

FEAST OF TABERNACLES – Day 4 – 2004

Fred R. Coulter – October 3, 2004

And greetings, brethren. This is day four of the Feast of Tabernacles, 2004, which means we're halfway through the feast already. And when there is a beginning, there is an ending. And this is what we also need to understand concerning God's plan. And in teaching and helping the people all during the millennium, it is going to be a fantastic and wonderful thing to do. Now how much latitude they're going to be given we don't know exactly, because it says there in Isaiah 30 that if you turn to the right hand or to the left hand you're going to see your teacher, and your teacher is going to say, "This is the way, walk in it." But nevertheless there's going to have to be a certain degree of choice and self-determination that they're going to have to do. Not like it is today. Today we see the world run amok because it has what we might call the "philosophy of meaninglessness;" which really means that everything, regardless of the choice, right or wrong, good or evil, is ok.

Now Aldous Huxley wrote this in one of his books... (Sorry for the interruption. What you heard was the bookstand that I had collapsed.) And the book that this is out of that Aldous Huxley wrote is *Means and Ends*. Now there are various excerpts from pages 312, 315, 316, and 318. Here's what he said. Now notice how similar this is to what Solomon did in his experiment. Not exactly the same, but very similar to it. But notice the attitude that he had in order to experiment and find out what was the best thing for him to do. He writes, "I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning." Purposelessness. Not keeping your mind fixed on God and His way. "I consequently assumed that it had none, and was without any difficulty able to find satisfying reasons for this assumption. For myself, as no doubt most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was an instrument of liberation..." When the world proclaims you are free, you are the slave of sin. Just remember that.

"...Instrument of liberation from a certain system of morality." Not that Solomon completely went against all the commandments of God; but in order, as we will see in chapter 2, to experiment the way he did, he had to come right up on the borderline of this to do so. He said, "We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom." Well now, did Solomon have a lot of sexual sins as well? Yes indeed. And he didn't relate in the book of Ecclesiastes all of the sexual experiments that he probably went through with his 300 wives and 700 concubines.

"We objected to the political and economic system because it was unjust. There was one admirably simple method of justifying ourselves in our politically erotic revolt: we could deny that the world had any meaning whatsoever..." And that's the world we're living in today. "Similar tactics have been adopted during the 18th century for the same reasons. The chief reason for being philosophical was that one might be free from prejudices; above all, prejudices of a sexual nature..." Or, what they would say, prejudice against God's commandments. "It was the manifestly poisonous nature of the fruits that

have been forced upon me to reconsider the philosophical tree on which they had grown.” And so here’s a man going his way, seeking what he wants to do.

Now let’s come to the book of Proverbs and let’s see a proverb here which aptly describes what happens when this is undertaken; and aptly also describes what happened to Solomon. Because although during his accounting in the book of Ecclesiastes, he had not rejected God totally. How close did he come to it? We’re going to see that he gave himself over to certain things. Now, Proverbs 28:26: “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool...” And there’s also another kind of fool, Psalm 14:1: “The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God.*” And then it lists how corrupt they are, and so forth. So: “He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool...” Now here’s another one. Let’s back up, Proverbs 28:13: “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper...” Now Solomon, there’s no account that he repented of his sins and of his experimentations. And God had to divide the kingdom and take ten of the tribes away from his son, Rehoboam, who sat on the throne after he died. “...But whoso confesseth and forsaketh *them* shall have mercy.” And this is what we need to realize. We need to confess and forsake our sins to find mercy. “Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.” And I submit to you that all that Solomon did, and all that people do, and the things that they do, in experimenting and just trusting in their own selves, they harden their hearts, and they fall into mischief. Did Solomon fall into mischief? Yes. Verse 18: “Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but *he that is perverse in his ways* shall fall at once” (Prov. 28:13-14, 18, 26).

Now let’s come back to the book of Ecclesiastes, and let’s begin in chapter 2. And let’s see how profound that these things are in relation to what Solomon did. And as you will see, Solomon became what we would call a hippie. Remember in the ‘60’s what they started to do? Experiment with everything. And look what that led to. So let’s begin, Ecclesiastes 2:1: “I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also *is vanity.*” Because what does it do? It’s a vain thing. In other words, you could say it this way: people who laugh all the time, this is also vanity and madness, isn’t it?

“I said of laughter, *It is mad:* and of mirth, What doeth it?” Well, you can feel good for a while. But also, that ends in vanity. So he said, “Ok, here’s what I’m going to do: I’m going to experiment.” “I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine...” Go ahead and drink as much as you want. Become a drunken fool. Have parties and everything that goes with it. “...Yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what *was* that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life” (verses 2-3). Is that why God created man, just to have fun, just to have pleasure? Now if we take what Solomon said here, “That which has been is what shall be” (Eccl.1:9, paraphrased). So just note the increase in television of “reality” shows, and of experimenting, and seeing all of the things that people can endure. For what sake? It’s all madness. Now I haven’t watched any of those shows myself, but I’ve seen some of the advertisements for it, and it’s absolutely foolish; like seeing who can eat so many worms. The same kind of thing here. So that’s what he did.

And he said, “Ok, I wanted to have bigger projects. These other things I did on the side while I watched my big projects.” So, “I made me great works...” Yes he did – built the temple of God, built the city of Jerusalem; built temples for all of his wives’ gods. “I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all *kind of* fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got *me* servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me...” (verses 4-7). He was just getting everything - get, get, get, get, get.

“I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, *as* musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me” (verses 8-9). So he kind of was a double-minded man at this point, trying to experiment and see what was the greatest thing that could be. Now in the final analysis he says, “Let’s hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments” (Eccl. 12:13). but he himself did not follow his own advice. So somewhere all of these things were the beginning of Solomon going into mischief. And in the end he sort of recovered himself a little bit at the end of all these experiments. But before he died he gave himself over to all the debauchery that had been there. After all, when you go out and do these things there are certain things that you do in your life which are a one-time thing. And so if you go out and you destroy your mind, and destroy your emotions, and go through all the experimentations that Solomon did here, then you understand that all is vanity. Well, Solomon did learn some things.

Now let’s see what he did here: “And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.” So then he stepped back and he said: “Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all *was* vanity and vexation of spirit, and *there was* no profit under the sun” (verses 10-11). Now what did Jesus say? Jesus said in John 6: “The words that I speak to you, they are spirit, and they are life. The flesh profits nothing. It is the Spirit that quickens” (John 6:63, paraphrased). So here Solomon was going against everything of God, spiritually. And he ended up frustrated, vain, empty, hollow, unfulfilled, though he just satiated himself with everything that could possibly be given to a man; or that a man could do, or that a man could do with women, or that a man could do with projects, and buildings. And he found it all vanity and vexation of spirit. He was just frustrated. Because that inner – how shall I put it? That inner spiritual longing – or itching, if we could put it that way - that God put in every man (which He did) is so that they would realize that in this physical life there has got to be more beyond. And so we can be thankful for Solomon for writing these things down for us.

Now he certainly did experience all these things. He wanted to learn by experience. And one of the greatest lessons that we can learn is this, and I never will forget this, because it was the first assembly that we had when I joined the army in 1956.

So this was the summer of '56, and we're down at Fort Ord and all the recruits were there. And out comes a general with all of his pomp and ceremony, and all of his medals, and so forth. And he spoke to all of the raw recruits. And he said, "I want to tell you something." He said, "It is true that you can learn by experience." Same way as Solomon here. You can learn by experience. And that's what Solomon was trying to do. He says, "The one who learns by experience is a wise man." He said, "But I want to tell you something else which is even more important: the wiser man is the one who learns from the experience of others." And so God intends us to learn from the experience of others as written in the Bible so that we can learn.

And every young person, and every teenager, and every young adult, please understand: in exercising your free choice, before you exercise it, learn from the experience of others. You don't have to experience it yourself in a sinful way to know what is right and wrong. You don't have to steal to know that stealing is wrong. You don't have to hurt and harm others to know that it is wrong. You don't have to commit sex sins and adultery to know that it is wrong. Learn by what is in the Bible. And don't think, as Solomon apparently thought here, that the commandments of God are a straightjacket for you to deny you choice, to deny you pleasure, to deny you good. No. The commandments, and statutes, and judgments of God, and all the teachings of Christ and the apostles are given so that you may channel your life experience so that you will find the good things of God without all of the pain and the sorrow which comes from self-experiment, as we find here that Solomon did. Yes, you can learn lessons. Yes, experience can teach you. But experience is the hardest teacher of all because you also have to suffer. So if you can learn by the experience of others and understand what is right and wrong, then you're going to be so much further ahead, and you're going to be in right standing with God. How many people really have done that? Very few indeed.

In the New Testament you have the parable of the prodigal son, don't you? What did he do? Well, he said, "Father, give me my inheritance and let me go. I want to go experience life for myself." Now as we're growing up, yes, we want to experience life for ourselves. But he decided to give up what his father had taught him, the ways of God, and everything. And so, because there's free choice, his father said, "Ok. We'll divide the inheritance and give it to you." So what did he do? He went off into a strange country. And he thought he's going to eat, drink, and make merry and have all the women he can have. And it says there that he spent all of his inheritance in riotous living. So he ended up with nothing. Yes, he was learning by experience. And so what happened? He had to sell himself as an indentured servant to feed swine. Now imagine a Jewish young man feeding swine, those unclean things, and that they were being fed better than you. And you couldn't even steal a portion of the corn that was going to the swine.

And then it says, "And when he came to himself..." In other words, when he came to himself and repented. Then he said, "Look, even my father's servants have more than I. I'm going to go back home and say, 'Make me one of your servants, Father, and I'll just work for you.'" Well, the father was merciful, kind, and forgiving, and you know the rest of the story. He was received back. But still, nevertheless, even though he was forgiven and received back, look how he destroyed his life. Look what he did.

Now let's compare that with Solomon. Ecclesiastes 2:12: "And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what *can* the man *do* that cometh after the king? *even* that which hath been already done. Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness." Well he did learn by experiment, didn't he? Yes, but that wasn't the best way to learn. He should have trusted God all along. "The wise man's eyes *are* in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all. Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also *is* vanity" (verses 12-15). Because if you live your life even as perfect as you can live it and you die and go in the grave and there's nothing more after that. That's why a lot of people say, "Eat, drink, and make merry, for tomorrow we die."

Well, he goes on. He's lamenting here. He's depressed. And all of this kind of activity will make you depressed. "For *there is* no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever..." of course, unless it's written down. But how many real wise men are written down in history? Not many. Here's a few here and there. "...Seeing that which now *is* in the days to come shall all be forgotten..." (verse 16). How many people were under Solomon's rule and reign? Where are they? Does anybody remember any of them? Oh, maybe a name or two as written in the Kings and Chronicles and Proverbs. But where are they? Where are the rich? Where are the poor? Where are those who were famous in the world?

Now just this summer we had a famous actor die, didn't we? His name was Marlon Brando. And now they're finding out that there were many, many things wrong in his life, and now there's going to be a great fight over his estate, just like it says here in the Proverbs. Now whether he was wise or whether a fool, we don't know. But it says, Solomon wrote: "And how dieth the wise *man*? as the fool." You give up your breath of life, and that's it. He said: "Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun *is* grievous unto me: for all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit. Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun..." Everything that he was proud about here. He looked at it and because it was unfulfilling, he hated it. How many rich people are frustrated, vexated, have hatred, and are bitter because everything that they pursue ends up in vanity and frustration? All the works that they have done, all the things that they have performed: vexation, and frustration, and vanity.

So he was lamenting. He said: "...because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise *man* or a fool?..." (verse 19). And he was even prophesying of his own son. Now hold your place here and let's come back to the book of I Kings 12, after it indicts everything that Solomon had done, and his taking and splitting the kingdom was God's judgment for it. And let's see what his son did. And the people of Israel came to him and said, "Now look, ease up on the taxation. Don't be like your father." Because it says here in verse 4: "Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee." Now he had a chance to be wise. I don't know if Solomon was one of the first Democrats in taxation or not. I couldn't say

that. But it just reminds me, or Rehoboam also, because Rehoboam wasn't going to let up on the taxation. He turned out to be a fool. And Solomon was lamenting, "Who's going to know what the man is that comes after me, and what he will do?"

So, verse 6, after waiting three days: "And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people? And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people..." So he had wise counsel, didn't he? Yes indeed. "...If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them..." And isn't that the whole point of being a ruler, or a king? Is that not the whole point of God having us to be kings and priests to reign under Christ, to serve the world, to serve the people? Yes indeed. So they gave good advice.

"...And answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever. But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, *and* which stood before him:..." "Well, I'll go to all my buddies." So here's the new generation. "And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter? And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou *it* lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little *finger* shall be thicker than my father's loins. And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions" (verses 6-11).

So they all came back with Rehoboam the third day: "And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him; and spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father *also* chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform His saying..." (verses 13-15). So God hardened their heart. Now we can learn a lesson with that, can't we? What happened in the church when the hierarchy was confronted with all of their sins and excesses, to repent and not have the hierarchy so harsh? What did they do? They made the idolatry even worse. And that's why it had to fall. Just like the kingdom was taken from Solomon, so everything that the church had was taken from it. And now all the property is sold, and strangers have it. And now they are having an auction on-line as we prepare this tape.

All the excesses and all of the things that were experimentations in the flesh to spend money on things in the flesh to be important are now being auctioned off. And many of us do not even know or realize what some of these things were. Let me just read you one here. Here's an item: "Parlor suite, French gilded, three pieces. Floor-standing pair of candelabra, 7'3". Baccarat parcel, gild and cut crystal, 20th century, 800-plus hand [cut] pieces of crystal used by the late Shah of Iran during the celebration of the 2,500th anniversary of the Persian Empire." What was the church doing with that? Then

there are some bronze statues of Horowitz and other performers that performed in the Auditorium.

So when the church decided to follow the world in pursuit of riches, in pursuit of indulgence, in pursuit of those things to declare itself absolutely Laodicean, God had to intervene just like He did with Solomon. And who was the one that succeeded? Was he wise, or was he a fool? Well history shows that he was a fool, both his father and his son, and turned the church of God into that like which is a church in the world. And so God is taking every last vestige of that away; because the people were just as responsible as the leaders, because they committed idolatry and worshipped the man, and worshipped the property, and worshipped the things. So we need to understand: no one is going to mock God.

So here, let's come back to Ecclesiastes 2 and let's see, what did he do? He did all of these things, and he said, the last part of verse 19: "This *is* also vanity." Isn't it vain, everything that was done? The only good thing out of it all is that through the scattering and the trials that have come upon the people of God, the true brethren who were really converted, love God, kept His commandments, held fast to the truth; did not give away to the indulgences and the luxuries and things that were just absolutely blasphemous before God.

Now, you can understand some of this if this were just riches and wealth that was in the world. But to take the tithe money of God and to use these things, to buy these things, and to say that this is all the will of God is as much nonsense as Solomon saying that everything that he did was the will of God. No, it was of his own – of his own vanity, of his own self, from his own heart. And all the people went along with it. Now you see, that's why it's important for us to understand this today. Because this, what we find in the book of Ecclesiastes, is going to be the number one example of all the problems we will be confronted with in helping and teaching people during the millennium.

Now let's come back here to Ecclesiastes 2:20: "Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair [just give himself into a depression] of all the labour which I took under the sun. For there is a man whose labour *is* in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it *for* his portion. This also *is* vanity and a great evil" (verses 20-21). Because Solomon couldn't take a thing with him. He left it all. And his son was a fool, which is fitting that a fool should follow the wisest man in the world, because of the foolishness of the wisest man in the world.

"For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? For all his days *are* sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity" (verses 22-23). So he just put himself through every conceivable thing, didn't he? So then he comes to a little bit of sense. Out of it all, from everything he experimented with, he came up with a little bit of wisdom. It really makes you wonder, God gave him all this wisdom, all this knowledge, all this understanding, that even all the kings of the earth would come and seek the wisdom of Solomon. And yet he turned to this folly and self-indulgence. It makes you

wonder, what goes on in the minds of men when they allow carnality, and selfishness, and lust, and greed to take over? It's an amazing thing, isn't it?

So he finally got a little bit of wisdom here. He said: "*There is* nothing better for a man, *than* that he should eat and drink, and *that* he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it *was* from the hand of God." In other words, if you live your life the way that God intended you to, you will enjoy life without being self-indulgent and vain. This is also from God. "For who can eat, or who else can hasten *hereunto*, more than I?" (verses 24-25). He says, "After all of what I've done, no one's done more than me to find this out." And the thing is this: can we learn by the experience of Solomon, that we don't have to go through it ourselves? Can we learn this as a matter of character so that when God gives us the responsibility for teaching and training people that will be under us during the millennium, that we will be able to show them the right way? That we will know and understand that vanity and foolishness is not the way to go? See, Solomon did not eat off the tree of life. He ate off the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

And what brought him all of the frustration? Let's come back here to I John 2:15 (FV), and let's see what God tells us today: "Do not love the world..." And that is where the church got itself in trouble, right? They began to love the world. They began to love the riches in the world. They began to love the honor and flattery that other men would give. They began to do the same sin as Israel by showing off their wealth and indulging in things that they should never have gotten involved in. Is it any wonder that God had to take it all away, just like He had to take away the kingdom from Solomon? Yes indeed. Solomon loved the world and the things in the world. Now notice what happens if you do that: "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." So when he gave himself over to do these things, where was God's Spirit? Where was his understanding of God's way? Did not God just give him over to this and let this experiment run its course? Even though at the end we will see he recovered himself a little bit, his life ended up with the sentence of death and the removal of the kingdom, and the removal of his wealth, and everything that he had gotten. Is that not vanity? "Vanity of vanity, says the preacher, all is vanity."

Now let's continue on here in verse 16: "Because everything that *is* in the world—" Because to experiment the way that he did is to indulge in lust and to indulge in self experimentation. So John writes: "[All] that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes..." And that's what Solomon did, wasn't it? He just gave himself over to lust. "...And the pretentious pride of physical life—" And that's just the pretentiousness of physical life, which is vanity and vexation of the spirit. John writes: "...[This] is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world and its lust is passing away, but the one who does [is doing] the will of God abides [dwells or lives] forever" (verses 16-17, FV). And isn't that what happened in the church? Now all these things will be auctioned off by the time you hear or view this tape. But isn't it a shame. A church that took in \$140 million a year no longer exists because the wealth blinded their eyes. Yes indeed. True as Christ said, "I will spew you out of My mouth." And that's exactly what happened to Solomon.

Now let's come back here to the book of Ecclesiastes again, and let's see that he did learn a little bit. Just like the false gospel that was preached to the leaders of the world - the gospel of "give and get," that's not the gospel of Christ, it's repentance of sin. Well, he was able to teach some, just like Solomon was able to learn a little bit like he says here, Ecclesiastes 2:26: "For *God* giveth to a man that *is* good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy: but to the sinner He giveth travail, to gather and to heap up, that he may give to *him that is* good before God. This also *is* vanity and vexation of spirit." So he learned a little bit. Quite an amazing thing. Here, one that God appeared to twice was given profound wisdom and knowledge and understanding. He had everything he could possibly need, and he could have been one of the greatest rulers in the world and cause nations to follow the way of God had he not conducted himself in this way of folly and self-experimentation through lust and greed.

(Turn Tape)

...the third chapter, and there's an awful lot for us to learn here. And in this there is quite a bit of wisdom that Solomon was able to focus in on and to present to us in this chapter so that we get a good perspective on life. So let's begin, verse 1: "To every *thing there is* a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven..." (Eccl. 3:1). And remember, that's all under the overall purpose of God, because God has a predetermined plan that He is carrying out. And what is so profound and important for us is God, through the holy days, gives us understanding of what that plan is, and that He has called us to have an intimate working part in that plan. Not only now in the things that we are doing in building character, and growing, and overcoming, and helping and serving people, and preaching the gospel, and doing the things that God wants us to do; but also through all eternity. So there is that purpose.

And he says: "A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up *that which is* planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace" (verses 2-8). And all of these, you might say, are the various cycles of life, whether they be for the individual or whether it be for a nation. Now we are seeing with the nation there was a time it was building, now we're seeing it is reaching its pinnacle and it is going to come down. Now we don't know how quickly it's going to come down or whatever. But as long as we stay right with God and love Him, He will see us through it.

Now we also need to understand this - this is an important thing: there is a time to die. And we need to realize when we look out and we see the average age of those in the church of God - also it's true in the Protestant churches - there is a generational change in the nation and in the churches. And I might mention too, just as God has dealt with the Worldwide Church of God in correcting it, so God is going to deal with all of these

Protestant churches that profess His name. And He is going to take away their riches, and take away their wealth, and He is going to correct them for their sins. But He starts with His own church because we should have known better. So there's a time for all of these things. There's going to be a time when many of those who are sitting right here in the audience this year that they won't be here next year. And the next year there will be some who will cross the finish line and enter into the grave to wait the resurrection. And we need not mourn or be despaired, as others are when that happens, because they have finished the course. They have run the race. And in being faithful to God they're going to receive a crown of life. But in everyone's life, you're going to see, all of these things sort of run in a cycle. And so that's what Solomon was bringing out here.

Now he says, "What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth?" So what is the profit in our lives if we love God and keep His commandments and have the Spirit of God, that's the profit in our lives. Not the physical things in the world. So he says, "I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it" (verses 9-10). And we all have the travail. And we all go through it. And the thing that we need to understand - now let me just mention this right now: If you are in the midst of a trial right now, or a difficult time in your life right now, we need to just understand something that's very important. You need to also understand that God's way will see you through. God's Spirit will see you through.

Now let's come to Romans 8, and let's claim this promise as we're looking at everything that all human beings are going through. And all of us are going to have trials and tests and difficulties, aren't we? Yes we are. And those things are going to happen to us. They will be in our lives to try us, to test us, to see whether we love God and are going to build the character that God wants us to have. Now here, Romans 8:28. And this is the thing that we need to do as we look at the things in the book of Ecclesiastes, as we look at the things in our lives, as we look at the things in the world and look at the trials that we are going through. Always remember this: Romans 8:28 (FV): "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose." So God has a purpose in your life. God has a purpose in everything that takes place in your life - so that you can grow and build character and know and understand that God is with you. And of course, in the hindsight of 20/20 vision after a trial or difficulty is over we can see the reason and purpose for it.

But here the apostle Peter gives us in I Peter 5 a very important thing for us to understand about trials and difficulties. And so here's the reason. Let's pick it up here. And he's talking to the elders, and then he blends in to the purpose of trials. I Peter 5:5 (FV): "In the same manner, *you* younger men be subject to *the* older men; and all of *you* be subject to one another, being clothed with humility because God sets Himself against *the* proud, but He gives grace to *the* humble." And we can see that even in Solomon's life. Did he not get lifted up in vanity and pride, and going through all the experimentation and life that he went through? Yes, yes he did. Now here's what we are to do: "Be humbled therefore under the mighty hand of God so that He may exalt you in *due* time..." (I Peter 5:5-6). And the due time is going to be the resurrection. Not now. And you can go back and read and study the whole episode in the book of Esther of

Mordecai and the Haman the Agagite, that God is able to bring the wicked down and raise the humble; if we can have faith and trust God.

Next, we are to be casting all our cares upon Him for He cares for us. Now lots of times in trials and difficulties that we are going through it's awfully hard to see how God cares for us with all the misery that we are going through. Well we're going through it so we can learn to love God, so we can learn to have wisdom, and truth, and understanding. And God is going to make it all work out for good in the long run. So you need to have faith and trust God, and look to Him, believe His word, and it will work out. And then when you come through the trial and you have 20/20 hindsight to look back, you will see why.

Now continuing, he says: "Be sober! Be vigilant! For your adversary *the* devil is prowling about as a roaring lion, seeking anyone he may devour." And that's part of the reason we go through the tests that we have. Satan wants to come and get us. Now here's what we need to do: "Whom resist, steadfast in the faith..." You can't overcome Satan with human devices. You can only overcome him in the name of Jesus Christ and by the faith of God, and by the things that God has given you. You can't overcome him any other way. "...Knowing *that* the same afflictions are being fulfilled among your brethren who *are* in *the* world. Now may the God of all grace [and understand this], Who has called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after *you* have suffered a little while, Himself perfect you, establish, strengthen, *and* settle *you*. To Him *be* the glory and the power into the ages of eternity, Amen" (verses 8-11, *FV*).

So God is going to see you through it. So if you're going through many things as we have covered here in Ecclesiastes 3, and see what is happening, remember that God is going to see you through it. This is tremendous for us to realize. And here is the lesson. Now let's come back to Ecclesiastes 3, and let's pick it up here in verse 11, because there's an awful lot for us to learn and to understand here in the book of Ecclesiastes. Now obviously we're not going to be able to have the time to go through every verse in Ecclesiastes. So we will leave that up to you after we cover the important sections here. Verse 11: "He hath made every *thing* beautiful in his time: also He hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. I know that *there is* no good in them [that is, in the things in the world; of themselves there is no good in them], but for *a man* to rejoice, and to do good in his life." So he did learn some things, didn't he? Yes he did. "And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it *is* the gift of God" (Eccl. 3:11-13).

Now during the Feast of Tabernacles this is what we should do. And also in eating and drinking and going out with the brethren, why don't we make it a goal of some of the things that we can do, let's go out with those that we haven't had a chance to be with. Let's take some of the widows and some of those who are by themselves, the widows and widowers, and share the Feast with them. And if you just get with only those you've always gotten with every year, then why don't you make a concerted effort and say, "Well, we've been together every time, and we know each other and love each other. Let's go ahead and take the challenge, and let's go out with someone that we haven't

been with. Let's fellowship with some of those that we haven't fellowshiped with before, and let's make the Feast a good occasion," instead of something like we have here with Ecclesiastes. Because that's a gift of God.

Now verse 14: "[And] I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever [So he still had some wisdom didn't he?]: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it..." So that's interesting, isn't it? Especially with the Word of God. No one can add to it, and no one can take from it. Now they can attempt to do it, but it will fail. "...And God doeth *it*, that *men* should fear before Him. That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past." So in other words, through all ages God's judgment is there. "And moreover I saw under the sun of the place of judgment, *that* wickedness *was* there..." (verses 14-16). So don't be surprised when you see in judges in this world that wickedness is there. They're carnal, they're human beings, and they operate according to their ideology. Or maybe they end up like the sons of Samuel. Samuel, one of the greatest judges that God never gave - a priest, a judge, and a ruler over Israel both. And what did his sons do? They turned aside and took bribes. And it got so bad that the children of Israel came to Samuel and said, "Look, your sons are not walking in the way that you are walking." And he had set them as judges. There was wickedness that was in their hands by taking bribes and so forth. So the children of Israel came to Samuel and said, "Look, make us a king." Because they saw wickedness in the places of judgment.

Now continuing: "...and the place of righteousness, *that* iniquity *was* there." And know for all of these things God is going to judge, right? Yes. So: "I said in mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for *there is* a time there for every purpose and for every work." Now lots of times in it God gives spaces of repentance. God gives a time of change and returning to God before He executes His judgment. And so we also need to understand that. God will take care of it in the long run. So he says here, "I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts" (verses 16-18). In other words, come to understand the carnality of human nature and how that we're just no better than the animals if we don't have God, and if we don't understand His purpose, and if we don't live by God's way.

So verse 19, now he becomes very philosophical here: "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they all have one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all *is* vanity." Now you can say that is true, minus God. So what a thing to come to this point. See how he's got interwoven in here despair, and vanity, and lust, and greed, and a little bit of wisdom of God, all kind of mixed together here.

Now it says: "All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward..." And of course, we know that returns to God when we die. Because if there is not the spirit of man which is in him, the body is dead. Without the spirit the body is dead, writes James. When we die that goes back to God. The body goes in the grave. The soul that sins, it will die. The soul is not immortal.

It dies. So he is saying here: “Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast, that goeth downward to the earth?” The only lasting thing is what God is doing. “Wherefore I perceive that *there is* nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that *is* his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?” (verses 20-22). Quite a thing, isn’t it? Boy, what an experimentation in life.

Now as we get into Ecclesiastes 4, we’re going to see that many of the Proverbs were a key and take-off from some of the things that he wrote here. So this is still interesting. Because what he does, he gives an overview of life that is so profound and so great. No one has ever given an overview of human life and everything that men go through other than what Solomon has given here. You can read books on philosophy, you can read books on religion, and you can read books on people’s life, and so forth, and you will find that none of them have the wisdom that Solomon has here, and none of them really learned the lessons as thoroughly as Solomon did and wrote them down for us.

Now let’s see what he says here in Ecclesiastes 4:1: “So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of *such as were* oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors *there was* power; but they had no comforter.” Boy, I couldn’t think of anything that describes living under a dictatorship than this. The oppressed - and any dictatorship that you want to look at, whether going all the way back through history and even into our modern times. “Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive” (Eccl. 4:1-2). In other words, if you’re going to live your life under oppression, what good is living under oppression? Just as good as being dead. You’re just having your face ground into the dirt. And it’s also true, if you are oppressed in a church of God, what a shame. You ought to be filled with hope, be uplifted, be encouraged, not be oppressed with fear and damnation. Oh yes, there is the unpardonable sin. Yes, there are going to be those who will commit that. But that is not the vast majority that God has called.

So he says: “Yea, better *is he* than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun” (verse 3). In other words, if there can be someone who has innocence in life and experience, that can be also a great blessing and a great joy. Because they haven’t gone out and destroyed their lives trying to experiment and do this and that and the other thing. Just ask those who have experimented with drugs. Ask those who have experimented with sex. Ask those who have been addicted to alcohol, or addicted to gambling. And gambling right now in what one man calls “this cheating culture” is one of the most profound things that is afflicting this nation today. All the gambling and lying and cheating that goes with it. And that is an oppression, isn’t it? Yes it does. That just wears down and bears down on people. So it’s better to have innocence. It’s better not to be involved in that or suffer in that or become a perpetrator of being oppressive. Because you see what you do to people when you do it.

Now then he changes right here: “Again, I considered all [the] travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour. This *is* also vanity and vexation

of spirit.” So someone is doing right, then his neighbor gets vain and looks at him, “Well, how can he have this and I don’t have this?” That’s vanity and vexation of spirit. Now here’s an observance: “The fool foldeth his hands together, and eateth his own flesh” (verses 4-5). Now that doesn’t mean that he is a cannibal. That means he just lets his life waste away. And he devours his substance and he becomes nothing. Now you go through and study all the Proverbs about the fool, where “a little folding of the hands, a little sleep,” where your poverty will come upon you, and so forth. So this is a takeoff on what Solomon wrote for many of the Proverbs there.

Verse 6: “Better *is* an handful *with* quietness, than both the hands full *with* travail and vexation of spirit.” You’ve heard it said, “Make your life simple.” That’s what this is talking about here. And so we all need to make our lives as simple as we can. And I think one of the best ways to make your life simple is to get out of debt as much as you can, because if you are oppressed by debt you are really weighted down and it is difficult indeed. Now he changes the subject again. He talks about those who are alone: “Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun. There is one *alone*, and *there is* not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother...” And that’s a difficult thing. Now if someone is alone and you see they are alone, go help them. Go cheer them up. Go share with them. Have a good time with them, especially during the Feast. He says in verse 9: “Two *are* better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour” (verses 6-9). And then it shows how they can help and support each other.

Verse 13, and here’s a proverb against himself. And this is really amazing that he would write it and come to the end that he came to. You know, sometimes we just need to step back and you think about how you judge other people. Because we’re always judging people one way or the other, don’t we? We see them, we make a judgment. We have something in our minds. Now do this: the judgment that you judge someone else concerning, why don’t you judge back to yourself? Now Solomon didn’t do this. Now verse 13: “Better *is* a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished.” That’s exactly what happened to Solomon. He would no longer be admonished. His son would not be admonished. And so there it is. “Better *is* a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished.” Now there’s another thing to learn: if there is something that someone brings to you that needs to be corrected, listen. Make whatever changes need to be made. That’s what it means being subject one to another. We can all help each other that way. So there is a great lesson.

Now let’s come to chapter 5. Here he gives some really good advice: “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil” (Ecclesiastes 5:1). Now what does God say about the sacrifice of fools? Now let’s come to Isaiah 66. Here is something that is true, and how we need to live our lives, and how God views things. And Isaiah is writing much about what Solomon wrote here.

Here’s what God looks to. Let’s understand our relationship with God, verse 1: “Thus saith the LORD, The heaven *is* My throne, and the earth *is* My footstool: where *is* the house that ye build unto Me?” And didn’t Solomon build the house for God? Yes he

did. "...And where *is* the place of My rest?" He gave rest to Solomon, didn't He? Gave rest to David, didn't He? So God says, "Where is My rest?" He says, if you build a house for Me, "For all those *things* hath Mine hand made..." (Isa. 66:1-2). See, God has already made it. What can you do for God that He hasn't already done for you, and more? So we need to keep that in perspective. In other words, none of us should ever feel that we are a gift to God; that we are so great, that we are so important that God has got to recognize us. That's what it says – consider yourself when you go into the house of God, than to offer the sacrifice of fools.

So God says: "...and all those *things* have been, saith the LORD: but to this [one] *man* will I look, *even to him that is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word" (verse 2). Not the one who is high and arrogant, but the one who is of poor and contrite spirit, humble before God. Now if you offer the sacrifice of fools – and many have done this, haven't they? This reminds me of "The 700 Club," where they have this big rally, and people send in so much to have their names read off by Pat Robertson. See, they have had their reward.

Now God says of that kind of thing, you offer the sacrifice of fools, verse 3: "He that killeth an ox *is as if* he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, *as if* he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, *as if* he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, *as if* he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before Mine eyes, and chose *that* in which I delighted not" (verses 3-4). That is the sacrifice of fools. And you will see that all of the professing Christianity of this world is going to come to this point. Just because some of them preach some of the words of God, don't think that they are from God. The words are from God, but they are not from God. Because if they don't keep the commandments of God, God never sent them. But even God said of the false prophets, that if they would make His people stand by His word (in other words, teach His word) then God would honor that. But sooner or later this is going to come upon them. And this is the judgment which shall be.

Now let's come back to Ecclesiastes 5. Let's continue on. There are a lot of things that we can learn here, Ecclesiastes 5:2: "Be not rash with thy mouth..." Very good advice! The one who can tame his tongue and tame his mouth really, as James said, is a perfect man. "...And let not thine heart be hasty to utter *any* thing before God..." Be careful what you say to God. Don't make a judgment to God because He may make that judgment upon you. "...For God *is* in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few." Good advice. Don't get carried away with all of the things that you can do.

Let's come down here to verse 18. You can read the rest. The parts that we don't read, you go ahead and read and add that to part of your Bible study during the Feast of Tabernacles. "Behold *that* which I have seen: *it is* good and comely *for one* to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it *is* his portion. Every man also to whom God hath

given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this *is* the gift of God” (verses 18-19). So think of that in this generation. Think of that in this nation, how God has given so very, very much to us and God is going to require much from us. Remember what Jesus said: “To whom much is given, much shall be required.” And God requires an awful lot of us, especially those of us who have the understanding of the Word of God.

Now let’s look at some things in chapter 6, and you will see that certain parts of the rest of the book of Ecclesiastes are kind of a repeat of some of the things in the first chapters. So we won’t go through every one of them. Ecclesiastes 6:1: “There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it *is* common among men: a man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this *is* vanity, and it *is* an evil disease” (Eccl. 6:1-2). In other words, he is saying here that if God gives all this wealth and all this power, and so forth, and it’s taken from you and a stranger eats it, then boy, it’s going to be something.

Let’s come over here to chapter 9. Now you can fill in the rest there as we go along. Ecclesiastes 9:1: “For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, *are* in the hand of God...” That’s what we need to remember. Whether we live, as Paul says, or whether we die, we belong to Christ. Then it also says here, it’s very important for us to understand, it says here in verse 5: “For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten” (Ecclesiastes 9:1, 5), except by God, Who will resurrect them.

Now then, he gives some advice of living joyfully with the wife of your youth. Then he talks in chapter 10 about much slothfulness. Now let’s come to chapter 11 and 12, and in this survey we will finish the survey for the book of Ecclesiastes. Here’s a great principle: “Cast thy bread upon the waters...” That’s all a part of preaching the gospel as well. “...For thou shalt find it after many days.” That is, if you do it right and do it according to the way of God. Now let’s come down here to verse 9. Very important thing. This is directed to those who are young: “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these *things* God will bring thee into judgment,” especially if you know the way of God. “Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth *are* [also] vanity” (Eccl. 11:1, 9-10).

Now he says in Ecclesiastes 12:1, very important: “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth...” Don’t wait till you get old like us. “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them...” because you’re getting old; you’re wearing out; your bones are becoming creaky, and your joints are stiff, and your eyes are dull of seeing, and your ears are hard of hearing, and your teeth have all gone. Of course, today we have false china clippers that we can have for false teeth. They didn’t have that back

then. Now he also says: “While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened [that is, you still have your sight, and your youth, and so forth], nor the clouds return after the rain: in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves [down]...” All of those of your associates, “...And the grinders cease because they are few...” In other words, you’re going to get old and someone is going to take care of you, and your old “grinders,” or teeth, are going to wear down, “...and those that look out of the windows be darkened...” In other words, they’re not going to be able to see far off. “And the doors shall be shut in the streets [can’t go out any longer], when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low...” (Eccl. 12:1-4), and so forth.

Then it talks about take care of your life before it really gets out of hand, because, he says, verse 7: “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God Who gave it. Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all *is* vanity” (verses 7-8). So we end up where we began. And the whole story is this: without God, without the Spirit of God, without the commandments of God, without the purpose of God, life is vain and empty and worthless. But with the Word of God, and the Spirit of God, it becomes great.

So he says: “And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, *and* set in order many proverbs.” So after this, all this experimentation, he wrote many, many proverbs. “The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and *that which was* written *was* upright, *even* words of truth. The words of the wise *are* as goads, and as nails fastened *by* the masters of assemblies, *which* are given from one shepherd. And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books *there is* no end; and [with] much study *is* a weariness of the flesh.” True. Then he gives the conclusion. So we’ll end with his conclusion, because it’s the most fitting of all: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter [everything that has been discussed here in the book of Ecclesiastes]: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this *is* the whole ... of man” (verses 9-13). Now it reads in the King James, “the whole *duty*,” but “duty” is in italics. And it’s not a duty; it’s the whole of man. That’s why He created us.

And then he gives one final warning: “For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil” (verse 14). So those are the lessons of the book of Ecclesiastes which Ezra commanded to be read during the Feast of Tabernacles.

(End Tape)

Tabernacles – Day 4 – 2004	
Scriptural References	
1) Proverbs 28:26, 13-14, 18	10) Romans 8:28
2) Psalm 14:1	11) I Peter 5:5-6, 8-11
3) Ecclesiastes 2:1-26	12) Ecclesiastes 4:1-9, 13
4) Ecclesiastes 1:9	13) Ecclesiastes 5:1-2, 18-19
5) Ecclesiastes 12:13	14) Isaiah 66:1-4
6) John 6:63	15) Ecclesiastes 6:1-2
7) I Kings 12:4, 6-11, 13-15	16) Ecclesiastes 9:1, 5
8) I John 2:15-17	17) Ecclesiastes 11:1, 9-10
9) Ecclesiastes 3:1-22	18) Ecclesiastes 12:1-4, 7-14

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