

# ESCAPING THE GREAT DECEPTION

Ecclesiastes 2:1-26



## HAPPINESS?

- ◆ It's Desire
- ◆ It's Deception
- ◆ It's Discovery

*“When I surveyed all that my hands had done and had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.” (v. 11)*

Bill Kirk

# “ESCAPING THE GREAT DECEPTION”

Text: Ecclesiastes 2:1-26 (v. 11) *“When I surveyed all that my hands had toiled for...nothing was gained under the sun.”*

Subject: How to Escape the Great Deception

## Introduction

- Solomon was the wisest and wealthiest man of his day.
- He had the resources to do anything he desired.
- He looks at life and death, time and events and what true success is and isn't.

Question: What is success? Who are the successful in this generation?

Sandra Bullock, Lindsay Lohan, Britney Spears, Paris Hilton, Madonna, Charlie Sheen, Tiger Woods, Warren Buffet, Mel Gibson, Bill Gates, A-Rod, Steve Jobs, Tom Brady, Lady Gaga, Oprah?

- Every year students are committing suicide on college campuses, because of pressure to succeed!

Question: What does Solomon discover when he surveys his seemingly successful life?

Answer: He discovers one central truth (what is it?) It is this:

- Enjoyment in life (without God) is only entertainment (not enrichment) and you cannot live on entertainment and be happy! (Repeat)

Question: How does Solomon make this discovery?

Question: What opens his eyes to all the reality shows on TV?

Question: How does he come to the right conclusion?

Question: And what difference does it all make in your life in light of eternity?

(From our text)

“Three discoveries to escape the Great Deception”  
(And enjoy your life to the fullest).

## Discovery #1: Everybody is born with a desire to be happy!

Question: What is Ecclesiastes all about?

Answer: It's about King Solomon on a long trip to find happiness in life.

Question: How does Solomon pursue happiness?

Answer: He travels down different roads and highways searching. (What highways?)

### 1. Laughter Lane (v. 2)

*“I said of laughter, it is mad; and of mirth, what does this pleasure accomplish?”*

- ♦ Solomon's desire leads him to surround himself with happy people (He says)
  - “If I can just hear a lot of jokes and funny people, I'll be happy.”
  - “If comedy central is on 24 hours a day, I'll be okay.”

Question: What does Solomon discover?

**Answer:** The jokes and comedians grew stale and didn't satisfy.

- ◆ They distracted for a moment – but had no power to satisfy inwardly.
- ◆ They came up short and couldn't help over the “happenings” in life. (Why not?)
- ◆ Because the “joy of the Lord” is an inner contentment built upon a living relationship and walk with God.

(Laughter Lane doesn't work – so Solomon tries...)

## 2. **Alcohol Avenue (v. 3)**

*“I sought to cheer myself with wine.”*

- ◆ Solomon pulls out the bottle for happiness.

**Question:** What's he discover?

**Answer:** He ends up with an empty bottle and an empty life. (How come?)

- ◆ The same pressures that were there before he dulled his mind – were there after the affects wore off.
- ◆ In fact – intoxicated people are deceived and commit foolish, wicked, destructive and deadly acts

## 3. **Workaholic Highway (v. 4)**

*“I undertook great projects and built houses and planted vineyards and trees and parks and gardens.”*

- ◆ These were no backyard vegetable gardens, but palaces and National Park adventures.

**Question:** How did Solomon try to fill his emptiness?

**Answer:** He became a work-a-holic!

- ◆ Yet great construction and architectural projects just couldn't satisfy (and make him happy).

## 4. **Entertainment Expressway (v. 7,8)**

*“I bought lots of slaves, cattle and amassed silver and gold for myself.”*

*“I acquired men and women singers to entertain me.”*

- ◆ This is no small “American Idol” show.
- ◆ Solomon became the “party animal” of his generation (with wine, women, song, dance and sexual excitements available 24/7).
- ◆ 700 wives and 300 others on the side.

**Question:** What's all this a picture of?

**Question:** What is God saying in all of this?

**Question:** Why is this wisdom (in the Word) in your hands?

**Answer:** To show us that everybody has an inward desire to be happy!

## **What's Discovery #2? Everybody can find out what real happiness is and isn't!**

**Question:** What did Solomon's travels on “Pleasure Parkway” bring him? (Notice this...)

- ◆ (v. 9) *“I became greater than anyone else in Jerusalem.”*
- ◆ (v. 10) *“I denied myself nothing my eyes desired and I refused my heart no pleasure.”*

(And then the discovery comes.)

- ◆ (v. 11) ***“Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and had toiled to achieve,  
(Listen to this)  
...everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.”***

**Question:** What is Solomon’s discovery and God’s revelation to us? (It’s simple)

**Answer:** After every party – the wine, women and song left him empty, unfulfilled and frustrated.

**Question:** Why is Solomon frustrated?

**Answer:** (v. 11) *“Nothing was gained under the sun.”*

In other words,

- ◆ *“If it felt good, I did it.” “If I saw it, I bought it.” “If it impressed people, I made it.”*

**Question:** But why is Solomon so frustrated?

**Answer:** He realizes the disconnect between life on earth and life to come.

(v. 11) *“Nothing was gained under the sun.”*

(v. 16) *“In days to come, everybody dies.”*

(v. 17) *“I hate my life because it’s all under the sun.”*

(v. 18) *“I’m leaving it all to those who follow me.”*

(v. 22, 23) *“I work so hard yet can’t even sleep at night.”*

**Question:** What does Solomon discover after so many years?

**Answer:** He discovers what God wants us all to discover. (What is it?)

1. We all have eternity in our hearts (made in the image of God).
2. We all were created to have fellowship with God (and without that we are empty).
3. We all will live with one of two world views:

- ◆ We live with an **“under the sun”** world view (which Solomon tries).
- ◆ Or, we live in a **“relationship with God”** world view.

In other words,

- ◆ Solomon represents the person away from the Lord.
- ◆ He seeks to find purpose and fulfillment and happiness through resources in this life.
- ◆ He finally cries out **“Meaningless, meaningless, utterly meaningless!”**

(And God reveals the second world view)

- ◆ In v. 25 - *“For without God, who can eat or find enjoyment?”*
- ◆ In v. 26 - *“For only God can give wisdom and joy, but the sinner gets travail and then leaves it all behind.”*

**Question:** What is God saying here?

**Answer:** It’s unmistakable:

1. If you live for what's under the sun without God, you lose in this life and the life to come, but...
2. If you live for God's purpose, you get to enjoy this life and life eternally.

In other words,

- ◆ If you try to live now without God, you lose now and you lose later! (But)
- ◆ If you live in relationship with God, you win now and you win later!

(You won't see this...)

- ◆ On Desperate Housewives or Two And A Half Men or Jersey Shore!

(Why not?)

- ◆ Because sin deceives the mind to live disconnected from God and without God everything is meaningless!

### **What's Discovery #3? Everybody here is responsible for the joy of their own journey!**

**Question:** Why are some people happy and others are not?

**Question:** How is it possible to enjoy life under the sun while preparing for life above the sun?

(Ecc 2:26)

*"To the man or woman who pleases God, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness; but to the sinner He watches them gather and gather and leave it all behind."*

**Question:** Who gets wisdom and joy? (v. 26)

**Answer:** "The man or woman who pleases God."

**Question:** How do you please God?

#1. A group asked Jesus this and Jesus said:

*"The work of God is this; to believe in the one He has sent."*

(In other words)

- ◆ The only means for a "**sinner**" to please God is to receive His Son and put **faith** in the gospel for salvation.

And

- ◆ The only way for a "**Christian**" to please God is **obedience** to the Word after faith is exercised.

#1. For the sinner, it's **repentance**.

#2. For the Christian, it's **obedience**.

### **(My wisdom discoveries from Ecclesiastes 2)**

1. To live under the sun (or only for the immediate) is to destroy your purpose for existence.
2. To live without God is to invite many idols to fill a void that only God can fill.

3. To aspire for only what's under the sun will produce a hamster on the wheel that is never satisfied.
4. To ignore the consequences of choices is to be deceived by sin's illusion and false promises.

*"To the man or woman **who pleases God**, God gives wisdom and joy."* (v. 26)  
(or)

◆ Obedience results in the joy of a clear conscience!

### **So let's be honest**

1. Are you pleasing God in your thought life? (TV, videos, movies, internet pornography)
2. Are you pleasing God in your priorities (is your prayer life okay, word life okay?)
3. Are you angry at anyone because they hurt you (and you need to forgive them?)
4. Are you allowing alcohol to destroy your brain cells and nicotine to steal oxygen from your blood stream?
5. Are you robbing God of His rightful place in your finances?
6. Are you critical towards your pastor, church leaders or anyone else?
7. Are you pleasing God in your humility (and willing to say "I'm sorry", "I was wrong", "Please forgive me"?)
8. Are you pleasing God in your pursuit of His glory in your home, on the job, in your relationships?
9. Are you asking God to fill you with the Holy Spirit on a daily basis?
10. Are you causing anybody to stumble because of inconsistency in your lifestyle?
11. Are you pleasing God in your hunger and thirst for deeper intimacy, clear direction and fresh anointing?
12. Do you care about lost people who are living only for what's under the sun?
13. Are you willing to take intentional steps today, so that God can change what needs to be changed?

### **Illustration**

◆ Car out of alignment vs. car in alignment!

Amen  
Bill Kirk