

The Information Age

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We live in a time of immense technological advancement: the Information Age. We use information to make decisions and gain an advantage of some kind. We also take comfort in our information gathering. If we have a problem, Google will give us the answer! However, information is worthless if we do not know what to do with it.

We are not the first humans to gather information. Solomon went to great lengths to gather information about the world. In Ecclesiastes chapter two, he lists some of the projects and studies he performed in the world. Also, in first Kings, we are told about his study of animals and plant life. He amassed more knowledge about the natural world than any of his contemporaries (1 Kings 4:32-34).

So, what was Solomon's most important discovery? What was his most important contribution to the advancement of human civilization? Solomon collected information about everything he could get his hands on; however, he realized information alone was not enough to gain a meaningful life in this world. Solomon realized the need for wisdom.

Of course, Solomon was known for wisdom. Much of his writing offers wisdom for living in this world. He appraised wisdom as being more valuable than gold and silver (Prov. 4:7). However, Solomon's wisdom is grounded in a singular truth: there is a God. Solomon explains why this truth is the most important factor in guiding the use of knowledge. His writings are book-ended by this point.

Prov. 1:5: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge..."

Ecl. 12:13: "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

The Limitation of Information and the Need for Wisdom

The quest for information continues today. However, we must realize that information, data, intelligence, analytics have limitations. They cannot solve all our problems. They will not fill us or make us whole. They cannot tell us what is right or wrong. As has been observed, science can tell us what is, but science cannot tell us what ought to be.

Information accumulated without concern for the Creator is futile. Likewise, information used without wisdom is disastrous. Solomon teaches us how the knowledge of God is to influence our pursuit and use of information. This will ensure proper stewardship of God's earth. Solomon's admonition also supports the broader Biblical message.

Ultimately, the Bible points us to an important piece of information: the Messiah. Of course, the Messiah is much more than just another data point. The Messiah was the Creator in

human form. He came to model human behavior and reunite us with the Creator. He is key to understanding life in this world.

Regarding the Messiah in the context of knowledge, Paul wrote, “For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:1-3).

Paul was concerned about the faith of the saints in Colossae and Laodicea. They were being influenced by Gnosticism, an ideology that stated the knowledge of Christ was insufficient. This philosophy was grounded in human understanding, discovery, and achievement. The keys to understanding our existence are not found in nature. They are not found in a database or through a search engine. They are found in Christ.

Beware of a False Choice

Sometimes the false choice of “God v. Science” is presented to us. The Bible does not force us to choose between the two. Paul was not pitting the Gospel against science. The Bible gives us a framework for pursuing information.

For example, consider Adam and Eve. They were charged to be stewards of the earth. They exercised their stewardship with the knowledge of God. Fulfilling their task required them to learn how the natural world worked. (Like Solomon, Adam studied the animals extensively and gave them names.) The information they collected would help them make wise use of the earth for their benefit and to the glory of God.

Being a Christian is not about choosing Christ or information. Being a Christian is about our motives for pursuing information and how we use it. Do we want to collect information for the sake of power and self-promotion? Or, do we want to increase our learning to make better use of God's earth? If we learn better methods to preserve and enhance human life, do we adapt? Or, due to self-interest, do we ignore the implementation of new discoveries?

These are not just technical or practical questions. They are moral, ethical, and spiritual questions. They probe the heart of our beliefs about our origin, purpose, and future. The knowledge of Christ, the Gospel, is to guide us in answering these questions. The Gospel is not just for Sundays. The Gospel informs the whole of our existence.

Conclusion

Paul reminded the Colossians and Laodiceans how the knowledge of Christ led to the forgiveness of their sins (Col. 2:11-14). No amount of worldly knowledge will forgive our sins. To borrow a word from Solomon, the acquisition of knowledge without the knowledge of Christ is vanity. Only obedience, the wise use of the knowledge of Christ, will result in the forgiveness of our sins and the hope of eternal life.

Unquestionably, our pursuit of information and knowledge is important. We are the beneficiaries of much learning and advancement. We have reasons to be hopeful about future advancements in science, technology, and medicine.

Exercising wise stewardship through discovery is as old as the Garden of Eden. We must do so with reverence for the Creator and love for our neighbor. If our motivations in the pursuit and use of knowledge are selfish, we are doing nothing more than rebuilding the Tower of Babel.