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Testing the Pleasures of Life (Ecclesiastes 2:1)

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The Holy Bible addresses life in the present, future, and hereafter. King Solomon wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes to caution future generations of leaders. There are many diversions from the serious issues and tasks of life. Solomon lists his foolish attempts to find meaning and pleasure. These threaten our relationships with others and with God Almighty. How are your relationships with colleagues and with God?

INTRODUCTION

The affluence in America, the prestige of a leadership position, or wisdom and education can be a snare! All this is of no lasting value to you when lost to illness, misfortune, or age. All is lost upon death, and is often a curse to the next generation. Solomon's son split the kingdom in his first months as monarch and warred against his own brother. **In what are you investing that will bless the next generation, even into eternity?**

A TEST OF PLEASURE

Ecclesiastes 2:1 I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself." And behold, it too was futility.

Solomon took notes as he sought to gratify himself. He accumulated one thousand wives and concubines, a harem (Deuteronomy 17:17). The foreign women turned him to other gods and idol worship. He and the nation suffered moral decline (Nehemiah 13:26).

Solomon tested the diversions of humor, even strong drink, concluding it was folly. *I said of laughter, "It is madness," and of pleasure, "What does it accomplish?" "I explored with my mind how to stimulate my body with wine...."* (Ecc. 2:2-3). **Are you being tested (2Cor 8:8) and tempted (James 1:12)?**

A TEST OF WORKS

Ecclesiastes 2:4-5 "I accomplished great things. I built for myself houses; I planted for myself vineyards. I made for myself gardens and parks, and I planted all sorts of fruit trees in them.

The king mused *"Even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity"* (Ecc. 2:23b). *It all goes to another at death* (Ecc. 2:22). **What's your exit plan?**

A TEST OF POSSESSIONS

Ecclesiastes 2:8 I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and of the provinces; I got singers, both men and women, and delights of the flesh, and many concubines.

Solomon gathered thousands of cattle, horses, wives, and wealth all against God's command for a leader (Deut 17:16-17). He summarized his quest for meaning: *"I became greater than all the Kings before me in Jerusalem...whatever I desired I acquired, I did not restrain myself..."* (Ecc. 2:9-10). Solomon points out that he carefully evaluated this phase of his study: There is pleasure in work, but that may be the only reward. *When I considered all that I had accomplished and everything I had labored to achieve, I found everything to be futile and a pursuit of the wind. There was nothing to be gained under the sun* (Ecc. 2:11). **Have you observed the relative emptiness of simple pleasure, accomplishment, and accumulation of things?**

A TEST OF WISDOM, MEANING, AND JOY

Ecclesiastes 2:12 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?

Solomon reached the conclusion that others must make: It's better to be wise than a fool; however, they both perish and are forgotten! *I hated all the fruit of my labor... for I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool* (Ecc. 2:18-19)?

Solomon's study conclusions: 1). God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who are good in His sight. 2). God gives the sinner the tasks of gathering and collecting so it can be given to those who please Him. 3). It is from God that we get joy in our eating and drinking and satisfaction from our work (Ecc. 2:24-26).

A PRAYER

Father God: Help me find joy in my work and my service. Bless me with rest at night, strength to endure, and with glimpses of your provision in my life. I pray in Your Son's Name. Amen.