

PARK HEIGHTS CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Thus Saith the Lord

THE CONCLUSION

By Jeff Sweeten

At first, it would appear that Ecclesiastes is the acrid product of a bitter old man, discontented with his ruinous life choices. What can be surprising is that it was written by the wisest man on the planet, to that date, and his synopsis of life is depressingly dreary. *"Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity"* (Ecclesiastes 1:2); now, there's an encouraging introduction to the wisdom of age.

But, wait (as our modern infomercial's would bellow), there's more! Sure, time just seems to drag on without notice of generations (1:4), life seems to be full of functionless, monotonous labor leading to a little of nothing (1:8) and, in spite of humanity's natural search for something new, *"the thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun"* (1:9). What an introduction to the boring, mundane plodding toward our ultimate demise. What's the point?

It's right about now that we ought to indulge that spoiler instinct, even though I would rarely encourage one to flip to the end of a book to see who-dun-it; this book is the exception to that rule. Before you get too bogged down in the details of Solomon's process in discovering the purpose of human existence, the value of a soul and the Lord's end-game, perhaps we should take a peak at the last page. *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man"* (12:13).

The temporary respite we take in the latest, "newest" distractions are merely band-aids on bullet wounds: superficial, ephemeral and ultimately functionless. And, that's just those activities which, in and of themselves, are not sinful. Sure "the pleasures of sin" (Hebrews 11:25) are fun, but so short-lived; and the damage can be eternal. Clamoring for something new is not always better; "if it ain't broke, don't fix it."

However, *"the conclusion of the whole matter"* is a two-parter. *"For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil"* (Ecclesiastes 12:14). Now, that's scary for sinners; but for saints, it's a prelude to "well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:23). What's your conclusion?

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