

Which Will It Be, Things Above Or Things Below?

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As we read and study the Bible, there are very few prophecies that we can say have been one hundred percent fulfilled in our lifetime. We are waiting for most prophecies to be completely fulfilled. We know in Christ's case, yes, those prophecies of His first coming were fulfilled. But there is a prophecy that we can say was fulfilled in our lifetime in front of our very eyes.

Let's turn to Daniel 12:4. This is for sure fulfilled in our lifetime. People who doubt the Bible or prophecies in the Bible ought to read this verse. I'll read it from the New King James. Wrapping up the Book of Daniel, Christ the God of the Old Testament says:

Daniel 12:4. "But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book (when?) until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase." (NKJV)

That is being fulfilled right before our eyes. A man named Buckminster Fuller was an American designer and a theorist. He created the notion of the knowledge doubling curve. In his research he noticed that before 1900, human knowledge doubled approximately every century. By the end of World War II, knowledge was doubling every twenty-five years instead of every hundred years. Recently, knowledge has been doubling at the rate of every thirteen months. Think about that.

Let me read a quote from an IBM white paper that tells us that very soon knowledge is going to be doubling every eleven hours, if you can imagine that. I'm quoting now from the paper.

It's projected that just four years from now the world's information base will be doubling in size every eleven hours. So rapid is the growth in the global stock of digital data that the very vocabulary used to indicate quantities has had to expand to keep pace. A decade or two ago, professional computer users and managers worked with kilobytes and megabytes. Now school children have access to laptops with tens of gigabytes of storage. A gigabyte is a billion units of storage. Network managers have to think in terms of terabytes which is a thousand gigabytes. They have to think about the terabyte and the petabyte which is a thousand terabytes. Beyond those lie the exabyte, the zettabyte, the yabyte, each a thousand times bigger than the last.

It's growing so fast. It's incomprehensible to the human mind how fast the amount of digital data is stored today. Knowledge certainly is being increased. I'm not making a comment on the validity of the knowledge. I'm just saying that knowledge is being increased.

So clearly the world has changed dramatically in the last hundred years. We have airplanes, space travel, television, radio, computers, internet, smart phones that didn't exist a hundred years ago. Some of it is very good. In a sense, it's nice. Our son and his wife and our two grandkids live in Boston, so it's nice to send pictures and emails back and forth and keep in touch with the family thousands of miles away. That's a good thing, but much of it is bad for many reasons because you're one touch way from unspeakable sin by these advances in technology.

Another change in our lifetime in the last sixty or seventy years is the advent of the television commercial. BBDO is one of the premier advertising agencies in the country. I had experience with them when I worked in the audio business in the 70s. Their mission in life is to take thirty seconds in a TV commercial to convince you that you have a problem. They identify a problem that you didn't know you had. It might be dull teeth, or hoses that take up too much space, or it might be devices to entertain your cats. They put forth the fact that you have a problem that you are not aware of and then they offer you the solution to this newly identified problem, and they do it over and over again. They program us through this to believe that things can solve our problems. Their premise is that if we buy this thing, our life is going to be happy and fulfilled and we will be very content after listening to this thirty second commercial and we dial the number and then get what they are offering.

Let me quote some television statistics from the A. C. Nielson Company who comprises such data. The average American today watches more than four hours of television every day. That is 28 hours a week; that's two months a year of non-stop television watching. In a 65-year life span of somebody who watched television at this rate for 65 years, that person will have spent eight years of their life in front of the television set, if you can imagine. The number of 30-second TV spots that the average child watches in a year (think about this), if a child watched one 30-second commercial a day they would average 365 in a year. If they watched ten a day, it would be 3,650. Guess how many the average child watches in a year. It is over twenty thousand 30-second commercials in a year. The number of TV commercials by the average person over a 65-year age span is two million commercials. Is it any wonder if you combine a prophecy in Daniel 12 with the bombardment of commercials and the explosion in the way to spend our time and energy through this entire media that are bombarding us, the result of that is that all of these things compete for our time and energy.

Some brethren in the Church spend hours a day grazing the internet, buying stuff, looking at stuff, investigating stuff. They spend two, three, four hours a day on the internet rather than studying or praying. All too many spend hours texting or talking over a cell phone rather than interacting face to face with family members or friends.

Dorothy and I were coming back from Sooke the last time we visited, and the ferry ride to the mainland is about an hour and a half. We sat down and across the aisle from us a family of four sat down. Mom and Dad were probably in their mid to late thirties. They had a teenage son and daughter. They all sat down, pulled out their smart, all four of

them. The whole hour and a half they never said a word to each other. Finally when they announced that it was time to go back to the cars, the parents folded up their phones and started walking and the kids followed them, but the kids are still on their smart phones. It is amazing how life has changed and how we are involved with things and not other humans, even within our own family.

Our minds are focused on the things on this earth. In a way, perhaps no other generation of Christians has had to face something like this. This is serious because Christians in past decades, past eons, past centuries have never had to deal with this. There is so much competition for our time, our attention and our energy.

God has a warning about this problem and about this time. Let's go to Colossians 3 and we'll read the first two verses. This is all by way of introduction to the subject. This is an admonition and a warning to all of us because we are all susceptible.

Colossians 3:1. *If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.*

2) Set your mind (affection) on things above, not on things on the earth. (NKJV)

What we are being told is, don't focus on things that happen down here. Focus on things above at the throne of God.

We need to understand that, to a certain degree, we all have to focus on this physical life and things down here. We have to provide food, clothing and shelter. We have to raise our children. We have to take care of our physical needs, but when we go beyond those basics and start fixating on things below, it takes our attention away from things above. There is a word for it. It's called "materialism." Webster's says this about materialism: "A preoccupation with or stress upon material rather than intellectual or spiritual things."

Let me give you a relevant quote from Herbert W. Armstrong in his booklet, What is Faith, written in August of 1952. He says, "We seem to lack that power today." He's referring to the holy spirit. "Not because God denies us that power, but because we are so close to a modern materialistic world, our minds so filled with the material interests of this life. Our minds and our hearts are so far from God." He said that in 1952, and 64 years later it is still true.

So I would submit that things below, meaning materialism, preoccupation with the physical, are a greater challenge to God's Church today than in any other time in the history of the Church.

So as we approach the Passover, we need to consider the following: Which will it be for me as an individual, things above or things below? That is the title of the sermon.

Which Will It Be, Things Above or Things Below?

Let's begin to look at the things below and identify those and see what the Bible has to say. We're going to examine to see if things below can bring us lasting joy, lasting contentment, lasting happiness.

The First Point: We are going to essentially ask and answer the question: Can stuff make us happy?

These are things that occupy our mind above the basics that we just talked about. It's one of the biggest mysteries in life for most humans. Can things make us happy? We already know the answer to that question. We know it is "No." It's not going to happen. It can't happen. But this brings up another question. If that's the truth then why do we keep on trying? Why do we keep on getting involved in physical stuff in an effort to make us happy? Some in society have learned that, but most have not.

Let's ask another question. Who was the first being to succumb to materialism? Who was the first being wanting something they don't have and thinking that if you get that, it will make them happy? I think you know where we're going with this. Let's go to Ezekiel 28 and we'll read the first five verses. We're talking about Satan. First there is the Prince of Tyre mentioned and then the King of Tyre. We'll talk about both of them, but the motivation of both are the same.

Ezekiel 28:1. *The word of the LORD came to me again, saying,
2) "Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre ...*

The Hebrew word for "prince" means *chief or leader*.

2b) ... 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Because your heart is lifted up, and you say, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods, in the midst of the seas,' yet you are a man, and not a god, though you set your heart as the heart of a god. (NKJV)

Some people investigating and speculating about prophecy feel this refers to the false prophet. This may be. The fact is, regardless, the originator of that attitude is Satan.

3) (Behold, you are wiser than Daniel! there is no secret that can be hidden from you!4) With your wisdom and your understanding you have gained riches for yourself (accumulating riches for the self) and gathered gold and silver into your treasuries; (NKJV)

To get things on this earth to make one happy.

5) By your great wisdom in trade ... (NKJV)

Now that is interesting.

5b) ... you have increased your riches, and your heart is lifted up because of your riches)," (NKJV)

The Hebrew word for “trade” is “kullah” in English. It means *to merchandize or to traffic in goods*.

We see that the Prince of Tyre’s motivation is to buy and sell and to gain things that he does not have and to grow in riches and in wealth. Trade is exchanging for a profit or a benefit. This means you give up something you already have for something that you want more. That’s exactly what the Prince of Tyre was doing. Verse 12; I’ll read that from the King James.

12) Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus ... (KJV)

Not the Prince of Tyre, the King of Tyre. We know that to be Satan.

12b) ... and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

14) Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so ... (KJV)

Christ, Who created all things created Satan.

14b) ... you were upon the holy mountain of God; you hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

15) You were perfect in thy ways from the day that you were created ... (KJV)

So Satan was created for a purpose, serving at the very throne of God. You would think that he would have been satisfied with that.

15b) ... till iniquity was found in thee. (KJV)

He wasn’t satisfied. What iniquity? It tells us in the next verse.

16) By the multitude of thy merchandise ...

This is the same theme as with the Prince of Tyre. The New King James says: *By the abundance of your trading*”, back and forth for gain.

16b) ... they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God ... (KJV)

Christ said in Luke 10:18 that He saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning.

16 continued) ... and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. (KJV)

You see Satan wanted something he didn’t have. Isaiah 14 tells us he wanted to be like God. He wanted to be God. Instead of being content with the role that he was created

for, he was dissatisfied and he wanted more. As we would say today, he tried to trade up. He tried to get something better than he already had.

So we see here that materialism, having things, having titles, having accolades, having merchandize is the root of the very first sin. The focus on shopping, trading and merchandize, and the focus on things below, have consumed humanity ever since that first time. It dominates the modern world.

The Second Point: This materialism, these things below, will dominate at the end of the age.

It's a fact. Let's go to Revelation 18:3 from the New King James. The context is speaking of the Babylonian system, the system that Satan founded through Nimrod, that continues to this day and is the motivation behind the same system that will be extant at the end of the age. Notice the very first few words.

Revelation 18:3. *For all the nations ... (NKJV)*

This tells us it is a worldwide system. It's not just in the United States. It's not just in some little country somewhere. It encompasses the entire world.

3b) ... have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication ... (NKJV)

The NIV says, "*the maddening wine*"; the wine that makes people crazy.

3 continued) ... the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her (this worldwide system), and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury." (NKJV)

The NIV says, "*through the abundance of her excessive luxury.*" But you see merchants are involved, trading is involved.

Verse 11:

11) "And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore: (NKJV)

But you see at the end of the age there is an absolute obsession with the physical, trading, business, shopping, buying and selling. That is the obsession.

Verse 14:

14) The fruit that your soul longed for ... (NKJV)

The Complete Jewish Bible says, "*The fruit that you lusted for with all your heart ...*"

14b) ... has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you ... (NKJV)

There is going to be a time when all this is going to go away for these people.

14 continued) ... and you shall find them no more at all.

15) The merchants of these things ... (NKJV)

Notice the emphasis on buying and selling and business.

15b) ... who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

Verse 23, again speaking of this Babylonian worldwide system.

23) The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. (NKJV)

The NIV says, “Your merchants were the world’s great men. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray.”

You hear it on the news about this interconnected world we live in, buying and selling and trading and exchanging money and goods. Today’s great leaders, business leaders particularly, are deceived by Satan. This goes way beyond just feeding the family. Materialism is their life. Materialism is their obsession in the world today. Shortly before Christ returns, there is an overriding focus on things below, an overriding focus on the physical, an obsession with materialism and things below.

We can say in the Church, “Well that’s society around us, but that’s not in the Church. That doesn’t affect us.”

The Third Point. Materialism also infects the greater Church.

The greater Church is not immune. The greater Church is infected to one degree or another depending on us. The greater Church is affected by things below or by materialism. Let’s go to Luke 8 and we’re going to read verses 4 through 7. We’re just going to break into parts of the parable of the sower. We want to focus on one particular aspect of that.

Luke 8:4. *And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spoke by a parable:*

5) A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

6) *And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. (KJV)*

We want to focus on verse 7.

7) *And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. (KJV)*

Notice the thorns didn't prevent the seed from growing initially. They grew up together. The thorns weren't stopping the growth of the seed initially. Ultimately what happened is the thorns choked out the plants that grew up from the seeds that were sown.

11) *Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. (KJV)*

Christ is clearly not talking about society at large. He is talking about where the seed was sown, and that involves us, those being called.

14) *And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life ... (KJV)*

Things below choked them out. They stop growing.

14b) *... and bring no fruit to perfection. (KJV)*

The New King James says, "No fruit to maturity."

The word "perfection" means *to end or to finish or to complete*. They don't complete the journey. They are choked out before they get there.

This is talking about Christians who initially have the holy spirit in them, but due to the focus on things below, they don't finish the race. They don't become spiritually mature. They are choked by the cares and the pleasures and the riches of this life. Obviously this is much more than just the focus on providing food, clothing and shelter. We're not talking about that. It's above and beyond that.

Christ warns the Church today of this very problem. Let's go to Luke 21. This is a parallel to Matthew 24. Christ is speaking to the twelve. He is not speaking to a multitude of people that God is not dealing with. We'll read verses 34 through 36.

Luke 21:34. *And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time ... (KJV)*

He is talking to the disciples, later the apostles.

34b) *... your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting (the New King James says carousing), and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. (KJV)*

He is obviously talking about the end time. Be careful that the cares of life don't distract you from seeing what you need to see.

35) For as a snare shall it (the cares of this life) come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. (KJV)

It's just a re-emphasis of the scriptures we have already talking about. There will be an obsession with materialism, with things below, at the end of the age.

36) Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. (KJV)

As we see in the Church, being over obsessed with things below began with Satan, and will consume the entire earth before the coming of Jesus Christ and has and will affect the brethren in the greater Church of God. It's something that we need to watch very carefully. I remember a Church member years ago, and we were talking about the kingdom to come. This was back in the 70s. He said, "I don't want it to come now. I'm having too much fun." He had an airplane, a car, a nice home and a good job. He said he was having too much fun. He was obsessed with things below.

The Fourth Point: Can we as individuals in God's Church fall prey to focusing on things below?

You can say, "That's for other people. Focusing on things below can't happen to me." It can.

There was a man who had God's holy spirit and if anyone could find lasting pleasure and satisfaction in the physical, this man could. His name was Solomon. Today we would say that he had it all. Let's see what Solomon had to say after experiencing all of this. Let's turn to Ecclesiastes 2:1 from the NIV. It's in modern English and brings out some interesting things.

Ecclesiastes 2:1. *I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." ... (NIV)*

Solomon said, "I'm going to find out if there's any lasting pleasure in this physical stuff."

- 1b) ...But that also proved to be meaningless.*
- 2) "Laughter," I said, "is madness. And what does pleasure accomplish?"*
- 3) I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly ... (NIV)*

The Hebrew word for "folly" means *silliness*. Today we would say *having fun*.

3b) ... my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was good for people to do under the heavens during the few days of their lives.

4) I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. (NIV)

To see where his mind was, keep your place here because we'll come back to verse 5. Let's go to 1 Kings 6:37 and 38. It talks about his building of the temple and then building his own palace.

1 Kings 6:37. *In the fourth year was the foundation of the house of the LORD laid, in the month Zif:*

38) *And in the eleventh year, in the month Bul, which is the eighth month, was the house finished throughout all the parts thereof, and according to all the fashion of it. So was he seven years in building it. (KJV)*

1 Kings 7:1. *But Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished all his house. (KJV)*

He took almost twice as long to build his own palace as it took to build the temple of God. That tells you where his mind was. That tells you what was important to him.

Now let's go back to Ecclesiastes 2:5. Notice in addition to that:

Ecclesiastes 2:5. *I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: (KJV)*

It would be wonderful to plan and build parks and gardens and things like that.

6) *I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that brings forth trees:*

7) *I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:*

8) *I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired male and female singers, and a harem as well—the delights of a man's heart. (NIV)*

We would say he had it all in a physical sense.

9) *I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me. (NIV)*

10) *I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil. (NIV)*

He had it all ... things below. Experienced everything as far as things below are concerned.

11) Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun. (NIV)

So what was the end result of focusing on all this, this man who could do anything he wanted? He was an absolute dictator and he could do anything he wanted. He was focusing on things below. Did it bring satisfaction and happiness or lasting contentment at all? Let's look at verse 17 from the Complete Jewish Bible.

17) So I came to hate life, because the activities done under the sun were loathsome to me, since everything is meaningless and feeding on wind. (CJB)

Can you imagine feeding on the wind? That means to get some sustenance or food from the wind. You can't. You can't even see it. It's totally futile trying to feed yourself on the wind. He said physical things provide the same sustenance as trying to feed on the wind.

Solomon was the poster child for focusing on things below. Look where it got him ... nothing. We could say that we've never had that opportunity. We're not even close to being as rich as Solomon. My point is that you don't have to be wealthy to have an obsession on things below. You don't have to have a lot of money to have an obsession with the material world. Remember what 1 John 2:16 says.

1 John 2:16. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. (NKJV)

You see just the lust will do that. Just the lust will get us focusing on things below, and you don't have to be wealthy. In fact, if you don't have much, it's easier to focus on things you don't have, thinking, "If I only had this it would make me happy." Like Solomon, things below affect the greater Church. It affected him and it can affect us.

The Fifth Point: Why is focusing on things below so meaningless?

What is it about focusing on materialism and physical things that leads us to meaninglessness?

Point A: The flesh is never satisfied.

That is just a characteristic of human existence. Ecclesiastes 1:8; Solomon says,

Ecclesiastes 1:8. All things are full of labor; Man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, Nor the ear filled with hearing. (NKJV)

The eye can see, but it's not enough. Our little granddaughter, Josie, said to her dad (she was maybe four or five years old) "Daddy, what are you going to do today to make me happy?" Now you analyze that and what she is saying is, "Whatever you did

yesterday to make me happy is not enough today. I need and want more.” Now I think as she has gotten a little older she hopefully sees the folly in that attitude. But that’s Solomon’s attitude. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. Look at chapter 5 and verse 10 from the Complete Jewish Bible. Boy, is this true.

Ecclesiastes 5:10. *The lover of money never has enough money ... (CJB)*

I don’t care how rich you are, it’s not enough.

10b) ... the lover of luxury never has enough income. (CJB)

A little bit of luxury is not good enough. I want more.

10 continued) ... This too is pointless. (CJB)

Dorothy and I will occasionally watch reruns of the old Frasier program. I don’t know if you are familiar with that. It’s a 30-minute program. Frasier was a psychiatrist. He was the main character and his brother, Niles, was also a psychiatrist. Both of them were pompous, arrogant, had their noses in the air. They were always striving to have more. They fashioned themselves as wine and food connoisseurs and music connoisseurs. They’re always trying to run with high society. The program is great in exposing the fallacies of all of this through comedy. This is based in Seattle, and in this one particular episode they found out there was an exclusive spa/club in Seattle. They weren’t invited to join. Only the upper crust could join, and they were frustrated and upset. They finagled to get an invitation and they finally got one and went into the club. They were pampered and had massages and oils and the wraps. Niles had the lemon slices on his eyes and the mud packs. They thought they had just died and gone to heaven, in human terms. They were sitting there just perfectly content. Then they noticed at the end of the room a guy walks through a door that was painted gold. They walked over and tried to get in and it was locked. They asked the attendant, “What’s this?” They were told, “That’s the gold room.” They wanted to know why they can’t get in the gold room and they were told that only the very upper crust of society can go in the gold room. Now all of a sudden they were completely dissatisfied with the experience they just had. It wasn’t enough. “How dare they! Why can’t we get in the gold room?” So go through all the experience of getting an invitation into the gold room which they finally got. They went into the gold room and had an even greater experience with more pampering, more fussing over them. They were just in nirvana laying there. They looked at the end of the room and there was another door. This was painted platinum. So they were grouching that they weren’t in the platinum room. Suddenly they are totally dissatisfied with all the experiences they just had. So they walk over to the platinum door and Niles is wrapped up like a mummy. They opened the door and the knob turns. They open the door and this blinding light hits them. They thought this is the ultimate experience. So they walk through the door and the door closes behind them. They come to their senses and look around and they’re in the alley behind the building. One of them is draped in towels and the other is wrapped up and

they find themselves in this alley. The show is pointing out just what Solomon was saying, that it's never enough.

This is why the more humans get, the more they want. Whatever they have now just isn't good enough. We want more. If we only had the good stuff, then we would be happy. Somebody just bought a Honda Accord and then they see a BMW drive by and they're not happy with the Honda Accord. They want this bigger and better thing. I've heard many people say, "If I could only make _____ thousands of dollars a year, I would be happy." My boss in Boston in the 70s was paid maybe \$75,000 or \$80,000 a year. He told me once that he used his salary to pay the taxes on all his investments. He was a very wealthy man. I said, "Okay, what happens when you make that amount of money? A lot of guys around here want to make that kind of money." He laughed. He said, "You know, it doesn't make you happy. All you do is get in debt at a higher level." The same problems, same worries, same fears except there are a few more zeroes added onto the end. How true that is.

Point A here is that the flesh is never satisfied.

Point B: God created mankind to have an emptiness in them if there is no relationship with Him.

Man has an inherent emptiness if there is no relationship with God. That applies to those who are called and to people in the world. Solomon sensed this emptiness. If one's focus is totally on things below, there is a void in one's life, and he sensed this. He realized this. Let's go to Ecclesiastes 3. He wrote Ecclesiastes, we believe, at the end of his life.

Ecclesiastes 3:9. *What profit has the worker from that in which he labors?*

10) I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied.

11) He has made everything beautiful in its time ... (NKJV)

Notice this next sentence.

11b) ... Also He has put eternity in their hearts ... (NKJV)

The Complete Jewish Bible says, *God has given humanity an awareness of eternity.* There is something God put into mankind that there is going to be an emptiness if we don't fill it with things above and not below. Even those not called can sense that there is something greater.

There was a song years ago that Peggy Lee sang. The title was, "Is that all there is?" The song basically said, "I've done this and done that, but at the end of the day you ask the question, 'Is that all there is?'" Is that the meaning of life? The same thing that Solomon said. There is a void that people feel in trying to satisfy themselves with

physical things. Too often they keep trying to fill this spiritual void that God created in mankind with physical things and it doesn't work.

We've seen that what brings emptiness and futility, as the Bible says, "feeding on the wind" is trying to fill a spiritual void with a physical substance. Focusing on things below does not work because there is a spiritual emptiness in all mankind. It can happen to any of us if we focus on things below.

The Sixth Point: Okay, if feeding on the wind brings nothing lasting, what is it that brings true satisfaction and joy to the hearts of men?

Christ gives us a hint. Let's go to Luke 12, and we see here that Christ is talking to a crowd. We're going to read verses 13 through 15. A man was looking to Christ to solve his problem. Let's analyze what his problem was.

***Luke 12:13.** Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." (NKJV)*

That was his focus, his physical inheritance. Notice Christ's reply.

*14) But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?"
15) And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." (NKJV)*

That man was concerned about possessions. The word of God had been made flesh and He was offering mankind lasting satisfaction, lasting joy and happiness. But what was this man focused on? He was focused on his physical inheritance, things below and that will not work.

So what will work? Let's go to Isaiah 55 and begin in verse 1.

***Isaiah 55:1.** "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; and you who have no money, Come, buy and eat ... (NKJV)*

Well, how can you buy and eat without money?

1b) ... Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. (NKJV)

What in the world are we talking about here?

2) Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? (NKJV)

Now go to Jeremiah 2:13.

Jeremiah 2:13. *“For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters (waters you cannot buy), and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water. (NKJV)*

They’ve made cisterns but they break. They don’t hold the true water – the living water. Back to Isaiah 55 and the latter part of verse 2.

2b) ... Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance.

3) Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; (NKJV)

How? By something physical?

3b) ... And I will make an everlasting covenant with you— the sure mercies of David. (NKJV)

The Tanakh version says, *the enduring mercies promised to David.*

What is this food that satisfies and lasts forever? What are the enduring mercies promised to David? Let’s go to 2 Samuel 7:12-16. This is the account of Nathan telling David what God had told Nathan.

2 Samuel 7:12. *“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. (NKJV)*

We know this is referring to Solomon.

13) He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (NKJV)

Notice it says forever.

14) I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men.

15) But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you.

16) And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.” (NKJV)

This is the spiritual promise, and he’s talking about his throne being established forever through Jesus Christ, in Christ’s kingdom and then eternity in God’s kingdom ... things above.

Let’s go back now to Isaiah 55. We saw in verse 3 that this everlasting covenant will be made with David, mercies promised to him.

Isaiah 55:4. *Indeed I have given him (David) as a witness to the people, a leader and commander for the people.*

5) *Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, and nations who do not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, And the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified you.”*

6) *Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. (NKJV)*

You don't have to turn there, but in Jeremiah 29:13 God says:

Jeremiah 29:13. *And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. (NKJV)*

We see here in this verse, we've got to seek the Lord while He may be found and if we do it with all our heart, He will answer and we will find. This is true, but seeking Him is not something we should be doing in the time that is left after we graze the internet or watch TV and text and then give God a few minutes at the end of the day. That is not seeking God with all our heart.

So we are told in Isaiah to pursue the food, the water that truly satisfies, and we have to do it with all our heart, not as an afterthought, not after TV or the internet.

So what is that? Turn to John 6 and begin in verse 27. Christ brought this concept to the people He was dealing with and calling. They sometimes had a hard time understanding it.

John 6:27. *Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”*

33) *For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”*

34) *Then they said to Him, “Lord, give us this bread always.” (NKJV)*

They are not quite understanding this.

Verse 53:

53) *Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. (NKJV)*

This is the only food that satisfies eternally.

54) *Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*

55) *For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.*

56) *He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. (NKJV)*

Verse 63:

63) It is the Spirit who gives life (things above); the flesh profits nothing (things below). The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. (NKJV)

What we're being told here in answer to the sixth question of what satisfies permanently and eternally and gives us joy and happiness is a close, personal relationship with God and Christ for they dwell in us and we dwell with them. We have Their spirit which allows us to have the mind of Christ, which allows us to have the peace and tranquility no matter what is going on in the physical world around us; a close personal relationship with God. That is the only thing that fills the spiritual void that has been created in all humans.

Point Number Seven (The last point): Our focus has to be on things above and not on things below.

Our focus has to be on things above if we are going to make it, if we are going to grow close to God and Christ. You see, we are called to fill this spiritual void in our life with a spiritual solution, not a physical solution. So what is that? Let's investigate filling the spiritual void. Let's go to Matthew 6 and let's view this from the perspective of someone that is being called by God, has God's holy spirit and he wants to be there in the resurrection. Matthew 6:24:

Matthew 6:24. "No one can serve two masters ... (NKJV)

Things above or things below; you've got to serve one or the other.

24b) ... for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. (NKJV)

The word for "mammon" is *materialism*. It's just what we are talking about. You can't serve God and focus on God and then try to focus on materialism too. They are like oil and water. They don't mix. They don't work.

25) "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? (NKJV)

Yet people fixate on this and obsess about it. Christ says, "Don't do that."

26) Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

27) Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

28) *“So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;
29) and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory ... (NKJV)*

All the possessions he had, all the palaces and parks and everything ...

29b) *... was not arrayed like one of these.*

30) *Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?*

31) *“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ (NKJV)*

These are all things below, not above.

32) *For after all these things the Gentiles seek (the unconverted seek). For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.*

33) *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (things above), and all these things shall be added to you. (NKJV)*

Our calling is to focus on things above and not on things below. That is a relationship with the Father and the Son through the holy spirit. That should be our focus.

Okay, let's summarize.

We've seen that man has and will be fixated on trying to fill a spiritual void with physical things, to solve a spiritual problem with physical. That man in Luke who asked about his inheritance, and society in large are focused on their physical inheritance, their physical wealth and their possessions. They are focused on a physical solution to a void that God has created in them that can only be satisfied spiritually.

Let's go to Ecclesiastes 12. Again, Solomon wrote this book toward the end of his life and perhaps he realized the error of his ways and repented. There is some evidence for that. He is summarizing and says:

Ecclesiastes 12:13. *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. (NKJV)*

The Complete Jewish Bible says: *This is what being human is all about.*

It appears that Solomon finally realized the true meaning of life. That was to have a relationship with God like he had in the beginning when he was anointed king. He asked for wisdom and not riches. His heart was right with God before his riches and his wives turned him to focus on things below. He wanted to go back to that simple, humble relationship that he had with God, actually Christ the God of the Old Testament.

Let's close in Psalms 16 and we're going to read verses 5 through 11. This is how we experience true joy, true happiness. David is speaking here.

Psalms 16:5. O LORD, You are the portion of my inheritance ... (NKJV)

Not like that fellow in Luke who wanted physical stuff.

5b) ... and my cup; You maintain my lot. (NKJV)

You maintain everything I have that is important. Verse 6 was one of Dorothy's mother's favorite scriptures.

6) The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places ... (NKJV)

The New International says, *The boundary lines have fallen to me in special places.* What he is referring to is if you had a dispute with somebody over a boundary line, what he is saying is, "God, You have caused that boundary line to favor me. You've caused that division to be in my favor."

6b) ... Yes, I have a good inheritance. (NKJV)

Is he talking about physical things or spiritual things? He is using a physical analogy about the boundary lines and property, but is he talking really about that or is he using an analogy? Let's go to verse 7.

7) I will bless the LORD who has given me counsel; my heart also instructs me in the night seasons. (NKJV)

When he talks to God when he lies down at night.

8) I have set the LORD always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.

9) Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices ... (NKJV)

He's happy because of his relationship with God.

9b) ... My flesh also will rest in hope.

10) For You will not leave my soul in Sheol (the grave) ...

He's referring to his own resurrection.

10b) ... Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. (NKJV)

This is referring to Jesus Christ. A body would decay after three days in the grave. Christ was resurrected before His body decayed at the end of the third day. The subject here is spiritual inheritance, focusing on things above.

11) *You will show me the path of life ... (NKJV)*

Notice this. This is the answer.

11b) *... In Your presence is fullness of joy ... (NKJV)*

The Hebrew for “fullness” refers to be physically satisfied when you have a meal, fullness of food. What David is saying is, “In Your presence I have the satisfaction that one would have in eating a meal where you are just pleasantly full.” He says that is exactly the truth spiritually in Your presence.

Let’s look at the latter part of verse 11.

11 continued) *... At Your right hand are pleasures (for a season?) forevermore. (NKJV)*

Hebrews 11 talks about the pleasures of sin for a season when referring to Moses and how he left the pleasures of sin in Egypt. Those are passing physical pleasures, but David is saying *... At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore*. But this pleasure David refers to involves eternity with God and with Jesus Christ.

We as God’s chosen elect are being offered the greatest gift possible. It’s far greater than things below, far greater than what Solomon had. We are offered a spiritual inheritance in the family of God and that is more than all the combined riches on earth going back to the beginning of time. Remember what Christ said, the Creator of all things, He said it is the spirit that gives life. The flesh profits nothing. He said that the words that I give you are both spirit and life.

So let’s insure that as we approach the Passover that we examine and look at ourselves, let’s make sure that we keep our priority on things above and not on things below.