

in Solomon's day? (Discuss in the light that he lives in a similar world where corruption is so prevalent?)

E. ADMONITIONS CONCERNING THE FUTILITY OF RICHES 5:10—6:12

1. Riches by themselves are vain. 5:10-20

a. They do not satisfy. 5:10-12

TEXT 5:10-12

- 10 He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity.
- 11 When good things increase, those who consume them increase. So what is the advantage to their owners except to look on?
- 12 The sleep of the working man is pleasant, whether he eats little or much. But the full stomach of the rich man does not allow him to sleep.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 5:10-12

- 131. What attitude toward money will keep one from being satisfied with it?
- 132. What is identified as vanity?
- 133. What else must be increased when one increases his possessions?
- 134. What advantage does the poor man have over the rich man?

PARAPHRASE 5:10-12

If the love for money becomes one's objective in life, money will never satisfy. He will never have enough to cause him to say, "I am content." His profits will always be looked upon as insufficient regardless of how great they are. This is but another illustration of vanity. What profit is there in accumulating riches? The more you collect and gather, the more people are required to care for them. You then have the added responsibility of providing for all these people. Your necessities of life are provided by only a fraction of what you possess, and all you can do with the excess is look upon it with your eyes. Observe a single example: One who labors and eats little or much finds that he is not incumbered with worry. His rest is profitable and his sleep is sweet. But the price one pays for being satiated is sleepless, restless nights.

COMMENT 5:10-12

Note the absence of such statements as "I turned to consider," and "I looked again." The reason is that Solomon is not turning to a new subject or even a different illustration of the same subject. He is returning to the vanity of all things as it is demonstrated through love for money and possessions. He has discussed this before in 2:10-11 and 4:7-8.

This discourse on the futility of riches runs through 6:12. It is lengthy because it is common to all men and it is highly deceptive and dangerous. It also has many sides which need exposed so the reader will not fall prey to any of its insidious nuances. Similarly much is said in the New Testament concerning the principle of Christian stewardship. Jesus offered numerous discourses on the danger of loving the world. His disciples kept the theme alive in their Epistles and instruction to the church. One need not apologize for extended discussion on such an important theme. Jesus said to his disciples on one occasion, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy

to enter the kingdom of God!" (Mark 10:24) It was a "certain rich man" in contrast with a beggar who found himself upon his death to be "in torment." (Read Luke 16:14-31.) Jesus told the story of the rich man and Lazarus after it is recorded that the Pharisees who had encountered Him "were lovers of money" (v. 14).

v. 10 It is the love for money and not money itself that Solomon is careful to note. He is talking about the man who "loves" money and the man who "loves" abundance. He shall discover that satisfaction escapes him in reference to both. Even when one continually receives a profit or income from the fortune he has amassed, it will not satisfy him. Many rich people touched the life of Jesus and were members of the church and were both successful and content. Such men as Joseph of Arimathea, Barnabas, and Zacchaeus are usually considered wealthy men. Yet, their love was not for their wealth but rather the good their wealth could accomplish. This is the difference.

Solomon identifies this *love* for money and possessions as "vanity." It is not the money itself. To this very point Jesus spoke when he illustrated this type of empty, transitory greed in Luke 12:20-21. He said concerning the certain rich man who had such an insatiable desire for riches, "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' So the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

v. 11-12 The reader is here confronted with two disadvantages of riches which are kept to the owners hurt. One is the fact that the more you gather, the more people you must have to look after your possessions, and thus you simply become a provider of the necessities of life for others who have not so labored to enjoy your wealth. The other is the fact that restful sleep, which is so vital to the renewal of strength and a proper spirit to both enjoy and care for what one possesses, is taken from you.

A single insight to one facet of Solomon's many endeavors is given for us in I Kings 5:13-16. Solomon became responsible

to care for 30,000 forced laborers, 70,000 transporters or burden bearers, 80,000 hewers of stone in the mountains, and 3,300 chief deputies to rule over the people who were doing the work. Although this cooperative work with Hiram and the Gebalites was in reference to the work on the temple, it nevertheless indicates the principle he is now setting forth. His own personal endeavors, which exceeded the work on the temple in both time and riches, necessitated similar involvement of those who must be cared for from his abundance.

What is meant by "to look on"? Perhaps it is the riches which are left over after the expenses of caring for all that it takes to support his wealth that he finally fixes his eyes upon and asks, "What profit is this?" Some believe "to look on" means that he gazes upon all the activity that is the direct result of his own wealth and speaks more to the workers and the fruit of their labor than the actual wealth itself.

It is a sad commentary on Solomon's activities and life-long endeavors to come to the conclusion that the humblest man in his employ enjoys a night's rest more than he. The king is envious of him. The "full stomach" means that the rich man has eaten all that he can possibly hold. Perhaps it was the most delicate and palatable of the finest or rarest prepared foods. Yet, he is unable to sleep. The point is that one man discovered that he is able to find satisfaction in the most meager circumstances while the other discovers that contentment is not the result of excessive riches. It is not so much the full stomach that causes the restless, sleepless nights, but the avaricious spirit of the rich man that causes him to toss and turn throughout the night as he thinks back over the activities of the day and schemes and plans for a more profitable tomorrow. His many activities and responsibilities invade his mind and rob him of sweet peace.

FACT QUESTIONS 5:10-12

243. What subject is again under consideration?
244. Give three reasons why the discussion on the "futility of riches" is particularly long.
245. What did Jesus say concerning the "wealthy" entering the kingdom?
246. Why were some rich men in the New Testament both successful and contented?
247. What is it that Solomon calls vanity?
248. Name the two disadvantages of riches. (Cf. vs. 11-12)
249. What was the total number of men under Solomon's control in quarrying stone for the temple?
250. Give two interpretations of what could be meant by "to look on."
251. What is the point of verse twelve?
252. What really robs the rich man of a restful night?

b. They may be harmful. 5:13-17

TEXT 5:13-17

- 13 There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun: riches being hoarded by their owner to their hurt.
- 14 When those riches were lost through a bad investment and he had fathered a son, then there was nothing to support him.
- 15 As he had come naked from his mother's womb, so will he return as he came. He will take nothing from the fruit of his labor that he can carry in his hand.
- 16 And this also is a grievous evil—exactly as a man is born, thus will he die. So, what is the advantage to him who toils for the wind?
- 17 Throughout his life he also eats in darkness with great vexation, sickness and anger.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 5:13-17

135. Identify the two activities of life Solomon considers as "a grievous evil."
136. How were the riches lost? (Cf. v. 14)
137. Why was it important that the man not lose his wealth?
138. What fruit of his labor will the rich man take with him when he dies?
139. List the four things which are descriptive of the rich man's life. (Cf. v. 17)

PARAPHRASE 5:13-17

I looked closely upon another situation under the sun, and I saw what was a painful misfortune for the rich man. He accumulated his riches and hoarded them, but this resulted in great damage to himself. In his attempt to increase his profits and accumulate more money, he made an unwise investment. Rather than compounding his money as he predicted, he lost his entire fortune! In the meantime he had fathered a son, and now nothing was left to be given the son for an inheritance.

This is life's lesson: one is born naked and empty handed, and when one dies he returns to the dust naked and empty handed. Men cannot carry any of the fruit of their labor in their hands when they return to the earth. And this also is a painful misfortune—since man goes exactly as he comes, what profit is there in gathering and collecting? Such a one actually labors for the wind!

I have clearly seen these things in my own mind. What does such a rich man gain? He eats his food in the midst of gloom, and lives out his life with frustration, sickness and anger.

COMMENT 5:13-17

In this section there are two additional descriptions of the futility of riches which lead the Preacher to the same conclusion. He states that both are "a grievous evil." The reader should keep in mind that it is not riches that are evil but the improper attitude toward riches. In this instance, the man "hoarded" them to his own hurt. This simply means that rather than using them for good, he accumulated riches for the sake of riches.

v. 13 He once more qualifies the activity by the phrase "under the sun." This time, however, he discovers that not only do the riches fail to satisfy and keep one from sweet sleep, they actually harm the owner. The owner once believed the added wealth was good and would be the answer to everything. He is to discover that they not only fail to produce peace of mind; they become the very source of sorrow and pain.

v. 14 It was suggested in 5:10 that money is generally invested for greater gain. But now some bad business investment has resulted in not only a failure to gain a profit, but the loss of the fortune as well. This of itself would be of grave consequence to one who had such a love for money. It is of a more serious nature, however, because the man who has lost the fortune has gained a son. He would naturally wish to instill in his son's mind the same desire and love for what is so important to him. He would demonstrate first-hand to the young man how to care for and increase the fortune and together they would share in promoting for even more gain. But it is not to be. Money is transitory just like other things that are attached to this world. The father has lost all he possessed and stands empty handed. He is unable to give his son a penny. The text offers that "he" had nothing in his hand. Is it the father or the son? It could be taken either way, and would be true in either instance.

v. 15 This verse speaks of death and contrasts it with birth. He is born with nothing and shall leave this life with nothing. The elusive riches one toils for in this life are actually called

“wind” by Solomon. From the beginning of his message, he has underscored the truth that one may labor through knowledge, wisdom, and skill only to leave what he has to another. The tragedy of this situation is that the one to whom he wanted to give his fortune did not receive it; neither does the man who accumulated it take it with him. It is a universal truth to which Paul speaks when he says, “For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either” (I Timothy 6:7).

Death terminates all wealth. This lesson is difficult for many to learn. Yet, it is close to the heart of Christianity. James admonishes when speaking of our new relationship in Christ: “But let the brother of humble circumstances glory in his high position; and let the rich man glory in his humiliation, because like flowering grass he will pass away” (James 1:10-11). The Preacher stands as it were, on the edge of the grave of the rich man looking at the freshly shaped mound of earth and asks, “So, what is the advantage of him who toils for the wind?”

v. 17 “Darkness” is a metaphor for gloominess and suggests that he lives his life in sorrow, dejection and heaviness of heart. Perhaps this is why James had written “let the rich man glory.” In other words, what riches cannot do, Christ can. But the man who eats in darkness, in this case at least, has had the privilege of riches. He is sorrowful the more because he has the memory of the temporary satisfaction they brought. He thinks back over his poor investment or the ones now who are enjoying what he had labored so hard to accumulate, and this adds to his darkness. His mind turns to view the son who should have inherited the fortune, but now has nothing in his hand. Such thoughts result in vexation, sickness and anger. These are mental maladies which could easily produce physical illness too. However, it is a troubled spirit that broods over what could have been. He placed his trust in material gain and when he lost it, he lost his joy and his life.

FACT QUESTIONS 5:13-17

253. In what way do "hoarded" riches harm the one who hoards them?
254. What adds to the rich man's sorrows since he lost his riches?
255. Who stands empty handed? Discuss.
256. Solomon equates "wind" with what?
257. "Darkness" is a metaphor which stands for what?
258. Name the past experiences of the rich man, which when remembered by him, adds to his sorrow.

c. Exhortation to enjoy the riches God permits 5:18-20

TEXT 5:18-20

- 18 Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward.
- 19 Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God.
- 20 For he will not often consider the years of his life, because God keeps him occupied with the gladness of his heart.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 5:18-20

140. List the four things which God does for, or gives to, men.
141. What is it that Solomon here calls "good"?
142. What is man's reward?
143. Who gives every man riches and wealth?
144. Can every man rejoice in his labor and his riches? Discuss.

145. What does man forget when God keeps him occupied with the gladness of his heart?

PARAPHRASE 5:18-20

“What does any man gain?” I have asked myself this question before. Now, I arrive at a similar conclusion. That which is satisfying and appropriate is to eat, and to drink, and to enjoy oneself in all the events of life under the sun. Let the labor of your hands bring you pleasure. That is really all one gets out of life. In addition, if your excessive wealth is indeed a gift from God—that is, you can actually enjoy it and it makes you happy because God permits it, consider yourself fortunate. You have just received a bonus from God. Another blessing which will come to you is the fact that you will not be vexed over the past experiences of your life. You will have your mind occupied with happy thoughts and thus you will not sit and ponder the transitory nature of life.

COMMENT 5:18-20

Solomon is still pursuing the “profit” that is available to one who labors “under the sun” and “during the few years of his life.” He speaks of such profit in these three verses as a “reward” or “gift” from the hand of God. He also instructs his reader to “rejoice” and discover the “gladness” of the heart that comes from his labor. This theme is an oft-repeated one that culminates in 9:7 with the imperative form which states: “Go then, eat your bread in happiness, and drink your wine with a cheerful heart; for God has already approved your works.” Note also 2:24; 3:12, 13, 22; 8:15. There is a sense in which man can find pleasure and some advantage in his labor. The qualifying mark appears to be that God must approve.

v. 18 To find personal satisfaction in one’s labor and the

joys of living is the reward available to men. Yet, on the one hand there are very few who seem to find it. Much of what the Preacher has observed and experienced, has been the opposite of this. There has been the inescapable futility that has marked all his labors. Now, however, there is a shaft of light that reveals some cause for rejoicing and joy that can be shared. He calls it "good and fitting." Actually the rendering is "good and *beautiful*" which implies personal satisfaction. What does one have to do to receive such a reward? Evidently avoid the attitudes which have been illustrated with such detail by Solomon in the preceding materials. (1) Eliminate the *love* for money and abundance. Use your wealth as a means to an end, and not an end in itself. (2) Do not offer hasty words before God. "When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it." (3) Do not put your trust in the acclaims of men. Realize that men are fickle and drawn by success rather than integrity. (4) Avoid selfishness which results in loneliness. Choose friends over insatiable desires for wealth. (5) Admit to the anomalies of life. Sorrow over the oppression of the poor, but do not despair. (6) Do not fail to see the hand of God in control of His world. The prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous are not indicators of God's justice, but rather His patience. God "has made everything appropriate in its time." Thus, from Solomon's own observations we draw the conclusion that there is a way to find a reward in the short years one has upon the earth.

v. 19 As noted, "riches" and "wealth" are not evil of themselves. God gives them. When they are looked upon with a proper attitude and used in harmony with God's ordained will, they bring joy. This is what is meant by the fact that God has "empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward." Such behavior is also called a "gift of God." It is surely available to every man, but some men choose the unrestrained, selfish pathway of avarice and greed. They miss the gift, the reward and the joy. The Preacher's admonition is to the better way of life. Do not be carried away with excess. Rather, accept your life each day and live it to the fullest.

v. 20 There is a "bonus" for those who seek such a life before God. Not only do they discover that they have a reward in finding joy in their labor and living, but they soon forget the undesirable experiences of the past which causes greater joy for the present. Since it is God who now controls his daily attitudes, it is also God who causes him to forget the sorrows of his past years. This verse does not speak to "eternal" life or the anticipated joys of some future state. This would be out of character for Ecclesiastes. However, it does suggest that one's present life can be rewarding and filled with joy. One way to accomplish this is to be busy doing what God desires. The memory that haunts the rich, lonely miser and brings him to a prison house of gloom and vexation has no part with the one who discovers God's gift for living.

All men have past experiences that are better buried and forgotten. Some come as a result of external circumstances and pressures that are beyond the control of the individual but nevertheless erode his peace of mind when recalled. Other experiences are direct results of volitional folly or sin. These have a more damaging influence on the joy of the present. It is a much-desired blessing to be able to close the door to the past and find joy in the present. This is the promise the Preacher now offers to those who make an effort to be wise.

Since such a positive note is sounded regarding the possible rewards that one may find even under the sun, it might be expected that Solomon will turn to a new theme. This is not true, however. This rather refreshing observation that speaks of rewards and joy is to be looked upon as a temporary terminal in his reasoning. He dedicates the entire next section (Chapter Six) to the theme of the futility of riches. Let us close out this section with two observations. One comes from Jesus who speaks to this point with the words, "Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:34). Also, the following quote from the Bereleburger Bible is very much to the point: "To the pure all things are pure" (Titus 1:15), "and so a pure man may undoubtedly use riches with purity;

and it will, therefore, chiefly depend on each one's own heart, on how it stands before God. But if any person is unable to remain just as contented and calm, when house and home are burnt down, or when some other damage is done to his property, he proves himself to be not yet truly composed and satisfied: *that is the test thereof.*"

FACT QUESTIONS 5:18-20

259. When and where does Solomon seek for a profit?
260. What does he call this profit?
261. What is the qualifying mark that makes man's labor profitable?
262. To labor according to God's will is said to be "good and fitting." What is an alternative rendering for "fitting"?
263. List the six reasons given why men can discover a profit from their labors.
264. How can "riches" and "wealth" bring joy? (Cf. v. 19)
265. Why do some men miss the gift, reward and joy of life?
266. Explain the "bonus" mentioned in verse twenty.
267. Past, undesirable experiences come from what two sources?
268. What general theme is discussed in chapter six?
269. What did Jesus teach about anxiety over tomorrow?
270. What does the Bereleburger Bible say is the true test of riches?

2. It is possible to possess riches which cannot be enjoyed.
6:1-6

TEXT 6:1-6

- 1 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun and it is prevalent among men—

- 2 a man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor so that his soul lacks nothing of all that he desires, but God has not empowered him to eat from them, for a foreigner enjoys them. This is vanity and a sore affliction.
- 3 If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, however they may be, but his soul is not satisfied with good things, and he does not even have a proper burial, then I say, "Better the miscarriage than he,"
- 4 for it comes in futility and goes into obscurity; and its name is covered in obscurity.
- 5 "It never sees the sun and it never knows anything; it is better off than he.
- 6 "Even if the other man lives a thousand years twice and does not enjoy good things—do not all go to one place?"

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 6:1-6

146. What is "better" than the rich man of this passage?
147. Give the five reasons listed in the passage why the miscarriage is better than the rich man.
148. Who gives men riches even when they are not enjoyed?
149. What is the prevalent evil among men?
150. What does the rich man lack of that which he desires?
151. Who enjoys the fruit of the rich man's labor?
152. The rich man's labor is considered vain because he is not satisfied with what? (Cf. v. 3)
153. Would begetting of children be considered a great blessing?
154. The rich man would not enjoy his riches even if he lived how many years? (Cf. v. 6)
155. What is the "one place" where all men go?

PARAPHRASE 6:1-6

I observed one other misfortune that lies heavily upon men who live and labor under the sun, and I concluded that not

only is the burden heavy, but it is also prevalent among men. That burden is this: A man has everything his heart desires and yet he does not enjoy it. God grants him riches, possessions and honor in his community. As a matter of fact, he has every materialistic benefit needed to satisfy his soul. Although God permits him to possess all and experience social prominence, God does not allow him to enjoy it. One who is a stranger receives it and enjoys it instead. This is indeed a heavy burden to bear. More than this, it is a misfortune marked with hollowness!

What can you say concerning a man who has everything except happiness? Even if he lives a good long time, is honored in his community, and is the father of a hundred children, and, yet, doesn't enjoy what he has, or doesn't even receive a proper burial when he dies, he would be better off not to have been born. It is my conclusion that a stillborn child is better off than he! I know that sounds extreme, but here are my reasons for such a conclusion: The stillborn has no name; it is marked with total futility; it leaves in darkness just as it arrived in darkness; and although it never saw the sun and never knew anything, it rests in greater peace than he.

The important thing is to discover joy and find contentment. What good is there if one lives for two thousand years if he cannot share in either of these? Do we not all finally come to the grave anyway?

COMMENT 6:1-6

This entire chapter continues the theme of the futility of riches. The poor would discover some comfort in the fact that since he is poor he is not sharing in the evil which lies heavy on so many others. However, the message is directed toward the one who is able to gather and collect and yet fail to enjoy. The Preacher now turns to another side of the deceitfulness of riches and would have his reader note carefully that it is not possible to find satisfaction through possessions, where God

does not permit, even when those possessions include everything the heart could desire!

v. 1 Wealth is relative. To the poor, a rich man is one who possesses more than he does. Thus, it is possible that a lesson is held in these verses for every man. Solomon does say that the incident which he has in mind is common or prevalent among men. In other words, one can see it everywhere. He also identifies it as an evil and influenced by vanity as it takes place once again under the sun. It is not to be thought of, therefore, as an incidental ill or burden but one that is "heavy" upon many men. When one looks to possessions for comfort and security and thus places his confidence in that which he owns, he is a prime candidate for the message the Preacher now proclaims.

v. 2 God is involved in this example in two ways: first, He permits the man to acquire all that his heart desires; secondly, He does not permit the man to enjoy what he has acquired. The first part of this verse is more easily understood. One can readily see that it is because of God's providential activities working through His laws of nature that we have material success upon this earth. Jesus spoke to this point when he said that God "causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45). It is evident that although men do not acknowledge that their success in gathering and collecting materialistic things comes as a direct result of God's blessing, it nevertheless does. The mercy of God is demonstrated in the apparent success of the wicked. Such success should be a means of bringing the wicked to the acknowledgment that his wealth is a result of God's goodness and thus come to repentance and humility before Him. However, men often gather and collect and fail to acknowledge God in their endeavors. It is this kind of man who also fails to enjoy what he possesses. The Preacher states that "God does not empower him to eat from them." The phrase "to eat from them" is a metaphor for "to enjoy them." Just what does "enjoy" mean in this instance? Or more to the point, how can one fail to enjoy such possessions

when he has *everything* his heart desires? This part is not so easily explained.

What the one who accumulated the riches failed to do, the stranger who inherits them does. It is said of the stranger or foreigner, and this should be understood as one who is not of the same family or rightful live to inherit the wealth, that he does "enjoy" them. That is, he eats from them with great satisfaction. To say that God does not empower the rich man to enjoy what he has accumulated is stating that the rich man cannot divorce himself from the power of his wealth. He is still greedy of gain; he is hoarding his riches to his own hurt; he is not content and perhaps he fails in health as a result of his avaricious spirit and thus cannot use what he has gathered together. Whatever the cause of such failure to enjoy, it is spoken of that God does not permit it simply because God's laws will not permit such to find joy. God has ordained that personal fulfillment and joy are to be found only within the confines which he has established. One who chooses to live outside such an area may be able, because of God's mercy, to gather and collect great amounts of wealth, but he will not genuinely enjoy it!

When riches capture the heart and control the will of an individual, it is indeed an evil. Such evil is common among men. In addition, Solomon speaks of it as vanity and a sore affliction. That which one believed would fulfill his life and bring lasting satisfaction has created an emptiness instead and is making a hollow mockery of life itself. Not only is this true of possessions, it is also true of prominent positions (Cf. 4:13). "Honor" suggests that the man has a place of respect in his community. The idea that he "lacks nothing" speaks entirely to the elements of this world which are marked with futility. In contrast James speaks of one who is "perfect and complete, *lacking in nothing*" (James 1:4). There is a marked difference. The man in Ecclesiastes has every possible physical need met and all that his heart desires; yet he is not enjoying life. The man in James may not have any physical blessings and yet lacks nothing. The difference? The Christian man of whom James

speaks is content because he possesses wisdom from above and potentially all the blessings in Christ are his (Colossians 2:3). Contentment in Christ is not a result of riches, prestige, health or long life. Rather, it is a result of spiritual maturity. Therefore, the poor man is to glory in his high position (in Christ) and the rich man rejoice in that he has been brought to see that his riches will not bring him enjoyment and he has been humbled and divorced from the control his possessions held over his life. Study James 1:1-11.

v. 3 Our attention has been drawn to riches, possessions and prominence in the community. Perhaps, one may reason, a large family and long life will surely bring personal joy. But, no, the Preacher reasons that though one fathers a hundred children and lives for two thousand years (v. 6) this will not change the picture. It would certainly add to his list of blessings which God permits him to have, but the additional blessings are not of such a nature that they in themselves will produce the joy.

The failure to have a proper burial was a disgrace (Isa. 14:19-20). The tragedy of the rich man is compounded as he has everything his heart desires except the means of enjoyment, and now at the end of his useless and hollow life he has no burial. To leave a body upon the ground to be devoured by animals or fowls of the air was reserved for the enemies of Israel or the despicable members of their society. (Cf. I Samuel 17:46; Jeremiah 22:18-19) It is not noted as to the reason why the rich man does not have a burial, but circumstances of life led to this unfortunate conclusion. To face such a reality is indeed a heavy burden especially in light of the unlimited wealth the rich man possessed, to say nothing of the fact that he was honored in his community.

Once again the qualifying mark of such a man is the fact that "his soul was not satisfied with good things." He has placed his values on things of this earth rather than being content with each day's activities. The sorrow and bitterness of such a wasted life is intensified in the following analogy. He compares such a wasted life with a stillborn baby and

concludes that miscarriage is better!

vs. 4-5 The baby born prematurely or born dead is said to be better off than the rich man. This is a strange conclusion because the child has no name, is not honored in the community, knows nothing, and never experiences one day of life. It is nameless, unrecorded, unburied and unremembered! Yet, such an untimely birth is more to be desired than the long life of the rich man under consideration. The key appears in the marginal reading of verse five in the NASV. Here it reads, "more rest has this one than that." The idea of rest is the reason why the one is desired above the other. It has previously been noted that when a rich man places his ultimate values on riches that he is restless at night and is unduly concerned for his riches during his waking hours. In other words, he has been robbed of rest. The stillborn does not experience the perpetual restlessness of the rich. Certainly one must agree that the description of the stillborn is depressing and undesirable. Yet, whatever the plight of the untimely birth, it is *better* than the misery of a covetous man! "Rest" may suggest "freedom from suffering." The entire picture leads one to the conclusion that such rich men in any society are to be objects of pity rather than envy.

v. 6 There are three significant points in this verse: (1) Regardless of how long one may live, even if it is twice as long as the longest life recorded, it would not change the circumstances nor would one come to different conclusions, (2) the reason being that the man who is under consideration did not "enjoy good things." This is the equivalent of verses two and three which teach that God did not permit him to enjoy life. (3) Both the stillborn and the rich man will return to dust and, in the grave as it were, there will be no remembrance of previous things. It is on the basis of these arguments that the conclusion is drawn that an untimely birth is better than living in the midst of plenty and yet failing to divorce oneself from an avaricious spirit.

FACT QUESTIONS 6:1-6

271. What theme is continued here?
272. How could the poor find some comfort in this passage?
273. Why does one fail to enjoy riches even when he has all his heart desires? Discuss.
274. Explain what is meant by the statement, "wealth is relative."
275. Who is a "prime candidate" for the Preacher's message?
276. In what two ways is God involved in this example? (Cf. v. 2)
277. How does God permit evil men to acquire wealth?
278. What should such blessings from God lead even evil men to do?
279. What is meant by the metaphor "to eat from them"?
280. Who is a foreigner?
281. What does the foreigner do?
282. List the possible causes why the rich man fails to enjoy his riches.
283. What is suggested by "honor"?
284. In what sense can one "lack nothing" and still be miserable?
285. What does James mean when he speaks of one who "lacks nothing"?
286. What two additional blessings come from God? (Cf. v. 3)
287. Who usually failed to receive burial?
288. List the characteristics of the stillborn.
289. What is the "key" that makes the untimely birth better than the long life of the rich man?
290. List the three significant points in verse six which serve as his final arguments for his conclusion.

3. Reasons why riches cannot satisfy 6:7-9

TEXT 6:7-9

- 7 All a man's labor is for his mouth and yet his appetite is not satisfied.
- 8 For what advantage does the wise man have over the fool? What advantage does the poor man have, knowing how to walk before the living?
- 9 What the eyes see is better than what the soul desires. This too is futility and striving after wind.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 6:7-9

156. Man labors for what primary cause?
157. Is man's appetite for either food or pleasure ever completely satisfied?
158. Does the wise man have an advantage over the fool in respect to being satisfied with pleasure or food?
159. Does the poor man have an advantage over the rich man?
160. Explain verse nine in the light of 5:18-19.
161. What parallel is found between verses seven and nine?
162. After reading over these verses, what does the Preacher identify as futility and striving after wind?

PARAPHRASE 6:7-9

A man labors all the days of his life for food and pleasure, and regardless of how much he gathers and collects he will never say, "It is enough!" If one's appetite is never satisfied, how is the wise man better off than the fool? Or, what advantage does the poor man have who at least knows enough to enable him to get along in life—even as he walks over against the rich and the wise? It is better that one enjoy daily what he has than fret over what he might be able to acquire.

To always anticipate more possessions and additional pleasures and think for a moment that when they are realized you will be satisfied is an empty dream which never will be fulfilled.

COMMENT 6:7-9

In searching for one idea in these three verses which would give clear insight to the unlocking of the mystery of how one with such great wealth could go through life unfulfilled, one discovers the thought that "the appetite is not satisfied." This explains the first seven verses in this chapter as well as giving direction to the remaining verses. The man under consideration has an insatiable appetite. He will never have enough regardless of how much he accumulates. Such a man is given over to the "cares of this world" and has lost control of his own spirit. In these three verses, therefore, we are discussing the same individual who has been under consideration from the beginning of this chapter. It is not to be concluded that the Preacher has one particular person in mind, but rather this evil which is common to men is simply being illustrated through a hypothetical situation. This activity is so designated as "futile" and "striving after wind."

v. 7 Some render this verse as "All of man's toil is for his mouth and yet his *soul* is not appeased." In doing so, it is argued that mouth represents the lower areas of desire and soul represents the higher, spiritual areas. This, however, is not the intention of the verse. It is not a comparison; it is an additional argument to demonstrate that certain men labor endlessly for the products of food and pleasure, and yet their desire is never satisfied. Certainly it is the soul that desires such things and it is the soul that is in difficulty. What Solomon is saying is simply that some men are so attached to earthly things that like fire, the barren womb, and the grave itself they never cry, "Enough!" (Cf. Proverbs 30:15-16) Once again the lesson which teaches the power riches have over the minds of men is vividly demonstrated. Indeed the man's soul is in

trouble. He has perverted his true purpose of living to God's glory and has become slave to things futile and transitory.

v. 8 One would think that the wise man would have great advantage over the fool. The wise man in this situation is the one who is skillful and has the ability to increase his possessions and receive healthy profits from his investments. In addition he has merited the esteem of his peers and managed his physical affairs in such a way that his life has been extended. He is also surrounded with his children. Yet, he does not hold an edge on the fool. The fool, of course, is the one who lacks the wisdom to make such a mark in his community as that which distinguishes the wise man. When a wise man fails to enjoy what he possesses, he is no better off than a fool. There is a sense in which he is indeed a fool (Luke 12:20).

The second part of this verse is difficult to understand. The tenor of this section would lead one to see here the simple statement that the poor man does not have an advantage over the wise man simply because, like the stillborn, all finally go to the grave and there are no distinctions there. The Paraphrase attempted to speak to this truth. However, there is much disagreement as to how the verse should actually be translated. Leupold translates it: "or what advantage has the poor man that knows how to walk over against the living?" He would argue that the poor Israelite, under Persian rule, is the only one who knows how to walk (because of his inheritance of Wisdom) over against the living (his oppressors). Two items militate against this translation or interpretation. One, the historical setting would necessitate a date at least 500 years later than Solomon, and secondly, such an interpretation does not speak to the line of reasoning pursued in this entire section. The Septuagint suggests that "the living" is to be translated "life," and implies that he knows how to walk in this world to prepare for the life to come. Thus the Septuagint reads, "For what advantage has the wise man over the fool? since the poor man knows how to walk before life?" This idea appears to be foreign to not only the immediate context, but the thought of the entire book. *The Anchor Bible* eliminates

the problem by actually changing the direction of thought and making the idea of "knowing how to conduct himself during his life" refer to the wise man and thus pointing out that this is the only advantage the wise man has over the fool. This translation seems to be more from convenience than meeting the issue. Perhaps what Solomon is saying is that the poor has his troubles, too. He never has his desires fulfilled, and thus his appetite does not receive the numerous benefits of the wise man, rich in the things of this world, but like the rich man his desires are insatiable. No man has an advantage over another if each is controlled by greed and earthly goods. If this is indeed the correct interpretation then what Solomon is saying is that such an evil is truly common to all men. Both the rich and the poor have demonstrated a failure to enjoy life, and both have the same misery as the result of a lack of fulfillment. Their inability to "eat from" what they possess places them on equal status in that respect at least.

v. 9 "What the eyes see is better than what the soul desires," is not that which is spoken of in the same verse as "futility and striving after wind." Rather, it is good advice and is in harmony once again with previous conclusions found in 2:24; 3:12, 13, 22; 5:18 and later in 6:12. The adage, "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," speaks of this truth. It is better to take what one has and enjoy it rather than entertain a craving for what is possibly in the future and uncertain. To control one's appetites and make the most of what one has is the mark of a truly wise man. God will evidently permit such a one to find joy in living and "eat from" what he possesses.

The contrary attitude which manifests the dissatisfaction with life regardless of what one possesses is that which Solomon speaks of as futile. The oft-occurring "striving after wind" marks this type of activity as totally useless.

FACT QUESTIONS 6:7-9

291. What key statement found in these verses helps to clarify the conclusions in this entire section?

292. What is demonstrated by the argument found in verse seven?
293. What characterizes the wise man of verse eight?
294. What characterizes the fool?
295. What advantage does the wise man have over the fool?
Discuss.
296. Give two reasons why Leupold's translation of verse eight should not be considered.
297. Explain what the Septuagint does with the term "the living."
298. What does the poor man have in common with the rich, wise man?
299. What good advice does Solomon offer? (Cf. v. 9)
300. How can one "eat from" what he possesses?
301. What does "futility" refer to?

4. Reasons why it is useless to strive for riches 6:10-12

TEXT 6:10-12

- 10 Whatever exists has already been named, and it is known what man is; for he cannot dispute with him who is stronger than he is.
- 11 For there are many words which increase futility. What then is the advantage to a man?
- 12 For who knows what is good for a man during his lifetime, during the few years of his futile life? He will spend them like a shadow. For who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun?

THOUGHT QUESTIONS 6:10-12

163. Man was made from what substance? (Cf. Genesis 2:7)
164. In what way is man described in Isaiah 45:9?

165. Who is stronger than man?
166. Can man dispute with God?
167. What increases when man's words increase?
168. Does man's ability to speak many words prove to be profitable to him?
169. Does man have the ability to know what tomorrow holds?
170. Man's short life is likened unto what?

PARAPHRASE 6:10-12

Man cannot contend with God. God is stronger than man. It is well known that God created man from the earth, and man should never forget that. Man knows that whatever he is, he is created and came from the earth. The more man talks, the more evident this truth becomes! Man's much speech betrays his origin and his nature. How does man profit from that? His life is but for a few days, and is compared to a shadow—it lengthens and then quickly disappears. Who can tell a man what will be after him in this life marked with such a heavy stamp of meaninglessness and death?

COMMENT 6:10-12

Solomon now returns to speak to a theme introduced in 1:9-11. This idea has been carried through his book. (Cf. 2:12; 3:15) The nature of man does not change. Man should know who he is and recognize that his ability to speak long and loud will not change his nature but only compound his futility. He concludes once more that one should simply make the most of the present and not fret over that which is beyond one's control.

v. 10 What is man? Whatever he is, he is certainly less than God. Perhaps it is a passing observation, but the Preacher admonishes his readers not to dispute with Him that is stronger than man. The idea that God is Creator is consonant with all

the teachings of the book. Direct reference to the fact is made when the Preacher begins to drive home his point like well-driven nails (Cf. 12:1, 11). The relationship that exists between "Adam" and the fact that Adam was taken from "the earth" is very close. God's new creation is called Adam because he is taken from the earth. One has aptly translated the idea into the English with the sentence: "His name is earthling because he was taken from the earth." Since this is true, man cannot dispute with God, for he is but the created, not the creator. It would also follow that man depends upon his Creator to empower him to eat of that which he possesses. The discussion here would be an additional argument for the Preacher's main thesis: i.e. The gift of God is for a man to enjoy his labor and stay occupied each day with the gladness of his heart. The superiority of God is demonstrated that man can see the futility of trying to find enjoyment without Him. God is definitely the One who is stronger than man and the One with whom man cannot contend.

v. 11 Although the NASV translates this idea as "many words" which increase futility, other translators have offered varying suggestions. One popular translation supplies "things" for "words," and thus suggests that wealth, pleasure, knowledge, all human pursuits along with every endeavor gives credence to the fact that man is subjected to futility. However, these are aspects that have previously been considered. The idea of "words" offers a different view of man. Now, one can see that the Preacher is saying that even though man is very glib and capable of varying and lengthy speeches, such exercises will only manifest his vanity. Perhaps this tendency on the part of man to demonstrate his futility through his speech was the thought in the Preacher's mind when he admonished, "Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few" (5:2).

We are now confronted with the question: What profit has a man? This may refer to the general approach of the entire book, or it may speak specifically to the immediate context.

However, it is obvious that the Preacher is concerned about man's role on this earth and if there is any way in which he can come to the end of the day and honestly say, "See, this is my profit for today!" It is evident from his previous reasoning that the rich have nothing more than the poor. We are to accept his inquiry then as a sad but true commentary of life's endeavors. Regardless of what is accumulated, there is no profit to man who lives simply for pleasure itself.

v. 12 The first question of this verse has been taken by some to mean that he is not only questioning the meaning of life on the earth, but also the value of life to come. This is out of character with the book, and it is forcing the immediate context into an unwarranted position. He is speaking only to life as it is lived on this earth. Such ideas or terms as "futile," "under the sun," "few years," "shadow" and "his life time," verify this contention.

In answer to his question, the implication of verse ten is that God knows what is good for man. This is the basis for his reasoning in 5:18-20. Man is not in a position to determine what is good because he, like that which he desires, is subjected to vanity. His own conclusions, apart from God's help, will inevitably lead to the frustrating burden of feasting on the wind.

To spend his life like a shadow suggests that it is fleeting. This figure reinforces the idea of a "few years." Too much should not be made of the idea that when the sun goes down, the shadow vanishes. However, the concept of living one's life under the sun is interesting in view of the analogy with the shadow. There is a sense in which when the sun sets life is over for all. (Cf. 8:13; I Chronicles 29:15) Sufficient comment has already been made concerning the shortness of life and the concurrent emptiness that accompanies it.

The final question of this section is: "For who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun?" It does not refer to eternity but rather to the activities which shall occur upon the earth tomorrow, the day after that or in the following years. No man knows. Since God is in control of His world and is

the One who permits man to enjoy living, then it would follow that man should cease fretting about what might happen and live each day with simple trust and enjoyment. The wise, rich, but yet unhappy man has concerned himself with many problems that pertain to tomorrow: Who will come after him? To whom will he *really* leave all that he has collected and gathered? What if he has no son to carry on? Will he receive proper burial? What will people think of him when he has died? These and many other questions continually trouble his mind. He is rather required to submit to the power of God and enjoy with moderation the goods of life which God has permitted to accumulate and now potentially at least offer him the ability to enjoy.

FACT QUESTIONS 6:10-12

302. Solomon now returns to what theme?
303. What is the meaning of the name Adam?
304. In what way does man depend on God?
305. Why do "many words" prove man's futility?
306. Why is man admonished to guard and select wisely the words he speaks? (Cf. 5:2)
307. What kind of life robs even a rich man of profit?
308. Give two reasons why Solomon is not writing of "eternal life" in verse twelve.
309. Why is man not in a position to determine what is good for himself?
310. What is meant by man spending his life like a shadow?
311. What period of time is referred to in the final verse by the phrase "after him under the sun"?