

In and Out
#9: In the Know, But Not of It
July 8-9, 2007

²⁹God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore.

³⁰Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. ³¹He was wiser than anyone else, including Ethan the Ezrahite—wiser than Heman, Kalkol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations. ³²He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. ³³He spoke about plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also spoke about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. ³⁴From all nations people came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom. *1 Kings 4:29-34 TNIV*

⁸All things are wearisome, more than one can say. The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing. ⁹What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. ¹⁰Is there anything of which one can say, "Look! This is something new"? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time. ¹¹There is no remembrance of people of old, and even those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow them. ¹²I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. ¹³I applied my mind to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under the heavens. What a heavy burden God has laid on the human race! ¹⁴I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind. ¹⁵What is crooked cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted. ¹⁶I said to myself, "Look, I have grown and increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge." ¹⁷Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind. ¹⁸For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief. *Ecclesiastes 1:8-18 TNIV*

Introduction: Perhaps the most pressing issue facing believers in our culture is how to live "in the world, but not of it." This is especially true for a church like Columbia in a place like DC. In a knowledge economy and a world glutted with information, it is vital that Christians learn to be "in the know, but not of it."

I. The "gods:" Science and Technology

A. Technology is the application of science, and both have become "gods" in our culture.

1. We tend to make idols of technological advances and worship them as sources of life.
 2. We tend to be prideful about human accomplishments.
 3. We tend to believe that there is no limit to human knowledge and ability, a quality belonging to God.
 4. We misuse technology in ways that violate God's laws for and destroy His creation.
- B. In his old age, after a life spent attaining knowledge, practicing science, and building great structures, Solomon came to see the folly of his idolization of knowledge.
- II. The God of Science and Technology
- A. Understanding Solomon as something of a scientist and technologist, we better understand his words:
Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of every human being. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. *Ecclesiastes 12:13b-14*
- B. Creator God is the end of all knowledge and the Lord of science and technology.
- C. Knowledge and scientific understanding can be pursued to celebrate God's glory.
"When [Kepler] finally hit upon that secret key to the universe [planetary orbits], he attributed it to divine providence. 'Now, however, behold how through my effort God is being celebrated in astronomy.'" *Owen Gingrich*
"When something new is revealed about the human genome . . . I experience a feeling of awe at the realization that humanity now knows something only God knew before. It is a deeply moving sensation that helps me appreciate the spiritual side of life, and also makes the practice of science more rewarding. A lot of scientists don't know what they are missing by not exploring their spiritual feelings." *Francis Collins, director, Human Genome Inst.*
- D. Technology itself can be utilized in ways that glorify God: Noah's ark, Solomon's temple, "wise men" who followed the star to Jesus, and healing, elimination of poverty, creation care, positive communications, etc.
- E. But science and technology should never be employed in ways that violate Biblical ideals.
- III. The God of Knowledge
- A. The joy of discovery that leads to understanding.
- B. Avoiding pride and seeking God's truth.
- Conclusion: Solomon himself offers wise summary counsel about our acquisition and use of knowledge: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Proverbs 9:10)