

RICHES ARE MEANINGLESS

FEBRUARY 12, 2006 – ECCLESIASTES 5:1-20

MEMORY VERSE:

Ecclesiastes 5:18, "Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him – for this is his lot."

INTRODUCTION

Solomon was a man who was richly blessed by God in the areas of money and possessions. In this chapter, he describes his efforts to accumulate wealth and status and concludes in the end that it is all meaningless and futile. Just like us today, people in Solomon's day tried to find happiness in the form of gathering and holding onto wealth and status. The problem with this approach to life is we never recognize that all things come from God and He is the one that our focus should be directed to. Solomon observes how making inappropriate vows to God, obsession with gaining and hoarding wealth, and the failure to see life from God's perspective leads man to a hopeless and empty life. If we are honest with ourselves, most of us can identify with the truths in this chapter regarding our own dreams, goals, vows and fears that have kept us from enjoying God's peace, provision and lasting fulfillment.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. What do you think is meant by the phrase in verse 1, "Guard your steps"?
2. In verses 1-7, what is the fool's error? What does Solomon infer is a consequence for those who do not keep their vows (verse 6)? How does verse 7 summarize the message of the first seven verses in this chapter?
3. What were the officials doing in verses 8-9? Why should this not be a surprise to any of us?
4. In verses 8-12, Solomon records three proverbs. What are the major points he is trying to convey in these words of wisdom?

5. What is the grievous evil that Solomon describes in verses 13-17?

6. Based on verses 18-20, what perspective does God desire us to have in regards to our possessions? Where should the focus of our joy and contentment be? Explain.

OUR WALK WITH GOD

1. In verse 7, the writer exhorts us to “Stand in awe of God.” In what ways are you guilty of taking God too lightly? How do your expectations of God lead to disappointment with Him?

2. How do you determine what to pledge or give to the church or a para-church organization? What prompts you to give? What does God’s Word urge us to do in making these type of decisions?

3. What are some attitudes or worries that can keep you from enjoying God’s financial blessings? What are some specific steps you can take to develop a godly attitude towards material possessions?

4. What priority does the pursuit of wealth and work have in your life? Is this necessary? What are you expecting your life’s work will give you in the end?

GOING DEEPER

1. Read Philippians 4:11-13, 19; 1 Timothy 6:6-11; 17-19. What does Paul reveal to us in these passages regarding the pursuit of true contentment? What do you think are some of the temptations and/or problems that wealth brings in this life? What does Paul tell us to pursue instead of wealth?

2. Read Matthew 6:19-24; Mark 12:41-44; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7; Colossians 3:22-25. What are some of the key principles and truths reflected in these passages concerning God's perspective on money and possessions?

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS FOR THE WEEK

"You know what I've learned? There are no happy godless people. And there are no unhappy holy ones."

Bill Bright

"God is a loving and generous Father, but He doesn't want our things to possess us. Money and possessions are not evil as long as they don't enslave us. Instead of destroying lives, wealth can serve the kingdom of God. Every good and perfect gift comes from God and has a good and perfect use. As long as we can find it and honor it, we honor Him. And we are one step closer to heaven on earth, rather than one foot deeper into the golden mirage of a fool's paradise."

David Jeremiah, "Searching For Heaven On Earth"