

*'All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.'*  
2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

# Ecclesiastes

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## Chapter 2



## **Kerrville Bible Church** Fall Semester 2023

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## Ecclesiastes

# Why Did Solomon Have to Sin?

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- ❑ First – because he was a sinner!
- ❑ Solomon was deeply discouraged by his life. Despite enormous indulgences, advantages and achievements, he could not find “Yitron” - lasting satisfaction, only *hevel!*
- ❑ So, he determined to fully explore everything men do to find pleasure, satisfaction and meaning under the sun.
- ❑ He thought his wisdom could solve this dilemma!
- ❑ In his explorations, most of his activities became sinful by disobeying God, dishonoring God or displacing God.





## Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared The Futility of Wealth (2:1-11)

*<sup>1</sup>I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So, enjoy yourself."  
And behold, it too was futility.*

*<sup>2</sup>I said of laughter, "It is madness," and of pleasure, "What does it accomplish?"*

*<sup>3</sup>I explored with my mind how to stimulate my body with wine while my mind  
was guiding me wisely, and how to take hold of folly, until I could see what good  
there is for the sons of men to do under heaven the few years of their lives.*

- Will pleasure satisfy?
- Solomon and his guests drank wine, feasted bountifully
- Exchanged jokes, were entertained by merrymakers from near and far
- Were there ever greater parties???

# Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared The Futility of Wealth (2:1-11)



- 1 KINGS 4:22-23 gives the DAILY menu:
  - 30 *kors* of fine flour (approx. 55-gallon drum)
  - 60 *kors* of meal
  - 10 fat oxen
  - 20 oxen from the pastures
  - 100 sheep
  - Various harts, roebucks, fallow deer and fattened fowl
- Estimates suggest this would feed 15,000 to 36,000 people!



# Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared The Futility of Wealth (2:1-11)



*<sup>4</sup>I enlarged my works: I built houses for myself; I planted vineyards for myself;  
<sup>5</sup>I made gardens and parks for myself and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees;*

- ❑ Will Stupendous Edifices satisfy?
- ❑ 20 years to build two Houses and the Palace (1 KINGS 9:10)
- ❑ Beautiful Gardens
- ❑ Cities of Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer, Beth-horon, Baalath and Tadmor.
- ❑ And the Temple!

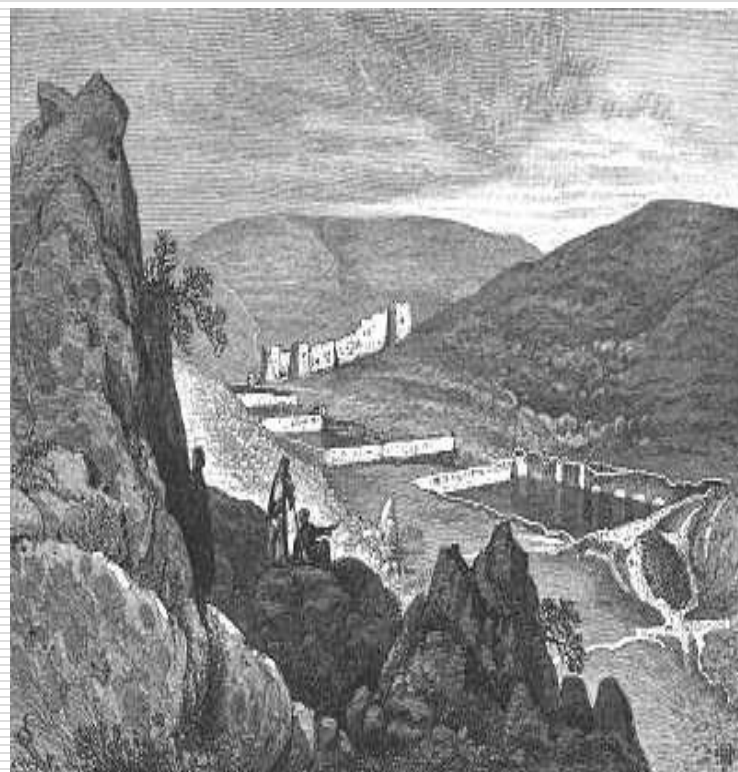


# Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared The Futility of Wealth (2:1-11)



*“I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees.”*

- Pools of Solomon. Three huge reservoirs built of squared stones and set in a steep part of the valley
  - Upper Pool                      380 by 236 by 25
  - Middle Pool                     423 by 250 by 39
  - Lower Pool                      582 by 207 by 50
- Works that rivaled any man!





## Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared The Futility of Wealth (2:1-11)

*7I bought male and female slaves and I had homeborn slaves. Also, I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem.*

- Will Possessing satisfy?
  - Slaves – impressed Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10-8)
  - Flocks and herds – larger than any person before





# Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared The Futility of Wealth (2:1-11)

*<sup>8</sup>Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male and female singers and the pleasures of men--many concubines.*

- Will Possessing satisfy?
  - Wealth (1 Kings 10:14-28)
    - 666 talents of gold per year –22 tons!  
**\$1.36 Billion today!!!**
    - Fleet of ships, Great ivory throne
    - 1,400 chariots, 12,000 horsemen
    - **Silver was as common as stone**
  - People
    - Singers – pleasure to his ears
    - 300 Concubines
    - 700 Wives



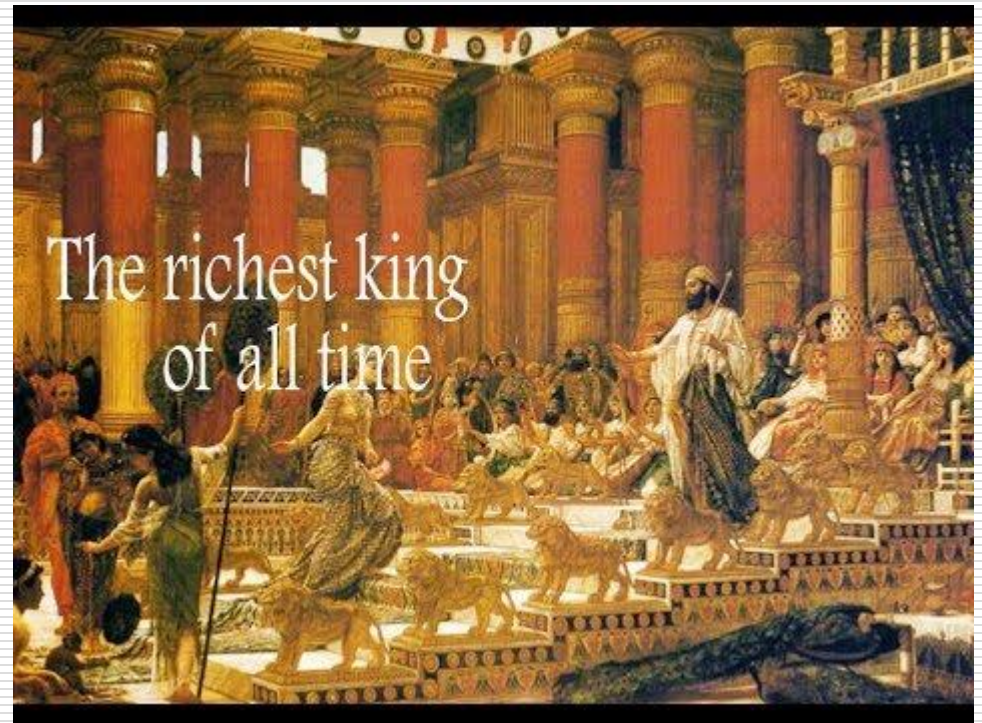


# Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared The Futility of Wealth (2:1-11)



<sup>9</sup>Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem.  
My wisdom also stood by me.

- ❑ He boasts that he became GREAT...
- ❑ He has INCREASED more than all before him.
- ❑ He admits his wisdom was unsurpassed.
- ❑ His wisdom has stood with him in his sinful search.



# Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

## The Futility of Wealth (2:1-11)



<sup>10A</sup>All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure

- ❑ He was voracious – constantly seeking new pleasures and possessions.
- ❑ Anything he desired he took.
- ❑ No one could stand in his way.

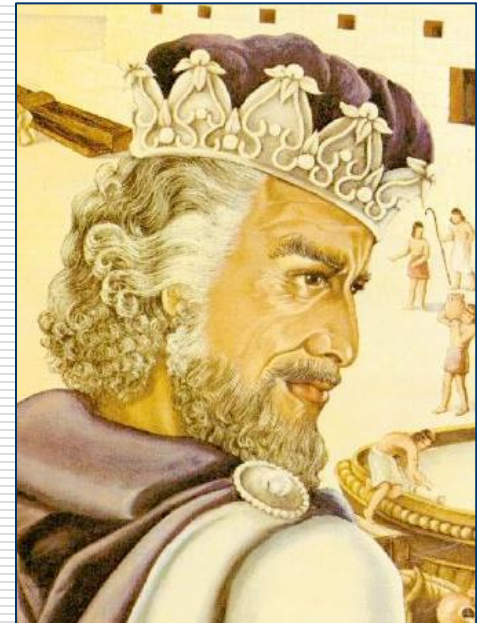




## Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared The Futility of Wealth (2:1-11)

<sup>10B</sup>for my heart was pleased because of all my labor, and this was my reward for all my labor.

- ❑ Solomon has been consumed with his building projects and gathering his possessions
- ❑ He has denied himself nothing and he has clearly enjoyed his efforts.
- ❑ His heart is pleased with all his labor
- ❑ He considers he has earned his indulgences in worldly pleasures as his reward





## Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared The Futility of Wealth (2:1-11)

<sup>11</sup>Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun.

- ❑ **Then Reality sets in ... “Behold”**
- ❑ Solomon considers his works and his possessions against eternity
- ❑ In every way, they are inferior to what God created
- ❑ **True joy cannot originate within man himself**
- ❑ “Under the sun” there exists no lasting happiness or pure pleasure
- ❑ Solomon ... with his unprecedented opportunities to test every conceivable benefit to be derived from the goods and projects of this world ... had been left unsatisfied.



## Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

### The Certainty of Death (2:12-23)

<sup>12</sup>So I turned to consider wisdom, madness and folly; for what will the man do who will come after the king except what has already been done?

<sup>13</sup>And I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness.

<sup>14</sup>The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I know that one fate befalls them both.

- ❑ So, Solomon considers wisdom and its opposites 'madness and folly'
- ❑ After exhaustive investigation he affirms the relative value of wisdom over folly.
- ❑ Wisdom is certainly better than madness or folly
  - The wise man can see farther ahead
  - The wise man can see in many directions
- ❑ But is the advantage of wisdom a permanent one?

# Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

## The Certainty of Death (2:12-23)



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<sup>14</sup>The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I know that one fate befalls them both.

- ❑ With all its advantages, wisdom cannot overcome the ultimate equalizer of sage and fool alike: death
- ❑ Pursuing education and wisdom has limited advantages but those advantages are limited to this life only.
- ❑ Wisdom cannot prevent death and wisdom does not supersede death.



## Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

# The Certainty of Death (2:12-23)

<sup>15</sup>Then I said to myself, "As is the fate of the fool, it will also befall me. Why then have I been extremely wise?" So, I said to myself, "This too is vanity."

<sup>16</sup>For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man as with the fool, inasmuch as in the coming days all will be forgotten. And how the wise man and the fool alike die!

- ❑ Death takes both the fool and the wise man
- ❑ Both are forgotten by future generations
- ❑ All the labor spent acquiring wisdom gives no ultimate advantage "under the sun".
- ❑ Vanity!



## Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

### The Certainty of Death (2:12-23)

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<sup>17</sup>So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind.

- ❑ Solomon, blessed with every conceivable advantage, expected to find fulfillment and joy “under the sun”
- ❑ But he did not find it – in fact, **HE HATED LIFE!**
- ❑ To expend his God-given resources in pursuit of self-satisfaction had proven to be empty and meaningless.
- ❑ In the final analysis, he was no better off than the fool or the pauper “under the sun.”





## Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

# The Certainty of Death (2:12-23)

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<sup>18</sup>Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me.

<sup>19</sup>And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun  
This too is vanity.

- ❑ Solomon even **DETESTED** the wealth he had accumulated
- ❑ He can't keep his wealth– he must leave it to his successor
- ❑ He can't protect his wealth – his successor might waste it or destroy everything he had built
- ❑ So ... there is no satisfaction in laying up wealth for your successor because there is no way of knowing that the inheritance will be used wisely or foolishly.
- ❑ This is vanity!



# Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

## The Certainty of Death (2:12-23)

<sup>20</sup>Therefore I completely despaired of all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun.

<sup>21</sup>When there is a man who has labored with wisdom, knowledge and skill, then he gives his legacy to one who has not labored with them. This too is vanity and a great evil.

- ❑ Not only did he DETEST it ... he DESPAIRED
- ❑ He can't even ENJOY his wealth.
- ❑ Giving it to one who has not earned it, fills him with dread, and drives him to complete despair.
- ❑ Solomon's fears were well-founded ... Rehoboam used his inheritance foolishly
- ❑ Not only is this vanity ... it is a great EVIL!





## Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

### The Certainty of Death (2:12-23)

<sup>22</sup>For what does a man get in all his labor and in his striving with which he labors under the sun?

<sup>23</sup>Because all his days his task is painful and grievous; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity.

- Solomon concludes this section with his opening question:
  - What does a man **get** for his labor and striving under the sun?
- He is deeply pessimistic – days are full of busy-ness that is deeply humbling
- At night his mind can't rest from continual worry
- Life is giving him nothing to aid him in securing meaning and an enduring satisfaction
- Is life only about survival? Is there no hope? Is it all *hevel*?



## Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

### The Certainty of Death (2:12-23)

<sup>24</sup>There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God.

<sup>25</sup>For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?

- ❑ William D. Barrick insists “nothing better” suggests other ways for men to be satisfied under the sun.
- ❑ V24b insists there is only one way – God is the Giver.
- ❑ V25 says, There is no enjoyment in life apart from the Giver
- ❑ V25 says, for the unbeliever, life turns out to be a bitter disappointment and its joys become empty and fleeting.
- ❑ Life in this world can only have significance and provide enjoyment for the believer



## Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

# The Certainty of Death (2:12-23)

<sup>26</sup>For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight This too is vanity and striving after wind.

- ❑ God alone makes enjoyment of life possible
- ❑ We must be “good in His sight” ... trust Him, follow Him
- ❑ God wants to give us wisdom, knowledge and joy
- ❑ These three gifts enable us to appreciate God’s blessings and to take pleasure in those things.
- ❑ Apart from God, there can be no true enjoyment of blessings or enrichment of life.
- ❑ Apart from God, life is vanity and striving after wind



## Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

# SUMMARY

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- ❑ Solomon has presented us with four arguments that life is not worth living: monotony of life; vanity of wisdom; futility of wealth; and certainty of death.
- ❑ These arguments are compelling if viewed “under the sun”, that is, from the human point of view.
- ❑ But when you bring God into the picture, everything changes.
  - Life, death, wisdom and wealth are all in His hands
  - He wants us to enjoy His blessings and please His heart
- ❑ In the next eight chapters, Solomon will revisit each of these four arguments and refute them.
- ❑ Questions???

# Ecclesiastes

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***"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Psalm 111:10"***