

THE END OF THE MATTER IS FEAR GOD

(Ecclesiastes 12:13)

King Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived. God so blessed him because he did not ask for riches or anything else, but for wisdom. At the very beginning of his reign the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, Ask what I shall give you. Solomon (then) said, I am but a lad: I know not how to go out or come in. Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen a great people who cannot be counted for multitude. So give You servant an understanding mind and a hearing heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and bad. For who is able to judge and rule this Your great people? It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, Because you have asked this and have not asked for long life or for riches, nor for the lives of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to recognize what is just and right, behold, I have done as you asked. I have given you a wise, discerning mind, so that no one before you was your equal, nor shall any arise after you equal to you (I Kings 3: 5-12). God not only blessed him with wisdom but also with riches and honor. But something happened to Solomon in the course of his reign that caused him to forsake the Lord, His commandments and statutes. He grew proud and defiant. The Bible says that he [defiantly] loved many foreign women- the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were of the very nations of whom the Lord said to the Israelites, You shall not mingle with them, neither shall they mingle with you, for surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods, Yet Solomon clung to these in love (I Kings 11: 1-3). He embraced and made alliance with those nations through marriage; he abused his position of king by adopting the practice of having wives and concubines in numbers unheard of. Seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines. I suppose he practiced this idea of alliances to keep peace with the nations.

When Solomon became old he followed the idolatrous ways of his wives. They turned his heart toward all their gods. Solomon, then forsook the Lord. He did evil in His sight. He did so for all of his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods (I Kings 11:7-8). As a result, the kingdom was divided after his death. When we read the book of Ecclesiastes we see Solomon's backslidden way of express himself and in the end of the book, his return to the Lord. The

book of Ecclesiastes' purpose is not only to investigate life, but to teach that life in general is meaningless without the fear of God. Solomon experienced all blessings that life can offer in his life time. God did not spare His blessings upon him. But he became defiant against God and walked contrary to Him. In chapter 2 of Ecclesiastes we read how he in retrospect viewed his life. He says, I made great works; I built myself houses, I planted vineyards; I made for myself gardens and orchards and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees; I made for myself pools of water from which to water the forest and make the trees bud; I bought menservants and maid-servants and had servants born in my house. Also I had great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem; I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and of the provinces. I got for myself men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men – concubines very many. So I became great and increased more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me and stood by me. And whatever my eyes desired I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any pleasure, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor, and this was my portion and reward for all my toil (Eccles. 2: 4-10). Solomon then concluded that all what he had done was “vanity and a striving after the wind and a feeding on it, and that there was no profit under the sun.”

Nothing mattered in the life of this great king because he took for granted all that constituted blessing in his life, including the Giver; he had gone astray from the purpose why God had blessed him. Therefore, his attitude does not connect with the teachings of Paul who taught a life of contentment and thanksgiving. Solomon, more than other person who ever lived in this earth, should have had a fulfilled life- physical and spiritual. Solomon's lust of the eyes held him a prisoner. For that reason, his weakness overcame his power. He is still considered the wisest man that ever lived on earth, but also one of the most wicked kings. How can that be? Obviously, he did not allowed wisdom to guide him, as he asked God. Gone through life away from God, he became idolatrous and even agreed to the sacrifice of children to please his wives. But his life did not end that way. He concludes the book of Ecclesiastes with a beautiful advice for all: Remember your Creator; do not wait until you are too old to acknowledge Him. Remember Him while you are young, before the evil days come or the years draw near when you will say, I have no enjoyment in them; before your sight is impaired and depression sets in; before your hands and arms tremble and the feet and the knees bow themselves and the molar teeth cease because they are few; and the

eyes are darkened; when the lips are shut in the streets and the sound of the teeth is low, and one rises up at the voice of a bird and the crowing of a cock, and the voice and the ear are brought low; when the old are afraid of danger from that which is high, and fears are in the way, and their white hair blooms, and a little thing is a burden, and desire and appetite fail, because man goes to his everlasting home and the mourners go about the streets or marketplaces; remember your Creator before the silver cord [of life] is snapped apart, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the fountain or the wheel broken at the cistern [and the whole circulatory system of the blood ceases to function]; then shall the dust [out of which God made man's body] return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it (Eccles. 12:1-7 from the amplified Bible).

All has been heard; the end of the matter is: Fear God, keep His commandments, for this is the whole of man and the whole [duty] for every man, for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it is good or evil (Eccles. 12:13-14). In other words, the summary of the matter lies on the reverence and worship of God, acknowledging Who He is, observing His commandments, for this is the purpose for which man was created, and man is the object of God's providence. This is the duty of man. At the end he will be judged by his works- good or bad when all will be exposed. Man's life is only profitable when his path follows the duty he has before God. Nothing else matters "under the sun," only that which is done to fulfill God's purpose for man. The rest is "futility of futilities." All will be gone when eternity shines through man's life.

THINK ABOUT IT!