

VANITY VERSUS AN ABUNDANT LIFE IN CHRIST, PT. 5 (ECCLESIASTES 5:1-2)

Last week, as we continued our look at the book of Ecclesiastes, written presumably by King Solomon, I had said that I consider to be a primary takeaway from Ecclesiastes, is that God gave Solomon the keys to the kingdom on earth, circumstantially speaking, as God did not seem to restrain Solomon from getting whatever he pursued, as Solomon is said to have "surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom" (**1 Kings 10:23**). Also, God had said to Solomon, "I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you." (**1 Kings 3:12**) It is in that testimony of God's Word, that the words of Solomon should be carefully considered. We have the book of Proverbs that can guide us in the wisdom from God, of which most of Proverbs are the collections of wisdom from Solomon, and we also then have the book of Ecclesiastes which is believed to be an autobiography by Solomon, of which Solomon right away says in **Ecclesiastes 1:2**, "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher; "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." There are two noticeable, distinguishing concepts that are developed in Ecclesiastes of what is called "types of Christ", but as we can also clearly see, they are far inferior to Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God.

1. Solomon refers to himself as the "Preacher", which is the Hebrew word "qoheleth", and the Greek equivalent is "Ecclesiastes". Qoheleth means a gatherer/collector/assembler, of which Solomon did of wisdom, and riches and women. The only one of those three that Solomon concluded was worth anything was the wisdom, as he said, "Then I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness." (**Ecclesiastes 2:13-14**) Contrary to the "qoheleth" of the earthly things, is Christ Jesus as THE Qoheleth of the kingdom of heaven. An example is when Jesus lamented, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (**Matthew 23:37**) Those chicks, that Jesus was referring to are the qahal which is the root of the word qoheleth which means assembly. So we have Solomon the qoheleth who gathered wisdom and riches and women and Jesus THE Qoheleth gathering the qahal of His people into the kingdom of heaven. The culmination and climax to that is, in the words Jesus Himself, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (**Matthew 24:29-31**) What a day that will be!

2. Solomon, being given the keys to the kingdom on earth, so to speak, yet once again, contrary to that, or what can be described as a faint image of what was/is to come, Jesus asked His disciples who they thought He was, and "Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. [Likewise, Jesus said to Thomas, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:29) Back to Jesus speaking to Peter:] "And I also say to you that you are Peter [petros: a rock or a piece of a rock], and on this Rock [petra: a massive Rock] I will build My church, and the gates of Hades [A "not" and eido, "seen"] shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ. (Matthew 16:16-20; primarily so that the people at that time would not try to make him a king, and also so that the rulers at that time would not try to destroy Him before His time)

With the following Scriptures we have a slight mixing of metaphors, which are merely illustrations to give us understanding to what Jesus was saying. In **1 Corinthians 3:11**, the Apostle Paul said, "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Yet the Apostle Paul also said, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." (**Ephesians 2:19-21**) Now Jesus, brought those metaphors together in agreement by saying, in **Luke 6:47-49**, "Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and **DOES THEM**, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the Rock [Petra]. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the Rock. But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation, against which the stream beat vehemently; and immediately it fell. And the ruin of that house was great." While metaphors have their place, one's understanding can get lost in the metaphors or illustrations. As is the case with the digging deep and laying our foundation on the Rock, it is God who is leading us TO dig deep and lay our foundation, which is actually the Word that Jesus gave His apostles. And that foundation is on THE ROCK!

So, while then, Christ Jesus alone is the Rock, another point I am intending to make is with Jesus saying **"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven"**, which can be said to be antithetical (diametrically opposed) to having the keys to the kingdom on earth, that Solomon concluded in his assessment by saying "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher; "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." To quote Job, in his time of suffering and loss, he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised." (**Job 1:21**) But what are the keys of the kingdom of heaven? It can be found in Jesus' I AM statements in the book of John. Jesus said **"I AM the Bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."** (**John 6:35**) Jesus also said, **"I AM the Light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."** (**John 8:12**) Conversely, in **Matthew 8:12**, Jesus said **"But the sons of the kingdom [of this world] will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."** Jesus also said, **"Most assuredly, I say to you, I AM the Door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I AM the Door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."** (**John 10:7-10**) Immediately after that Jesus said, **"I AM the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep. I AM the Good Shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one Shepherd."** (**John 10:11-16**) There's More!

Jesus said Martha, **"Your brother [Lazarus] will rise again."** Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, **"I AM the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"** She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." (**John 11:23-27**) Next we have the apostle Thomas saying to Jesus, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, **"I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."** (**John 14:5-6**) Then also, Jesus said, **"I AM the True Vine, and My Father is the Vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away [or lifts up]; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You**

are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the Vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. **I AM the Vine**, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit [abides=meno: abide, continue, dwell, endure, remain]; for **without Me you can do nothing**. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned." (John 15:1-6)

I would have loved to be there to hear Peter say to Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" and to hear Martha say, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." As a believer in Christ Jesus, as a child of God, what a beautiful thing to hear, the confession and testimony of others as Jesus being the Christ, the Son of God! Again, Jesus said, **"I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."** What is He talking about? I believe it is tied in to what Jesus was saying in **John 15** about abiding in Christ and bearing fruit which is intrinsically tied in to what we call the Great Commission, that Jesus gave His apostles, and then to us, and in what Jesus said was the Great Commandments of God, to where we come up with the phrase that we are sharing and showing the love and the gospel of Christ Jesus. The Great Commission being, Jesus saying, **"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples** [to follow Him] **of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you;** and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

Now Jesus said, **"If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper** [parakletos: para-beside, kletos-makes a call (the perfect lawyer); intercessor, consoler, advocate, comforter], **that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you."** (John 14:15-18) Right after that, Jesus says, **"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."** Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered and said to him, **"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me."**

(John 14:21-24) Then later, as Jesus told His disciples that His time had come, He assured them "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

His Word/commandments are summed in what Jesus said is the Great Commandments of God, to love Him with all of our heart, soul, strength and mind and to also love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:30-31). Jesus was actually referring to the book of Deuteronomy (6:5, 10:19) to love God with all that is in us and to also love the stranger. But we are not just following the letter of the law, in legalism, we are following Christ in Communion/Fellowship with Him! It is the Greek word "koinonia": fellowship, sharing, contribution, participation. 1 John 1:6-7 says, "If we say that we have fellowship [koinonia] with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light [as He IS the Light], we have fellowship [koinonia] with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." In that fellowship that we have in Christ we then are bearing the fruit of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace, patience [longsuffering], kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." (Galatians 5:22-25) That is what we are loosing or binding on earth as it is in heaven. As we are promised, as the Apostle Paul says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58) Also, as God promises, "So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." (Isaiah 55:11) "Indeed the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the world: "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Surely your salvation is coming; Behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.' " (Isaiah 62:11) "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Romans 8:16-18) Also, Paul told Timothy, "If we endure, We shall also reign with Him." (2 Timothy 2:12) Then also, we are reminded that, "whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ." (Colossians 3:23-24) REWARD=JESUS! QOHELETH=JESUS! KEYS=JESUS!

=====

[Ecclesiastes 5:1-2 (Fear God, Keep Your Vows)]

Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil. Do not be rash with your mouth, And let not your heart

utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; Therefore let your words be few.

=====

[Meaning He reigns over us! Yet God is not JUST in heaven and we don't JUST consider what we say when we are in church. As Solomon's father David said, "O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it." (**Psalms 139:1-6**) I'm not sure as to what provoked Solomon to say what he did, perhaps he heard many a person coming to or leaving the temple pontificating on what was a bunch of nonsense. Yet Solomon in pursuing knowledge, wisdom, and understanding was always watching what was going on in his kingdom. In **Proverbs 7**, Solomon speaks of witnessing those who passed by the harlots and were ensnared by their enticements. In **Proverbs 24**, Solomon mentions witnessing the "field of the lazy man" that was overrun with weeds and thorns. He also witnessed the two women who claimed to be the mother of the one child, meaning one mother was willing to steal the other mother's child. Then, in **Proverbs 6:12-15**, Solomon says "A worthless person, a wicked man, walks with a perverse mouth; he winks with his eyes, he shuffles his feet, he points with his fingers; perversity is in his heart, he devises evil continually, **he sows discord**. Therefore his calamity shall come suddenly; suddenly he shall be broken without remedy." That is the exact opposite of what God is presently doing, as He is bringing His people into the unity of the faith in Christ, as Paul said, "till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (**Ephesians 4:13**) as God is presently building His eternal kingdom. We are expected to be edifying (oikodome: building up) one another in Christ. "Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another." (**Romans 14:19**)]

Now Jesus said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man." (**Mark 7:18-23**) Not only do those thoughts abide within the heart of that said person, it becomes that person, all those things that Jesus mentioned. But we are given the perfect example to follow. "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our

sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” (1 Peter 2:21-25) It becomes, in the heat of the moment, what is more important to you, your pride or your testimony.]

Solomon had summarized his message in Ecclesiastes by saying, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether **GOOD** or evil.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14) Solomon also tells us in **Proverbs 8:13**, “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.” **Proverbs 1:7**, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” **Proverbs 9:10**, “**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom**, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” As we have been given the revelation of Christ Jesus and that the love of God has been demonstrated to us through Christ and therefore also knowing that God IS Love, the “fear of the Lord” is JUST the beginning of wisdom. The Apostle John gives us that Word saying, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” (1 John 4:18) “to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” as Jesus is our All in all! There is “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher; “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity”, to where one is pursuing the “grasping of the wind” as Solomon said, or there is **Romans 12:1-2**, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Then at the end of that chapter Paul says, “Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of **all men**. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with **all men**. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” (**Romans 12:17-21**)