

Vanity of Vanities Ecc. 1:1-2

Introduction:

Greek Definition:

1892 hebel (heh'bel); from 1891; emptiness or vanity; figuratively, something transitory and unsatisfactory; often used as an adverb:
(Used 38 times in the book of Ecclesiastes).

There are three main things that Solomon says are vain (or useless).

- I. Acquisition of Wisdom (1:12-18).
 - A. Remember, Solomon (the author of this book) was the wisest man who had ever lived.
 1. 1 Kgs. 3:4-14
 2. But even Solomon in all of his wisdom did not remain faithful to God.
 - a. He began to trust in his own wisdom.
 - b. 1 Kgs. 11:6, 9-10
 - B. There needs to be a distinction of wisdom because there is a kind of wisdom that we are to seek.
 1. James 1:5 - If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.
 2. James 3:13-18
 3. We are not talking about the wisdom of God being vanity, but rather the wisdom of man.
 4. In fact, even Solomon saw the importance of heavenly wisdom.
 - a. Ecc. 7:11-12
 - b. Wisdom is good with an inheritance, and profitable to those who see the sun. {12} For wisdom is a defense as money is a defense, but the excellence of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who have it.
 - C. Notice especially 1:15.
 1. Ecc. 7:13 - Consider the work of God; for who can make straight what He has made crooked?
 2. It takes wisdom to understand that God is in control and that we cannot change what God has set forth.
- II. Worldly Pleasure (2:1-3). (Mirth is “joy” or “pleasure”)
 - A. Solomon had tried to find happiness in worldly pleasure, but it was not to be found.
 1. Solomon says that this is “vanity.”
 2. Pr. 21:17 - He who loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich.
 - B. There are great joys to be had in this world, but if we leave God out, we cannot find happiness.

1. It is not pleasure that is wrong because Paul tells us many times to rejoice.
 2. It is when our main goal is to have pleasure, and not to do the will of God, that we fall into sin.
- C. We are warned ourselves about following after worldly pleasure.
1. **Luke 8:14** - And the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.
 2. **II Tim. 3:4-5** - traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, {5} having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!
 3. Notice the example of Moses.
 - a. Moses followed after God when he could have enjoyed living in the house of Pharaoh.
 - b. **Heb. 11:24-25** - By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, {25} choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,

III. Great Possessions (**2:4-11**).

- A. Solomon had great wealth.
1. Remember, when Solomon asked for wisdom, God gave him riches as well (**I Kgs. 3:13**).
 2. Solomon had so great of possessions that the Queen of Sheba commented on them.
 - a. **I Kgs. 10:6-7**
 - b. Then she said to the king: "It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. {7} However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard."
 3. Because of his great wealth, if Solomon says that riches are vanity, we need to listen to him.
- B. It is important for us to understand that it is not riches that are the problem, but trusting in those riches instead of trusting in God that is the problem.
1. **Mk. 10:23-25** - Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" {24} And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! {25} It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."
 2. **I Tim. 6:6-10**
- C. We need to store our treasures in heaven, not on the earth.
1. **Mt. 6:19-21** - Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; {20} but

lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. {21} For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

2. To illustrate this point, Jesus tells a parable in **Lk. 12:16-21**

Conclusion:

It is important for us to understand that these things are not evil in and of themselves. It is only when we trust in these things instead of trusting in God that they become evil.

At the end of this book, Solomon tells us what we should be doing. Notice what he says in **Ecc. 12:13-14**: **Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. {14} For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.**

The purpose of our life is to fear God and keep His commandments. Today, are you keeping the commandments of God?