

28 - Vanity Fair

Then I saw in my dream, that when they were got out of the wilderness, they presently saw a town before them, and the name of that town is "Vanity"; and at the town there is a fair kept, called "Vanity Fair"; it is kept all the year long. It bears the name of Vanity Fair, because the town where 'tis kept is lighter than vanity; and also because all that is there sold, or that comes thither is vanity. As is the saying of the wise, "All that comes is vanity." (#Isa 40:17 Ec 1:2,14 2:11,17 11:8)

This fair is no new erected business; but a thing of ancient standing. I will show you the original of it.

Almost five thousand years ago, there were pilgrims walking to the Celestial City, as these two honest persons are; and BEELZEBUB, APOLLYON, and LEGION, with their companions, perceiving by the path that the pilgrims made, that their way to the City lay through this town of Vanity, they contrived here to set up a fair; a fair wherein should be sold of all sorts of vanity, and that it should last all the year long. Therefore at this fair are all such merchandise sold: as houses, lands, trades, places, honors, preferments, titles, countries, kingdoms; lusts, pleasures, and delights of all sorts—as whores, bawds, wives, husbands, children, masters, servants, lives, blood, bodies, souls, silver, gold, pearls, precious stones, and what not.

And moreover, at this fair there is at all times to be deceivers, cheats, games, plays, fools, apes, knaves, and rogues and that of every kind.

Here are to be seen, too—and that for nothing—thefts, murders, adulteries, false-swearers, and that of a blood red color.

And as in other fairs of less moment, there are the several rows and streets, under their proper names, where such and such wares are vended; so here likewise you have the proper places, rows, streets (viz., countries and kingdoms), where the wares of this fair are soonest to be found: here is the Britain row; the French row; the Italian row; the Spanish row; the German row—where several sorts of vanities are to be sold. But as in other fairs, some one commodity is as the chief of all the fair, so the ware of Rome and her merchandise is greatly promoted in this fair: only our English nation, with some others, have taken a dislike thereat.

Now, as I said, the way to the Celestial City lies just through this town, where the lusty fair is kept; and he that will go to the City, and yet not go through this town, must needs go out of the world (#1Co 5:10). The Prince of princes himself, when here, went through this town to his own country, and that upon a fair day too; and as I think, it was BEELZEBUB, the chief lord of this fair, that invited him to buy of his vanities; yea, would have made him lord of the fair, would he but have done him reverence as he went through the town. Yea, because he was such a person of honor, BEELZEBUB had him from street to street, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a little time, that he might, if possible, allure that Blessed One to cheapen and buy some of his vanities. But he had no mind to the merchandise; and therefore left the town without laying out so much as one farthing upon these vanities (#Mt 4:8 Lu 4:5-7). This fair, therefore, is an ancient thing, of long standing, and a very great fair.

Now these pilgrims, as I said, must needs go through this fair: well, so they did; but behold, even as they entered into the fair, all the people in the fair were moved, and the town itself as it were in a

hubbub about them; and that for several reasons. For—

First, the pilgrims were clothed with such kind of raiment as was diverse from the raiment of any that traded in that fair. The people, therefore, of the fair made a great gazing upon them: some said they were fools; some they were lunatics; and some they are outlandish men.

Secondly: and as they wondered at their apparel, so they did likewise at their speech; for few could understand what they said. They naturally spoke the language of Canaan; but they that kept the fair were the men of this world: so that from one end of the fair to the other, they seemed barbarians each to the other (#1Co 2:7,8).

Thirdly: but that which did not a little amuse the merchandisers was, that these pilgrims set very light by all their wares—they cared not so much as to look upon them; and if they called upon them to buy, they would put their fingers in their ears, and cry, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity;" and look upwards, signifying that their trade and traffic was in heaven (#Ps 119:37 Php 3:19,20).

One chanced mockingly, beholding the carriages of the men, to say unto them, "What will ye, buy?" but they, looking gravely upon him, said, "We buy the truth" (#Pr 23:23). At that there was an occasion taken to despise the men the more: some mocking; some taunting; some speaking reproachfully; and some calling upon others to smite them. At last, things came to a hubbub and great stir in the fair, insomuch that all order was confounded. Now was word presently brought to the great one of the fair, who quickly came down, and deputed some of his most trusty friends to take these men into examination, about whom the fair was almost overturned. So the men were brought to examination: and they that sat upon them, asked them whence they came; whither they went; and what they did there in such an unusual garb?

The men told them that they were pilgrims and strangers in the world; and that they were going to their own country, which was the heavenly Jerusalem (#Heb 11:13-16); and that they had given none occasion to the men of the town, nor yet to the merchandisers, thus to abuse them, and to let them in their journey. Except it was, for that when one asked them what they would buy, they said they would buy the truth. But they that were appointed to examine them did not believe them to be any other than lunatics and mad, or else such as came to put all things into a confusion in the fair. Therefore they took them and beat them, and besmeared them with dirt; and then put them into the cage, that they might be made a spectacle to all the men of the fair. There, therefore, they lay for some time, and were made the objects of any man's sport, or malice, or revenge; the great one of the fair laughing still at all that befell them.

But the men being patient, and not rendering railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing, and giving good words for bad, and kindness for injuries done, some men in the fair that were more observing and less prejudiced than the rest, began to check and blame the baser sort for their continual abuses done by them to the men. They, therefore, in angry manner, let fly at them again: counting them as bad as the men in the cage, and telling them that they seemed confederates, and should be made partakers of their misfortunes. The other replied, that for aught they could see, the men were quiet and sober, and intended nobody any harm; and that there were many that traded in their fair that were more worthy to be put into the cage, yea, and pillory too, than were the men that they had abused. Thus after divers words had passed on both sides—the men behaving themselves all the while very wisely and soberly before them, —they fell to some blows among themselves, and did harm one to another.

Then were these two poor men brought before their examiners again, and there charged as being guilty of the late hubbub that had been in the fair. So they beat them pitifully, and hanged irons upon them, and led them in chains up and down the fair for an example and a terror to others, lest any should further speak in their behalf, or join themselves unto them. But CHRISTIAN and FAITHFUL behaved themselves yet more wisely; and received the ignominy and shame that was cast upon them with so much meekness and patience, that it won to their side—though but few in comparison of the rest—several of the men in the fair. This put the other party yet into a greater rage; insomuch that they concluded the death of these two men. Wherefore they threatened that the cage nor irons should serve their turn; but that they should die for the abuse they had done, and for deluding the men of the fair.

Then were they remanded to the cage again, until further order should be taken with them. So they put them in, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

Here therefore they called again to mind what they had heard from their faithful friend, EVANGELIST; and were the more confirmed in their way and sufferings by what he told them would happen to them. They also now comforted each other, that whose lot it was to suffer, even he should have the best of it; therefore each man secretly wished that he might have that preferment; but committing themselves to the all wise disposal of him that rules all things, with much content they abode in the condition in which they were, until they should be otherwise disposed of.

Isa 40:17 Ec 1:2,14 2:11,17 11:8 1Co 5:10 Mt 4:8 Lu 4:5-7 1Co 2:7,8 Ps 119:37 Php 3:19,20 Pr 23:23 Heb 11:13-16

“All nations before Him *are* as nothing, And they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless.” (Isa 40:17 NKJV)

““Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher; "Vanity of vanities, all *is* vanity.”” (Ec 1:2 NKJV)

“I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all *is* vanity and grasping for the wind.” (Ec 1:14 NKJV)

“Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done And on the labor in which I had toiled; And indeed all *was* vanity and grasping for the wind. *There was* no profit under the sun.” (Ec 2:11 NKJV)

“Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun *was* distressing to me, for all *is* vanity and grasping for the wind.” (Ec 2:17 NKJV)

“But if a man lives many years *And* rejoices in them all, Yet let him remember the days of darkness, For they will be many. All that is coming *is* vanity.” (Ec 11:8 NKJV)

“Yet *I* certainly *did* not *mean* with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.” (1Co 5:10 NKJV)

“Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.” (Mt 4:8 NKJV)

“⁵ Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. ⁷ "Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.”” (Lu 4:5-7 NKJV)

“⁷ But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory, ⁸ which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” (1Co 2:7-8 NKJV)

“Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, *And* revive me in Your way.” (Ps 119:37 NKJV)

“¹⁹ whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is* their belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. ²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,” (Php 3:19-20 NKJV)

“Buy the truth, and do not sell *it*, *Also* wisdom and instruction and understanding.” (Pr 23:23 NKJV)

“¹³ These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ¹⁴ For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. ¹⁵ And truly if they had called to mind that *country* from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly *country*. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.” (Heb 11:13-16 NKJV)