faced with leaving it to a relative or other person. Some leave everything to Christian organizations that eventually depart from the faith and become apostate entities. How do you know that particular cause will be carried on in the way it was originally designed to? John Harvard, for example, was a rock-ribbed fundamentalist. He left his money specifically to propagate the fundamental faith. Well, you won't find fundamental faith on the campus of Harvard University today, friends. Let's keep this real. They departed from his last will and testament, erected a statue of him, and forgot all about him at the same time! That which Harvard left behind came to absolutely *nothing* as he intended. In fact, it is being used for the exact opposite of his intentions.

Alright, let's be sure we understand Solomon is not talking about the child of God seated in the Heavens. No, we're talking about the man under the sun — the man who is away from God. Living only for self and our own best interest will result in pessimism and bitterness; that is the outcome for the natural man of the world — it simply cannot be otherwise. It's like holding a handful of dead leaves — no value, no meaning, of no use. Solomon also discovered it wouldn't do him any good to worry about all of this, because there was absolutely nothing he could do about it. Today, however, there is something we can do about it. We can turn to Christ and trust Him. Solomon didn't have that luxury. The Mosaic System of Levitical Law offered no finalization of sin. The problem of sin was never worked out until Christ died on the cross and rose again from the dead.

So, as we end this leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God having thoroughly addressed the philosophy of humanism. The next experiment we will make with Solomon in the laboratory of life — in chapter three — will be that of fatalism. The philosophy of fatalism was common amongst the Greeks, and it is common amongst pagans today. Buddhism is and Platonism was, a fatalistic system. Almost all of the cults — some disguised as Christian denominations — have a fatalistic world-view intertwined, too. The fatalist can easily give the impression that they have a glorious faith in God; but, ultimately, their faith is not faith in the True and Living God. They have faith only in themselves.

The philosophy of fatalism says, *“whatever will be shall be.”* They like to phrase it by saying that when their number comes up, and it is their time to die, there’s nothing they can do about it. Well, Hezekiah was given a death sentence by Isaiah, but that changed when Hezekiah prayed to God. God gave Hezekiah fifteen more years in answer to that prayer. The fatalistic crowd is the group drinking at happy hour after work. It used to be done only on the weekends; but today they do it every day. Interestingly, they never look very happy at happy hour. In fact, they look like the most miserable people I’ve ever seen. Well, the liquor gets them to laughing, and the thing they seem to be attempting to escape by laughing it off is their fatalistic viewpoint of life. That’s as mixed-up as the mixed-drinks they’re consuming. It’s a horrible way to live! It’s not a solution. Ultimately, it’s just a futile attempt to obtain happiness. The goal is to turn reality off. Fatalism isn’t going to work for Solomon in Ecclesiastes, and it isn’t going to work for you, either, friends.

As we prepare to continue through this book, and study the subject of fatalism in our next report, we need to take a brief look back for clarification. If you have not read our first three reports from Ecclesiastes, I would highly suggest you go back and do so now. We have already observed humanism, pleasure and rapacity. Those three philosophies are entrenched in our contemporary society. Hedonism and humanism are inextricably intertwined; forming a marriage to death with the world today. Both require a status symbol. They mandate that you have the right type of luxury automobile, a mansion in a gated community, and a second home in

a resort location of the world. Then, they act as if that is unimpressive; and proceed to gleefully make you aware that someone else has just a little bit more than you do.

Our computerized age of pleasure lives in a silicon state; a place where everything is synthetic, manufactured, and nothing is real. In an attempt to flee the trappings of technology, many people turn to pleasure with wine, women, and whatever – but they don't find it. Drowning out the tensions, terrors and troubles in our contemporary lives is an absolute industry today. Humanism erroneously exalts mankind as the measure of all things; and as the end-product of evolution. It declares the world anthropocentric – man centered. Well, men and women chase humanism, pleasure and materialism until they either catch it — and discover its emptiness — or it destroys them — whichever comes first. Their lives are nothing but a continual search for more and more possessions. It culminates into a life of frightening greed, selfishness, conceit – and on to a hopeless future with a philosophy of fatalism. Solomon says it is empty, boring and purposelessness.

Matthew 6: 19 *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also ~*

You and I won't be taking anything we possess down here to Heaven. Candidly, many are in for a huge disappointment. Paul gathered religious assets as a Pharisee, only to discover they had no value, and that they would not satisfy him. Paul thought those were spiritual treasures – but they weren't. Paul trusted in the things he had done; such as being circumcised, and belonging to the tribe of Benjamin. Paul also persecuted the church; which was a very religious thing to do in that day. Well, Christ found Paul and Paul gave those things up. When we trust and obey the Lord Jesus Christ, and begin to learn the Word of God, then the cares of the world will mysteriously drop into insignificance.

There's nothing wrong with making money and having nice things; but when that becomes the object of life, then they become absolutely wrong – wrong because it necessarily leads to fatalism. Gritting our teeth, biting the bullet, and defiantly facing life means we have actually lost the will to live. Jesus came that we might have life, and life more abundant. God is the only answer to a materialistic philosophy of humanism and fatalism. Those two damnable lies have deceived so many young people today that I doubt a correction can be made. Oh, that we might be brought back to things which are spiritual; and seek those things that are above — where Christ Jesus sitteth at the right hand of God the Father. That brings purpose, interest, and meaning to the racecourse of life! I can only pray that you and I would now be delivered from this present evil world ~

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