

II. The Words of the Wise

In Ecclesiastes 12:8-14, we see the concluding testimony of a wise man who tasted the vanity of life and came back to the teaching of God's Word. Without a doubt, this man is Solomon: son of David, King in Jerusalem – a preacher of wisdom and truth, (I Kings 3:5-15; 4:29-34; Proverbs 1:1; 4:1-13; Ecclesiastes 1:1). The word he chose for "vanity" to describe this life is a Hebrew word that means "bubbles." Things in this life can be very attractive, but they are all of a temporary nature and lack lasting value. Here is a summary of Solomon's comments on the vanity of life:

Solomon's Observations of Vanity (Ecclesiastes chapter 1).

The endless cycles of life: sun, wind, water, man's labor, man's pursuit of knowledge.

Solomon's Experience with Vanity (Ecclesiastes chapter 2).

He experimented with pleasure, possessions, accomplishments, knowledge and found no satisfaction. He also experienced compromise with the world and walked away from God. See I Kings 11:1-6 cp. Ecclesiastes 10:1. Ecclesiastes is Solomon's testimony of repentance.

Solomon's lesson learned from Vanity (Ecclesiastes 3:1-14; 7:13-14; 8:16-17; 12:13-14).

Ecclesiastes 12:8-10 - Having tasted of the vanity of life, Solomon returned to his life of teaching God's Word. He personally gave heed to the Word (I Timothy 4:12-16) and set in order many proverbs (Proverbs 1:1-7; 8:1- 9:12). He chose acceptable words / words of truth (Psalm 119:24; Proverbs 30:5-6; Isaiah 28:9-10; II Timothy 2:15).

Ecclesiastes 12:11 - See the power of the words of the wise! They are like goads that motivate and redirect stubborn sheep. They are like nails, used to construct a sheepfold (an enclosure which secures and protects the sheep at night). They are given by one shepherd, who directs all the work of caring for the sheep. Consider the Word of Christ: I Peter 1:10-11; Colossians 2:1-8; 3:16; John 5:24; 6:63; 8:30-32; 14:15-18,23-26; 17:14-20.

Ecclesiastes 12:12-14 - Avoid fruitless knowledge. It is exhausting and it doesn't do any good. Pursue a knowledge of God that gives you love and a child-like faith that will produce practical obedience. True knowledge makes us like Christ: an example that others can follow. It gives us a life that God can reward.

See II Timothy 2:14-26; 3:1-7,13 cp. 14-17; James 1:21-27; 3:11-18; II Peter 1:2-11; 3:17-18; John 13:17; II Corinthians 3:18.