

**Study of Ecclesiastes: Chapter 2**  
**Questions for Discussion**

1. In the Koheleth's experiment, what sort of things did he explore and accumulate? What was the purpose of his experiment? (vv. 1-10; 1 Kings 10:14-29)
  
2. What guided his heart during the course of his experiment? How is this possible, and why is it important? (vv. 3 & 9)
  
3. What was his reaction to all he had explored and accumulated? (vv. 1-2 & 10-11)
  
4. In what ways do we "test" ourselves with "pleasure" or worldly things? What are we hoping to find? What is the result of those "tests?" How do we overcome the need for those types of "tests?"
  
5. What is the significance of the statement regarding the one who would come after the king? (v. 12)
  
6. Explain wisdom's advantage over folly. Does the fact that both will suffer the same fate nullify the importance of wisdom? Why? (v. 12-16)
  
7. What caused the Koheleth to hate his labor? What perspective can cause someone to feel this way? (vv. 18-23; Matt 6:19-21)
  
8. If our happiness and contentment are dependent upon the things of this world, what will our life be like?
  
9. What is the key to finding enjoyment in this life? Does man have this capability within himself? (vv. 24-26)

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#### Notes & Answers

#### **Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity. <sup>2</sup> I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?" <sup>3</sup> I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine—my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life. <sup>4</sup> I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. <sup>5</sup> I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. <sup>6</sup> I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. <sup>7</sup> I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. <sup>8</sup> I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the children of man. <sup>9</sup> So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. <sup>10</sup> And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. <sup>11</sup> Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

#### **1. In the Koheleth's experiment, what sort of things did he explore and accumulate? What was the purpose of his experiment? (vv. 1-10; 1 Kings 10:14-29)**

- Wine
- Great works (houses, vineyards, gardens, parks, fruit trees, pools)
- Male & female slaves
- Herds & flocks
- Silver & gold, treasure of kings & provinces
- Singers
- Concubines
- Whatever my eyes desired

#### **1 Kings 10:14-29 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold, <sup>15</sup> besides that which came from the explorers and from the business of the merchants, and from all the kings of the west and from the governors of the land. <sup>16</sup> King Solomon made 200 large shields of beaten gold; 600 shekels of gold went into each shield. <sup>17</sup> And he made 300 shields of beaten gold; three minas of gold went into each shield. And the king put them in the House of the Forest of Lebanon. <sup>18</sup> The king also made a great ivory throne and overlaid it with the finest gold. <sup>19</sup> The throne had six steps, and at the back of the throne was a calf's head, and on each side of the seat were armrests and two lions standing beside the armrests, <sup>20</sup> while twelve lions stood there, one on each end of a step on the six steps. The like of it was never made in any kingdom. <sup>21</sup> All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold. None were of silver; silver was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon. <sup>22</sup> For the king had a fleet of ships of Tarshish at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the fleet of ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks. <sup>23</sup> Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. <sup>24</sup> And the whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind. <sup>25</sup> Every one of them brought his present, articles of silver and gold, garments, myrrh, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year. <sup>26</sup> And Solomon gathered together chariots and

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horsemen. He had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, whom he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. <sup>27</sup> And the king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stone, and he made cedar as plentiful as the sycamore of the Shephelah. <sup>28</sup> And Solomon's import of horses was from Egypt and Kue, and the king's traders received them from Kue at a price. <sup>29</sup> A chariot could be imported from Egypt for 600 shekels of silver and a horse for 150, and so through the king's traders they were exported to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria.

*The purpose of the experiment was to "enjoy" himself? The Koheleth was searching for enjoyment, contentment, fulfillment, success, etc in the things "under the sun."*

#### **2. What guided his heart during the course of his experiment? How is this possible, and why is it important? (vv. 3 & 9)**

Throughout his experiment, he was guided by wisdom. This means that he was aware of the workings and the results of his experiment. However, this was wisdom "under the sun."

#### **3. What was his reaction to all he had explored and accumulated? (vv. 1-2 & 10-11)**

##### **Ecclesiastes 2:1-2 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity. <sup>2</sup> I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?"

##### **Ecclesiastes 2:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

#### **4. In what ways do we "test" ourselves with "pleasure" or worldly things? What are we hoping to find? What is the result of those "tests?" How do we overcome the need for those types of "tests?"**

Anytime we play the "I'll be happy when..." game. It always leads to looking elsewhere for happiness.

##### **Ecclesiastes 2:12-17 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly. For what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done. <sup>13</sup> Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness. <sup>14</sup> The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them. <sup>15</sup> Then I said in my heart, "What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?" And I said in my heart that this also is vanity. <sup>16</sup> For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool! <sup>17</sup> So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind.

#### **5. What is the significance of the statement regarding the one who would come after the king? (v. 12)**

Solomon could have been considering his own son, Rehoboam. He could have been thinking that any successor would be doomed to repeat the same things he had done. He could have been worried about his son would do with the empire he had built. All of the worldly concerns "under the sun."

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#### **6. Explain wisdom's advantage over folly. Does the fact that both will suffer the same fate nullify the importance of wisdom? Why? (v. 12-16)**

Wisdom and Folly will both suffer the same fate "under the sun" – however the wise walk with "eyes in their head" and could possibly find the one thing that is truly important – the fear of God.

#### **Ecclesiastes 2:18-23 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, <sup>19</sup> and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. <sup>20</sup> So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun, <sup>21</sup> because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. <sup>22</sup> What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? <sup>23</sup> For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity.

#### **7. What caused the Koheleth to hate his labor? What perspective can cause someone to feel this way? (vv. 18-23; Matt 6:19-21)**

- Must leave the fruit of that toil to someone else
- Don't know if the successor will be wise or a fool
- Successor did not work for it

Put true value in the things of this life "under the sun"

#### **Matthew 6:19-21 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

#### **8. If our happiness and contentment are dependent upon the things of this world, what will our life be like?**

*See answer to #4*

#### **Ecclesiastes 2:24–26 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, <sup>25</sup> for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? <sup>26</sup> For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

#### **9. What is the key to finding enjoyment in this life? Does man have this capability within himself? (vv. 24-26)**

Must put our treasure in Heaven....Above the Sun. The Koheleth temporarily takes a glance above the sun and sees that the ability to enjoy our toil under the sun is a gift from God.