

Session 6

April 7, 2019

FULL CONTENTMENT

Ecclesiastes 11:7-10; 12:12-14

Jesus said, “I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance.” If that was the case, then why do people like Solomon have so much trouble finding it? Perhaps, like Solomon, some people define an abundant life as an *eccentric* life; filled with material possessions and physical pleasures. But pursuit of that kind of abundance had the exact opposite effect! Solomon concluded that a life spent chasing pleasure and wisdom and riches was a life spent “chasing the wind;” he could never quite catch it...and neither can we. The wise king closes the account of his search for significance with some words of advice.

Rule #1: Enjoy your life (11:7-8). The rushing torrent of time and obligations often sweeps our lives along too rapidly to actually *live* them. Solomon’s words are poetic. The light of each new day is a good thing; something to be enjoyed in the moment (v. 7). The warm sun is pleasing to the upturned face. If a man has a long life, then he should find such pleasure every day of it. And he should be reminded that dark days will follow (v. 8). Whether he is referring here to the darkness of days filled with sorrow and pain, or to the ultimate darkness of death and the grave that follows (or both!), we cannot be sure. But the point is clear: enjoy the simple pleasures daily, and live life fully as it comes.

Rule #2: Guard your life (11:9-10). A frequent theme in Solomon’s concluding thoughts is the virtue of youth. But his is not a simple “Oh, to be young again” nostalgia. Rather, he expresses the benefits of being young, only when tempered by the reality of living responsibly. Circumspect young men grow up to be wise and respected old men. Hence, he tells the young to “rejoice,” and let their “heart be glad,” but reminds them that following after a foolish heart and immature desires racks up consequences, not the least of which is the judgment of God! (see Gal. 6:7-8; 2 Cor. 5:10, et al.) The sorrow and pain mentioned in verse 10 can be taken two ways. It’s possible that Solomon is encouraging young people to avoid those emotions altogether, for there will be plenty of opportunities to feel regret later in life. On the other hand, the imperative verb tense can indicate a more severe command, so “put away evil and hurtful desires” also makes sense, especially in light of the explanation that follows: “youth and the prime of life are running away from you.”

Rule #3: Submit your life (12:12-14). Solomon’s final chapter begins with remembering our Creator (12:1) and ends with obeying Him (12:13). The journey to that conclusion has been long and arduous, and resulted in these writings. Yet the inspiration of them (or at least their truthfulness) was apparently understood by their author. His warning (v. 12) could be paraphrased as, “Beyond my account, there are (and will be) other accounts of those seeking some purpose in life. But searching through them all will yield little, other than making the reader weary of it all.” His simple but profound conclusion to both his search as well as his archive is to revere God and obey Him. The Holman’s “this is for all humanity” is rendered in the older translations, “this is the whole duty of man.” The Hebrew makes it even clearer: “for this is the whole of man.” In other words, fearing God and obeying Him is the only significant

purpose for all of humanity. And this, of course, is the basis of God's judgment: one's submission to the person of God, and one's submission to the commandments of God. Only when we remember our Creator and submit wholly to His purpose, will we find the abundant life that Jesus promised.