

ECCLESIASTES 1

written and compiled by Gary Kukis

Ecclesiastes 1:1–18

All is Vanity Under the Sun

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall be have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God.” (John 3:16–18). “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!” (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10).

Document Navigation

[Preface and Quotations](#)

[Outline of Chapter](#)

[Charts, Graphics, Short Doctrines](#)

[Doctrines Alluded to](#)

[Dictionary of Terms](#)

[Introduction and Text](#)

[Chapter Summary](#)

[Addendum](#)

[A Complete Translation](#)

Verse Navigation

[Ecclesiastes 1:1](#)

[Ecclesiastes 1:2](#)

[Ecclesiastes 1:3](#)

[Ecclesiastes 1:4](#)

[Ecclesiastes 1:5](#)

[Ecclesiastes 1:6](#)

[Ecclesiastes 1:7](#)

[Ecclesiastes 1:8](#)

[Ecclesiastes 1:9](#)

[Ecclesiastes 1:10](#)

[Ecclesiastes 1:11](#)

[Ecclesiastes 1:12](#)

[Ecclesiastes 1:13](#)

[Ecclesiastes 1:14](#)

[Ecclesiastes 1:15](#)

[Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)

[Ecclesiastes 1:17–18](#)

These exegetical studies are *not* designed for you to read each and every word. For instance, the Hebrew exegesis is put into greyish tables, so that if you want to skip over them, that is fine. If you question a translation, you can always refer back to the appropriate Hebrew tables to sort it all out. The intent is to make this particular study the most complete and most accurate examination of Ecclesiastes 1 which is available in writing. The idea is to make every phrase, verse and passage understandable and to make correct application of all that is studied.

Besides teaching you the doctrinal principles related to this chapter, this commentary is also to help bring this narrative to life, so that you can understand the various characters, their motivations, and the choices that they make. Ideally, you will be able to visualize the peoples, their temporal and spiritual leaders, and their armies as they move across the landscape of the Land of Promise. I hope to provide not only an accurate exegesis of the chapter in view, but to also quote many of the great insights that past commentators have offered us.

Although much of this chapter is based upon narrative from the book of Kings, I will make every attempt possible to provide enough historical information and theological context so that you will have a sufficient background to understand what is going on.

Preface: Ecclesiastes 1 introduces us to the entire book. Solomon, the author, sees the world as an empty and meaningless place, where there are patterns and even wisdom, but everything seems circular and lacking in purpose and meaning. Nothing seems truly new, and whatever has happened in the past, has soon been forgotten about. Solomon himself has searched out wisdom, under the sun, and upon finding it, feels as if he is just chasing wind.

Solomon is a man with essentially infinite means by which to secure happiness and/or meaning in his life. No one else could make a more complete search for knowledge, meaning and happiness than Solomon. In this book, he reveals that he cannot find meaning, happiness or satisfaction in life, apart from God.

The point which will be made many times in this study is, the wisdom which Solomon accumulates is human viewpoint wisdom; it is a collection of secular beliefs and conclusions; and none of it is truly satisfying to the human soul.

To make a premature application, this is what our children are being taught in the public schools and universities. No wonder there seems to be so much rage in this world.

This should be the most extensive examination of Ecclesiastes 1 available, where you will be able to examine in depth every word of the original text.

Quotations:

Emptiness:

Healthy Place quote; from [Pinterest](#); accessed June 25, 2018.

my life has
become this
one big
"I DON'T
KNOW"

"I don't know" quote from [Pinterest](#); accessed June 25, 2018.

Sebastian Horsley: *Pain can be vitalising; it gives intensity in the place of vagueness and emptiness. If we don't suffer, how do we know that we live?*¹

Tyson Fury: *Every time I stray away from the Lord's word, I find emptiness and darkness.*²

Chris Hadfield: *The world, when you look at it, it just can't be random. I mean, it's so different than the vast emptiness that is everything else, and even all the other planets we've seen, at least in our solar system, none of them even remotely resemble the precious life-giving nature of our own planet.*³



Vanity:

¹ From https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/sebastian_horsley_633276 accessed June 25, 2018.

² From https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/tyson_fury_741898 accessed June 25, 2018.

³ From https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/chris_hadfield_634406 accessed June 25, 2018.

Lisa Kleypas: *A man's vanity is more fragile that you might think. It's easy for us to mistake shyness for coldness, and silence for indifference.*⁴

Blaise Pascal: *Curiosity is only vanity. We usually only want to know something so that we can talk about it.*⁵

Miscellaneous:

William Makepeace Thackeray: *Which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? or, having it, is satisfied?*⁶

Shannon L. Alder: *Beauty is not who you are on the outside, it is the wisdom and time you gave away to save another struggling soul like you.*⁷

Eccles. 1:1–2 The words of the Teacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. "Vanity of vanities!" says the Teacher, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity!" (LEB)

John W. Ritenbaugh: *God has not given material things the power to satisfy man's spiritual needs.*⁸

Dr. Bob Utley: *All human work and all other things are meaningless if there is no God (atheistic humanism). We are the chance result of physical forces. There is no purpose, no meaning, no afterlife, no god, just the physical universe (atheistic naturalism).*⁹

Archer: *[The book of Ecclesiastes] is as if this wise, wealthy, and powerful king had undertaken a trial of Jesus' later challenge: 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' (Matthew 16:26). And so he set about gaining the whole world and the full enjoyment of all the pleasures and satisfaction that this life could give him.*¹⁰

Ray Stedman: *There is something wrong inside of man. It is a tricky business for a man, who senses an overwhelming curiosity to discover the secrets of life around him, yet he finds himself baffled all the time by an inadequate understanding. Man cannot put it all together.*¹¹

Pastor John Griffith: *The truth is that life is full of meaning when in fellowship with the living God - the only sphere of living that truly satisfies the soul.*¹²

Robert Hawker: *Under a great variety of evidences, taken from the circumstances of human life, and everything around, the Preacher fully proves the total inability of all the outward circumstances of nature to constitute happiness.*¹³

⁴ From <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/vanity> accessed June 25, 2018.

⁵ From <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/vanity> accessed June 25, 2018.

⁶ From <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/vanity> accessed June 25, 2018.

⁷ From <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/vanity> accessed June 25, 2018.

⁸ From [Bible tools](#) accessed June 18, 2018.

⁹ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:3–11.

¹⁰ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2 (further citation there).

¹¹ Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 1:12–15.

¹² From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_03.html accessed June 15, 2018.

¹³ Robert Hawker *The Poor Man's Commentary*; ©1805; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1.

College Press Bible Study: *Nothing in all of God's creation, except man, concerns itself with the "why" of the activities of our world. Man, however, is restless until he discovers the why.*¹⁴

Pastor John Griffith: *The search for happiness "under the sun" leads away from the source of true happiness. The surest way to miss or to lose happiness in life is to pursue it.*¹⁵

Augustine, speaking about the book of Ecclesiastes: *Setting forth the vanity of this life, only that we may desire that life wherein, instead of vanity beneath the sun, there is truth (and eternal joy) under Him who made the sun.*¹⁶

Augustine (speaking to God): *Our hearts are restless until they rest in You.*¹⁷

The very human point of view of Ecclesiastes has been expressed by many famous writers:

The Playwright Tennessee Williams: *We all live in a house on fire, no fire department to call; no way out, just the upstairs window to look out of while the fire burns the house down with us trapped, locked in it.*

Author George Orwell: *Most people get a fair amount of fun out of their lives, but on balance life is suffering and only the very young or the very foolish imagine otherwise.*

William Shakespeare (from Macbeth): *Out, out, brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.*¹⁸

Playwright Alan Bennett: *Life is rather like a can of sardines, were all of us looking for the key.*¹⁹

Jesus speaking to His disciples: *"Instead, seek His [God's] kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."* (Luke 12:31–34; ESV; capitalized)

Outline of Chapter 1:

Preface

Introduction

vv.	1–2	Title, Author and Theme
vv.	3–11	The Futility and Weariness of Life
vv.	12–18	The Acquisition of Human Wisdom is Vanity and Chasing the Wind

Chapter Summary

Addendum

¹⁴ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:13–18 (comment).

¹⁵ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_03.html accessed June 15, 2018.

¹⁶ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

¹⁷ From <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/110101.htm> accessed June 4, 2018.

¹⁸ From [Aging Capriciously](#); accessed June 17, 2018.

¹⁹ These 3 quotes are taken from *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:2.

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines:

Preface	Quotations
Introduction	Ecclesiastes 1 (or the Preacher) (a graphic)
Introduction	The Five Kinds of Wisdom
Introduction	Ecclesiastes (life in a meaningless world) (a graphic)
Introduction	Titles and/or Brief Descriptions of Ecclesiastes 1 (by Various Commentators)
Introduction	Brief, but insightful observations of Ecclesiastes 1 (various commentators)
Introduction	Fundamental Questions About Ecclesiastes 1
Introduction	The Prequel of Ecclesiastes 1
Introduction	The Principals of Ecclesiastes 1
Introduction	The Places of Ecclesiastes 1
Introduction	By the Numbers
Introduction	A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes 1
Introduction	A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes 1 (from Matthew Henry)
Introduction	Outlines and Summaries of Ecclesiastes 1 (Various Commentators)
Introduction	929 Chapters Outline of Ecclesiastes 1
Introduction	A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes 1 from the Summarized Bible
Introduction	Vanity of Vanities...all is vanity (Eccles. 1:2—the theme of Ecclesiastes) (a graphic)
Introduction	The Big Picture (Ecclesiastes 1–2)
Introduction	Paragraph Divisions of Modern Translation for Ecclesiastes 1
Introduction	Ecclesiastes 1 (a young person’s approach) (a graphic)
Introduction	Changes—additions and subtractions
v. 1	When Life Goes in Circles (Ecclesiastes 1:1–11) (a graphic)
v. 1	On the word Qôheleth (various commentators)
v. 1	Solomon’s Wisdom
v. 1	Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:1 (Ron Snider)
v. 2	The Meaning of Vanity (Ecclesiastes 1:2) (various commentators)
v. 2	The Meaning of Vanity of Vanities (Ecclesiastes 1:2) (various commentators)
v. 2	Everything is dust in the wind (Ecclesiastes 1:2) (a graphic)
v. 2	All is Vanity (Ecclesiastes 1:3) (a graphic)
v. 2	All is Vanity (Ecclesiastes 1:2c) (various commentators)
v. 2	What brought Solomon to this point? (Dr. Dan Hill)
v. 2	Solomon, being rejected by the woman of Songs drives him here (Dr. Dan Hill)
v. 2	Solomon’s conclusion in Ecclesiastes 1:2 (various commentators)
v. 2	Can of book of such skepticism be in the Word of God? (Geisler & Howe)
v. 2	Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:2 (Ron Snider)
v. 3	What profit is there to all man’s toil? (Ecclesiastes 1:3) (various commentators)
v. 3	The Vanity of Human Production (Ecclesiastes 1:3) (various commentators)
v. 3	The Second Divine Institution: Work
v. 3	The Four Objectives of Work (from Dr. Dan Hill)
v. 3	Principles concerning your work (Dr. Dan Hill)
v. 3	“Under the Sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:3) (various commentators)
v. 3	The Doctrine of Under the Sun
v. 3	Lady Justice Life Size Bronze Resin Goddess Statue (a graphic)
v. 3	Kenny’s Backyard (a photo)
v. 3	Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:3 (Ron Snider)
v. 3	In consideration of Solomon, the author of Ecclesiastes, by way of Donald Trump
v. 3	A Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:1–3
v. 3	Summarizing Ecclesiastes 1:1–3 (various commentators)

- v. 4 **Time and Cycles; Greek and Hebrew Views of Time** (John W. Ritenbaugh)
- v. 4 **The futility of human existence (Ecclesiastes 1:4a)** (various commentators)
- v. 4 **The transitory nature of man; the permanence of earth (Eccles. 1:4)** (commentators)
- v. 4 **The Transitory Nature of the Earth (Ecclesiastes 1:4 and 1John 2:17)**
- v. 5 **Ecclesiastes 1:5** (a graphic)
- v. 5 **The lecturer's view of the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:5)** (various commentators)
- v. 5 **Solomon views the motion of the sun as wearisome (Eccles. 1:5)** (commentators)
- v. 5 **Psalms 19:1–9** (from English Standard Version; capitalized)
- v. 6 **The wind blows to the south and north (Ecclesiastes 1:6)** (various commentators)
- v. 6 **The lecturer's view of the wind (Ecclesiastes 1:6)** (various commentators)
- v. 6 **Even the wind can be monotonous (Ecclesiastes 1:6)** (various commentators)
- v. 7 **Ecclesiastes 1:7** (a graphic)
- v. 7 **The lecturer's view of the water cycle (Ecclesiastes 1:7)** (various commentators)
- v. 7 **Are the Scriptures cognizant of evaporation? (Ecclesiastes 1:7)** (commentators)
- v. 7 **Creation Science 4 Kids on the Water Cycle**
- v. 7 **The Water Cycle** (a graphic)
- v. 7 **A Living Cell** (a graphic)
- v. 7 **Man and the cyclical character of nature (Ecclesiastes 1:4–7)** (many commentators)
- v. 7 **On the cyclical nature of life as related to mankind** (Matthew Poole)
- v. 7 **Summarizing Ecclesiastes 1:5–7** (by Ray Stedman)
- v. 7 **The Law of Circularity** (by H. Macmillan, D.D.)
- v. 7 **Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:4–7** (Ron Snider)
- v. 7 **Genesis Versus Ecclesiastes**
- v. 8 **All things (Ecclesiastes 1:8a)** (various commentators)
- v. 8 **All things are wearisome (Ecclesiastes 1:8a)** (various commentators)
- v. 8 **Man is unable to utter it (Ecclesiastes 1:8b)** (various commentators)
- v. 8 **Ecclesiastes 1:8** (a graphic)
- v. 8 **The eye is not satisfied with seeing (Ecclesiastes 1:8c)** (various commentators)
- v. 8 **Being satisfied with hearing (Ecclesiastes 1:8)** (various commentators)
- v. 8 **Being satisfied with seeing and hearing (Ecclesiastes 1:8c-d)** (many commentators)
- v. 8 **Summarizing the weariness of life (Ecclesiastes 1:8)** (various commentators)
- v. 8 **Ecclesiastes 1:8 Depression** (a graphic)
- v. 8 **Ignoring the Spiritual Needs of Man** (Chuck Smith)
- v. 8 **Despite great advantages, people in the United States are still depressed**
- v. 9 **Introducing Ecclesiastes 1:9–11** (from the College Press Bible Study)
- v. 9 **Ecclesiastes 1:9 (NLT)** (a graphic)
- v. 9 **Ecclesiastes 1:9 (NKJV)** (a graphic)
- v. 9 **What has been done in the past will be done in the future (Eccles. 1:9)** (comments)
- v. 9 **Ecclesiastes 1:9 (ESV)** (a graphic)
- v. 9 **Ecclesiastes 1:9 (Bible journaling)** (a graphic)
- v. 9 **There is no new thing under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9)** (various commentators)
- v. 9 **There is nothing new—Part II; what about technology?** (Various commentators)
- v. 9 **The repetition of cycles (Ecclesiastes 1:4–9)** (various commentators)
- v. 10 **The Newest Thing (Ecclesiastes 1:10)** (John W. Ritenbaugh)
- v. 10 **It has already existed (Ecclesiastes 1:10)** (various commentators)
- v. 10 **Is there really nothing new under the sun?** (Geisler & Howe)
- v. 10 **What Solomon should have asked**
- v. 10 **Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:8–10** (Ron Snider)
- v. 11 **There is no remembrance of former things (Eccles. 1:11)** (various commentators)
- v. 11 **Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:11** (Ron Snider)
- v. 11 **Summarizing Ecclesiastes 1:9–11** (various commentators)
- v. 11 **Summarizing Ecclesiastes 1:4–11** (Pastor John Griffith)

v.	11	Conclusions to Ecclesiastes 1:1–11 (various commentators)
v.	12	Introducing Ecclesiastes 1:12–18 (various commentators)
v.	12	Ecclesiastes 1:12–18 (a graphic)
v.	12	Lessons from experience (Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:26) (Bridgeway Bible Commentary)
v.	12	Solomon was able to do a full search for happiness (various commentators)
v.	12	Solomon “is” or “was” king — a discussion
v.	12	King over Israel (Ecclesiastes 1:12) (various commentators)
v.	12	Putting Kingship Over Jerusalem into Perspective (Pastor John Griffith)
v.	13	To seek and to search (Ecclesiastes 1:13) (various commentators)
v.	13	Seeking out wisdom for all which is done under heaven (various commentators)
v.	13	I applied my mind (Ecclesiastes 1:13) (a graphic)
v.	13	This business of evil (what is it?) (Ecclesiastes 1:13) (a discussion)
v.	13	Elohim is the Name for God in Ecclesiastes (Ecclesiastes 1:13) (a discussion)
v.	13	Man’s insatiable desire to know (Ecclesiastes 1:13) (a discussion)
v.	13	Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:12–13 (Ron Snider)
v.	14	Ecclesiastes 1:14 (a graphic)
v.	14	Solomon’s search eventually was fruitless and pointless (various commentators)
v.	14	Striving after wind (Ecclesiastes 1:14) (various commentators)
v.	14	Ecclesiastes 1:14 (Bible journaling) (a graphic)
v.	15	Making the crooked straight (Ecclesiastes 1:15) (various commentators)
v.	15	Ecclesiastes 1:15 (a graphic)
v.	15	What is lacking cannot be numbered (Ecclesiastes 1:15) (various commentators)
v.	15	Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:14–15 (Ron Snider)
v.	15	Crooked and lacking (Ecclesiastes 1:15) (various commentators)
v.	16	The accumulation of wisdom (Ecclesiastes 1:16) (various commentators)
v.	16	Over Jerusalem (Ecclesiastes 1:16) (various commentators)
v.	16	Comparing and contrasting “wisdom and knowledge” (Ecclesiastes 1:16)
v.	17	Ecclesiastes 1:18 (GNT) (a graphic)
v.	17	“I gave my heart to know wisdom” (Ecclesiastes 1:17a) (various commentators)
v.	17	Alternative translations to “madness and folly” (Ecclesiastes 1:17b) (a discussion)
v.	17	To know madness and folly (Ecclesiastes 1:17) (various commentators)
v.	17	Solomon’s conclusion at to what he had achieved (Eccles. 1:17) (commentators)
v.	18	“In much wisdom is much frustration” (Ecclesiastes 1:18a) (many commentators)
v.	18	Ecclesiastes 1:18 (a graphic)
v.	18	Does wisdom produce hapiness or sorrow? (Geisler & Howe)
v.	18	The sorrow of human knowledge (Ecclesiastes 1:18b) (various commentators)
v.	18	Solomon’s conclusions from his search for wisdom (various commentators)
v.	18	Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:16–18 (Ron Snider)
Summary		A Set of Summary Doctrines and Commentary
Summary		Why Ecclesiastes 1 is in the Word of God
Summary		What We Learn from Ecclesiastes 1
Summary		Jesus Christ in Ecclesiastes 1
Summary		Solomon’s conclusions from Ecclesiastes 1 (Pastor John Griffith)
Summary		Solomon’s conclusions from Ecclesiastes 1 (various commentators)
Summary		A Summary of Ecclesiastes (from the Christian Community Bible)
Summary		Summary of Ecclesiastes 1–2 (Bridgeway Bible Commentary)
Addendum		Everett’s conclusions to Ecclesiastes 1 and looking ahead (Gary Everett)
Addendum		A Complete Translation of Ecclesiastes 1
Addendum		Word Cloud from a Reasonably Literal Paraphrase of Ecclesiastes 1
Addendum		Word Cloud from a Reasonably Literal Translation of Ecclesiastes 1

Addendum **Word Cloud from Exegesis of Ecclesiastes 1**

Chapter Outline	Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines	
Beginning of Document	Verse Navigation	Introduction and Text
First Verse	Chapter Summary	Addendum
www.kukis.org	Exegetical Studies in Ecclesiastes	

Doctrines Covered or Alluded To			
Divine Institutions	Dual Authorship of Scripture		

Chapters of the Bible Alluded To or Appropriately Exegeted with this Chapter			
1Kings 9	Psalms 19	Proverbs 3	Introduction to the Book of Ecclesiastes

Many who read and study this chapter are 1st or 2nd generation students of R. B. Thieme, Jr., so that much of this vocabulary is second nature. One of Bob's contributions to theology is a fresh vocabulary along with a number of concepts which are theologically new or reworked, yet still orthodox. Therefore, if you are unfamiliar with his work, the definitions below will help you to fully understand all that is being said. Also included are various technical terms from Christian theology along with a few new terms and concepts which I have developed.

Sometimes the terms in the exegesis of this chapter are simply alluded to, without any in-depth explanation of them. Sometimes, these terms are explained in detail and illustrated. A collection of all these terms is found here: ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). Often, the terms below are linked to complete doctrines.

Definition of Terms	
Cosmic system thinking	A person's viewpoint is confused with the thinking of Satan, who thinks in terms of human viewpoint, lies, and legalism. This is exactly the opposite thinking of the gospel, Bible doctrine, and the laws of divine establishment.
Divine Establishment	Also known as the <i>laws of divine establishment</i> . These are laws which are devised by God for the human race (for believers and unbelievers alike). The more aligned a country is with these laws, the greater freedom and prosperity that country will enjoy. Furthermore, there will be greater evangelism and Bible teaching which takes place. The further a country strays from these law results in greater tyranny and unhappiness among its population. See the Laws of Divine Establishment (HTML) (PDF) (WPD).
Divine Viewpoint	Divine viewpoint is how God thinks. This is very different than how man thinks. The Lord says, "My thoughts are not like yours. Your ways are not like mine. Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts are higher than your thoughts." (Isa. 55:8–9; ERV)
Human Good	Acts which society may see as being good, but things which have no eternal value. For instance, a person may want to give one of Al Gore's carbon credit companies money to pay for "carbon usage," and then Al sends out one of his minions to go plant a tree. There are people who would praise this as a great act of self sacrifice, but it means nothing to God. Human good (HTML) (PDF) (WPD)

Definition of Terms	
Human Viewpoint	Man's thinking apart from Bible doctrine. See Human Viewpoint Versus Divine Viewpoint Thinking (HTML) (PDF) (WPD). In the context of our study, human viewpoint is equivalent to <i>under-the-sun</i> wisdom.
The Revealed God (or, the Revealed Lord)	We all come to a time of God-consciousness where we understand the concept and possibility of the existence of God. At that point, we face 2 great questions: (1) do we want to know this God and (2) are will willing to believe in God as He has revealed Himself or do we make a god in our own image and worship that? In both the Old and New Testaments, God will make Himself known (He reveals Himself) to those who will believe in Him and to others as well. We know Him firmly and concretely as Jesus Christ; and in the Old Testament, He is known as the God of the Jews, the Creator of the Universe, the God of Moses (or of Abraham), etc.
Reversionism	Getting out of fellowship through sinning, and then remaining out of fellowship for a long time. Often, such a believer reverts to his behavior as an unbeliever (a dog returning to his vomit). This is called <i>reversionism</i> ; or <i>spiritual regression</i> ; or <i>spiritual retrogression</i> . This is going further than simple <i>carnality</i> , which is being out of fellowship; this is a person staying out of fellowship for long periods of time, losing his spiritual focus, and beginning to think like an unbeliever. He is a believer who is off course, walking backwards, or has fallen into a ditch (Reversionism —Ken Reed) (Reversionism —Jim Rickard) (Reversionism —divine viewpoint)
Sin nature	The sin nature is that part of man, passed down from father to his children, which is in rebellion to God. In the Church Age, we are either controlled by the sin nature or by the Holy Spirit. The sin nature has an area of weakness and an area of strength, as well as a lust pattern. (Old Sin Nature —James Allen) (Doctrine of the Sin Nature—Michael Lemmon ²⁰) (L. G. Merritt) (The origin of the old sin nature—McLaughlin) (Doctrine of the Old Sin Nature—Makarios —Word document) (Sin Nature)
Some of these definitions are taken from https://www.gotquestions.org/ http://rickhughesministries.org/content/Biblical-Terms.pdf http://www.gbible.org/index.php?proc=d4d http://www.wordoftruthministries.org/terms-and-definitions/ http://www.theopedia.com/	
Chapter Outline	Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

An Introduction to Ecclesiastes 1

Introduction: Ecclesiastes 1 begins one of the most unusual books found in the Bible. It is reasonably supposed, by most, to be written by Solomon²¹; but it seems to have a completely different take on life, as compared to the thinking found elsewhere in Scripture. Whereas, it is clear, in Proverbs and Kings, the importance of wisdom and close relationship between Solomon and *wisdom*; in this book, there seems to be a completely different take on wisdom (something which will be explained).

Although we do not know this from the outset, Solomon is going to very clearly be filled with human viewpoint. He is a very smart man, and he has apparently studied and learned from scientists and philosophers and

²⁰ You will have to do a search on this page.

²¹ Discussed in great detail in the introduction to the book of Ecclesiastes.

mathematicians; and he intermixes all of this knowledge with, to some degree, revealed truth. One thing that the believer cannot do is take a little Bible doctrine, take a little Buddhism, take a little New Age philosophy, and make a life philosophy out of all of it. That is not in God's plan; this will not help the believer to move forward spiritually. If you want to know truth, God will give it to you. You will not have to search it out. I went to a half-dozen churches looking for a place where the Bible was carefully taught—but God, knowing me, brought what I needed (lessons from R. B. Thieme, Jr.) right into my own house.

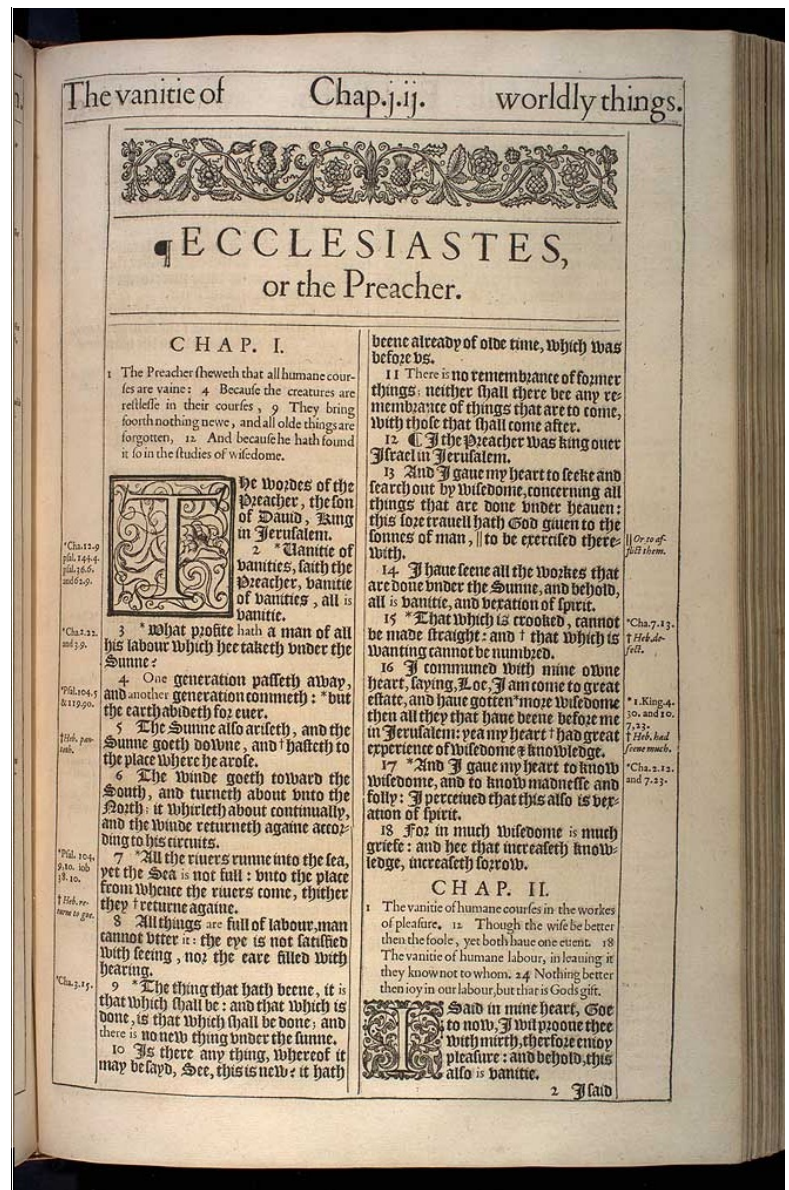
As I see it, Solomon is describing his thinking primarily when out of fellowship—which situation appears to have come about because of his many wives (1Kings 11:1–11); or perhaps because of his failures or near failures in 1Kings 9. At some point, Solomon's human viewpoint solutions eventually were so unsatisfactory that, Solomon, having been disciplined by God and distressed by life, returned to a doctrinally correct approach—which will be apparent in this book.

Ecclesiastes 1 (or the Preacher) (a graphic); from the **1611 King James Bible**; accessed June 17, 2018.

There is one thing which should be mentioned, and that is the references to wisdom in this chapter (and others). In the book of Proverbs and in the early chapters of Kings, *wisdom* seems to be a pretty good thing to have. Solomon, when asked of God what he wanted, he asked for wisdom; and God thought highly of that. In Prov. 8, wisdom seems to be just about the greatest thing ever. However, in the book of Ecclesiastes, wisdom is not held in the same high esteem.

In the book of Kings, Solomon asks God for wisdom and God gives that to him. Here, in Ecclesiastes, Solomon is on a search for wisdom (the same word is used in both contexts). Since the Bible cannot contradict itself, there must be some explanation for this disparity. The explanation is simple: there is divine wisdom and there is human wisdom. Divine wisdom is what we find in Proverbs and Kings; human wisdom is what we find in Ecclesiastes (the explanation is actually more nuanced than that this, which was covered in **The Categories of Solomon's Wisdom** found in the **Introduction to the Book of Ecclesiastes** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD—zipped](#))). If we want divine wisdom, God will give that to us (He will make His Word available to us). If we want human wisdom, then we must search that out. The accumulation of divine wisdom will bring us happiness and stability in life; the pursuit and acquisition of **human viewpoint** wisdom (**cosmic system thinking**) will lead us into frustration, misery and pain.

In order to sort out correctly what is being taught in this book and elsewhere, you have to disassociate Solomon's wisdom under the sun in Ecclesiastes from his divinely bestowed wisdom in Proverbs and Kings. We read in 1Kings 3:11–13 **And God said to him, "Because you have asked this [wisdom], and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but**



have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days.” (See also 1Kings 10:23–24 2Chron. 9:22–23) In Prov. 8, wisdom is seen to be of the highest value. But, in Ecclesiastes, we have the same words, but with a much different opinion. Therefore, we need to distinguish between the wisdom of Kings and Proverbs (which is divine wisdom—revealed and bestowed) and the wisdom referred to in Ecclesiastes, which is the accumulation of human philosophy and experience.

The Five Kinds of Wisdom: There appear to be at least 5 kinds of wisdom: (1) divine viewpoint wisdom, as described in 1Kings 3 and Prov. 8. (2) **Divine establishment** wisdom (these are laws and truths which are true for all mankind and, when a part of a nation, preserves that people and nation. (3) Cosmic viewpoint wisdom = human viewpoint wisdom, which is all of the false wisdom that a person might accumulate, but without any true satisfaction or happiness in life. Today, this would be humanism, or Buddhism, or various philosophies which incorporate evolution into their thinking. This is the kind of wisdom which Solomon seeks out and expresses in the book of Ecclesiastes. (4) There is a wisdom of science, of natural things in the universe. This can also be searched out and attained, but without any satisfaction apart from divine viewpoint wisdom. We might call this scientific knowledge or a knowledge of the natural universe. This knowledge may or may not reject God. (5) There are skill sets that might be developed, and that may be called wisdom, but it is really the development of a skill.

Dr. Thomas Constable: *To conduct his investigation of human achievements, Solomon had employed the tool of wisdom. Wisdom here does not refer to living life with God in view. It means using human intelligence as an instrument to ferret out truth and significance. However, he discovered it inadequate to turn up any truly meaningful activity. Consequently, wisdom was in this respect no better than "madness and folly" (Eccles. 1:17; i.e., foolish ideas and pleasures).*²²

Just as we recognize that the word *wisdom* in this chapter is human viewpoint wisdom; so we must recognize that many of the conclusions that we are forced to are logical conclusions of the secular mind. If you assume that there is no God (or even if you simply believe that God is not important to your understanding of life), then to what conclusions are you forced?

James Burton Coffman asks the question: *One of the mysteries of Ecclesiastes regards the terrible pessimism that marks many of the isolated statements. Are these the actual belief of the writer, or is he merely presenting what he regards as a false view which he will forcefully deny and correct in his conclusion? To this writer, the second explanation is the proper one.*²³

It is my opinion that Solomon, at one time, believed all of the statements found in Ecclesiastes, and that he publically shared the pessimistic views herein described. It also appears that he turned his thinking around near the end of his life, and returned to having a doctrinal viewpoint of the world.

Ecclesiastes (life in a meaningless world) (a graphic); from [Dwelling in the Word](#); accessed June 17, 2018.

The book of Ecclesiastes does not tell us the life is meaningless; but it does reveal to us that, apart from God, life has no real meaning for us.



²² Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:16–18.

²³ From <https://www.study-light.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

Solomon is a man with essentially infinite means by which to secure happiness and/or meaning in life, and in this book, he reveals that he cannot find it—not apart from God.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

A title or one or two sentences which describe Ecclesiastes 1.

Titles and/or Brief Descriptions of Ecclesiastes 1 (by Various Commentators)

929 Chapters: *Qohelet [the Hebrew word for Ecclesiastes] reflects upon the futility of mankind, the natural world, and the study of wisdom.*²⁴

Pastor John Griffith: *This is a book of phenomenal wisdom which is pertinent to all of us, it is for people in the trenches of life - living where situations must be evaluated and decisions made.*²⁵

Arno Gaebelein's brief outline of Ecclesiastes 1:

1. The introduction and prologue (Eccles. 1:1–11)
2. The seeker; his method and the results (Eccles. 1:12–18).²⁶

Keith Krell: *Solomon examines three broad categories in his search for the key to life: human history, physical nature, and human nature.*²⁷

Dead Sea Scrolls Bible: *Qohelet—perhaps meaning “the assembler”—is concerned with the purpose of life and in particular the inability of material things to provide meanings.*²⁸

There is no other book in the Bible like this book.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Sometimes, a commentator will begin with a good observation of this chapter of the Bible.

Brief, but insightful observations of Ecclesiastes 1 (various commentators)

John Dummelow: *[With the phrase] All is Vanity...[t]he writer describes himself. He declares that all things are transitory and without result, whether they be the works or the life of man, or the natural forces of heat, air, and water. Language cannot do justice to nature's wearisome sameness.*²⁹

Zondervan Encyclopedia: *Ecclesiastes is really intended to be a tract for the conversion of the self-sufficient intellectual; it compels him to discard his comfortable, self-flattering illusions and face honestly the instability of all those materialistic props on which he attempts to base his security. At the end of the road for the 'hard-headed' materialist lies death and physical dissolution.*³⁰

²⁴ From <https://929chapters.com/2012/06/14/ecclesiastes-1-reflections/> accessed June 14, 2018.

²⁵ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_03.html accessed June 15, 2018.

²⁶ Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–18.

²⁷ From Bible.org, accessed June 23, 2018 (slightly edited).

²⁸ *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*; translation and commentary by Martin Abegg Jr., Peter Flint and Eugene Ulrich; Harper SF, ©1999, p. 619.

²⁹ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 22, 2018.

³⁰ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2 further citation there).

Brief, but insightful observations of Ecclesiastes 1 (various commentators)

College Press Bible Study: *Nothing in all of God's creation, except man, concerns itself with the "why" of the activities of our world. Man, however, is restless until he discovers the why. Augustine's admission to God was that men are restless until they find their rest in Him. This quest for God in all the things around us is a futile pursuit. The reason it is unfulfilling is that it is directed toward God's creation, and not toward the mind of God which interprets God's creation.*³¹

John W. Ritenbaugh: *Despite Solomon's exclamation, Ecclesiastes contains sufficient evidence that he never completely lost his view of God, as the book's last paragraph is witness. Instead, he clearly demonstrates that for those who believe God, vanity does not have the last word. Therefore, we can glean a great deal of hope from Ecclesiastes.*³²

John W. Ritenbaugh: *Upon reading Ecclesiastes, many believe that Solomon's outlook on life was decidedly pessimistic despite living in regal glory and with every amenity to make life appealing.*

Ritenbaugh continues: *Ecclesiastes is not truly about the meaninglessness of life. Rather, it is about the meaninglessness of living life without God, or as Solomon wrote, living life entirely "under the sun."*³³

Archer: *In other words, it is as if this wise, wealthy, and powerful king had undertaken a trial of Jesus' later challenge: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26). And so he set about gaining the whole world and the full enjoyment of all the pleasures and satisfaction that this life could give him.*³⁴

Ken Cayce: *When Solomon depended on empirical research rather than divine revelation to understand life, he found it to be an empty experience.*³⁵

Brian Bell Commentary: *IF you leave God out of the equation. If your only perspective is under the sun, then yes, Life is not a bowl of cherry's...it's the pits!*³⁶

Gill sees Solomon as going apostate during much of this book; and eventually being brought back to the faith.³⁷

College Press Bible Study: *At the beginning of the book, we are confronted with the most basic question man can possibly ask: Is this life, in its toil, pleasures, possessions, challenges, and ambitions all there is to living, or is there a Word from God to give hope to man in the midst of his activities? It is in the face of this question that the Preacher embarks on his quest.*

College Press Bible Study continues: *It is with deep gratitude to God that we study Ecclesiastes with the wisdom of His final revelation. On numerous occasions Jesus pointed to the transitory nature of man and his world and always directed his hearers to a higher calling.*³⁸

Robert Hawker: *Under a great variety of evidences, taken from the circumstances of human life, and everything around, the Preacher fully proves the total inability of all the outward circumstances of nature to constitute happiness.*³⁹

³¹ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:13–18 (comment).

³² From [Bible tools](#) accessed June 17, 2018.

³³ From [Bible tools](#) accessed June 17, 2018.

³⁴ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2 (further citation there).

³⁵ From <http://www.bible-studys.org> accessed June 24, 2018.

³⁶ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/cbb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 25, 2018.

³⁷ Paraphrased from Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1. I did not quote Gill exactly, because he speaks of Solomon as going apostate from the church (Gill is incorrect about dispensations); and there was no church during Solomon's day.

³⁸ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:2.

³⁹ Robert Hawker *The Poor Man's Commentary*; ©1805; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1.

Brief, but insightful observations of Ecclesiastes 1 (various commentators)

S. Cox: *[T]he "son of David" grew mournful or bitter as he looked at the strong ancient heavens and the stable, bountiful earth and thought of the weariness and brevity of human life. This, then, is the mood in which the Preacher commences his quest of the chief good. He is driven to it by the need of finding that in which he can rest...[Solomon therefore] set out to discover the condition in which they might become partakers of the order, and stability, and peace of nature—the condition in which, raised above all tides and storms of change, they might sit calm and serene even though the strong ancient heavens and the solid earth should vanish away.*⁴⁰

A. W. Momerie has an interesting, if not unique, view of Ecclesiastes: *[Commentators] all assume that the author ought to have written something else. This kind of criticism, however ingenious, is dishonest and irreverent—dishonest, for it is an attempt to obtain unfairly confirmation for our own opinions; irreverent, for if a book be worth reading at all, it is our business to try and learn the author's views, and not to teach him ours...Whoever takes Koheleth's view of human destiny should participate in Koheleth's despair. What avails it to be a Homer or a Caesar today if tomorrow I am to be nothing but a heap of dust?*⁴¹

Momerie refers to the author as *she* and this comes out of a book entitled *Agnosticism*. He makes some interesting points, nonetheless.

Alexander MacLaren: *[R]emember that the wild things and the bitter things which the Preacher is saying so abundantly through its course do not represent his ultimate convictions, but thoughts that he took up in his progress from error to truth. His first word is: 'All is vanity!' That conviction had been set vibrating in his heart, as it is set vibrating in the heart of every man who does as he did, viz., seeks for solid good away from God. That is his starting-point. It is not true. All is not vanity.*

MacLaren continues: *That is the beginning of the book, and there are hosts of other things in the course of it as one-sided, as cynically bitter, and therefore superficial. But the end of it is: 'Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.' In his journey from the one point to the other my text is the first step, 'One generation goes out, and another comes in: the earth abides for ever.'*⁴²

Steve Zeisler makes a brilliant observation: *Ecclesiastes is unique among the books of the Bible. It describes a world in which God exists but has not spoken. God is acknowledged as creator and determiner of events, but the searcher (Koheleth) who writes and arranges the book only has information that can be gathered "under the un". For him, no divine voice has spoken to give meaning or direction for human strugglers. Ecclesiastes is an ancient companion to the writings of modern secularists and skeptics.*⁴³

One of the great questions which will come up in this book is, how come God is mentioned 41 times in Ecclesiastes, but *only* by the name/title Elohim. We do not find the Living Word of God, Y^ehowah. The idea is, Y^ehowah is the Personal God; Y^ehowah is Who reveals Himself to us. In the New Testament, Y^ehowah reveals Himself as Jesus. We do not have a relationship with God except through Him.

Solomon clearly went far afield from Bible doctrine in his search for happiness and wisdom in this book; but he also clearly returns to God in this book.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Gary Everett: *The theme of this passage is stated in the second verse, which says, "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." (Eccles. 1:2). He then asks the rhetorical question,*

⁴⁰ *The Sermon Bible Commentary*; ©1888-1893; in the Public Domain; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll, M.A., LL.D., from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–11.

⁴¹ *The Sermon Bible Commentary*; ©1888-1893; in the Public Domain; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll, M.A., LL.D., from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–11.

⁴² Alexander MacLaren, D. D., Litt. D., *Expositions Of Holy Scripture*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:4.

⁴³ From <https://www.pbc.org/messages/seek-and-you-shall-find> accessed June 24, 2018.

“What profit does a man have of all his labours in this life?” (Eccles. 1:3) He sees the generations of the earth testifying to its course of vanity (Eccles. 1:4–7), and generations of mankind testifying to the same (Eccles. 1:8–11).

Everett continues: *As a result the preacher will attempt to answer this question throughout the rest of the book of Ecclesiastes, in which the Preacher records his efforts to find the purpose and essence of life.*⁴⁴

As I study a chapter, questions will occur to me—some of them important and many of them minor. Not all of these questions will be satisfactorily answered.

Fundamental Questions About Ecclesiastes 1

1. What is vanity? What is *vanity of vanities*?
2. What is the nihilism which seems to pervade this first chapter?
3. Why does the author see man’s life as so temporal?
4. Why is wisdom held up elsewhere in the Bible as a meaningful pursuit; and yet presented as meaningless or empty in this chapter?
5. What does Solomon mean by the phrase *under the sun*?
6. Why are the references to natural occurrences not entirely accurate?
7. Some of the things in this chapter do not appear to be scientifically accurate. What about that?
8. There is a weariness; a disappointment with life in this chapter. What is that all about?
9. Why is wisdom presented as such an unsatisfactory and unfulfilling pursuit?
10. Why do we have the name for God *Elohim* 41 times in Ecclesiastes; but never *Y^ehowah*?

I do make an attempt to answer most or all of these questions if I am able.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

It is important to understand what has gone before.

The Prequel of Ecclesiastes 1

The Zondervan Encyclopedia: *Solomon was the tenth son of King David and the second son of Bathsheba. Whereas David and Saul had been born among the common people and grew up among them in village and countryside Solomon was born in the palace at Jerusalem and grew up among men of power. He had seen the heights of royal glory and the chaos of rebellion. He was well educated and never knew poverty or hunger. But he did know the consequences of intrigue, jealousy, and murderous hate. Before he grew to maturity several of his older half-brothers had met violent deaths and one half-sister had been raped. In addition a half-brother Adonijah tried to steal the throne from Solomon before David died.*

Ray Stedman: *This gives us a clue as to when this book was written. It must have been in the latter years of the reign of Solomon, after he had had ample opportunity to investigate all the areas of life and had done so. Following that period, which the book of First Kings describes, he fell into spiritual decline, led away by the idolatry of the wives he had married from foreign nations. This enlightened son of David, with all his knowledge of the law of Moses and all the insight of the word of God, actually ended up bowing down to lifeless idols in the heathen temples which he built for his wives in Jerusalem. But there was, apparently, a time of recovery.*

Solomon, the third king of Israel, at some point, moves away from God in his life. Many believe that it is his relationship with many of his 700 wives and 300 concubines which helps to lead him away from God (see 1Kings 11:1–10).

Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:12.

Ray Stedman, *Stedman’s Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:16–18.

⁴⁴ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett’s Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–11.

[Chapter Outline](#)
[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

We need to know who the people are who populate this chapter.

The Principals of Ecclesiastes 1

Characters	Biographical Material
Solomon	The author, the king of Israel; the one in search of wisdom and answers to life. He refers to himself twice in this chapter as <i>the preacher, king in Jerusalem</i> . He does not identify himself as Solomon anywhere in the book of Ecclesiastes. Discussion of Solomon as the author takes place in the Introduction to the Book of Ecclesiastes (HTML) (PDF) (WPD—zipped).
God	God is mentioned incidentally in v. 13. <i>And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with.</i>

Ecclesiastes is primarily a philosophical narrative.

[Chapter Outline](#)
[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

We need to know where this chapter takes place. I may need to eliminate this one.

The Places of Ecclesiastes 1

Place	Description
Jerusalem	The place where Solomon is king. This does not seem to play any role in this chapter except to help identify who the author is.

[Chapter Outline](#)
[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

By the Numbers

Item	Date; duration; size; number
Time of writing.	Benson: B.C. 977. ⁴⁵

[Chapter Outline](#)
[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes 1

The author is named in v. 1.

The theme of the book of Ecclesiastes is given in vv. 2–3.

In vv. 4–7, the cycles of man and nature (the sun, wind and seas) are examined.

Life is weary and unsatisfying. Nothing we can hear or see will change that. V. 8.

⁴⁵ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1 (chapter comments).

A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes 1

There is nothing new under the sun; and even if we think we have found something new, it is only because it had been forgotten about from past ages. Vv. 9–11.

In vv. 12–13, the author announces that he himself, the king of Israel, would pursue wisdom, to make determinations about this life given to man to endure.

All that he has observed—including some very profound things—have led him nowhere. Even his accumulated wisdom has led Solomon to a place of despair. Vv. 14–18.

There appears to be a careful organization to the first 3 chapters and the final chapter of Ecclesiastes. I do not completely follow the ordering of those chapters in between.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes 1 (from Matthew Henry)

Matthew Henry: *Much is to be learned by comparing one part of Scripture with another. We here behold Solomon returning from the broken and empty cisterns of the world, to the Fountain of living water; recording his own folly and shame, the bitterness of his disappointment, and the lessons he had learned. Those that have taken warning to turn and live, should warn others not to go on and die. He does not merely say all things are vain, but that they are vanity. VANITY OF VANITIES, ALL IS VANITY. This is the text of the preacher's sermon, of which in this book he never loses sight. If this world, in its present state, were all, it would not be worth living for; and the wealth and pleasure of this world, if we had ever so much, are not enough to make us happy. What profit has a man of all his labour? All he gets by it will not supply the wants of the soul, nor satisfy its desires; will not atone for the sins of the soul, nor hinder the loss of it: what profit will the wealth of the world be to the soul in death, in judgment, or in the everlasting state?*⁴⁶

Matthew Henry: *All things change, and never rest. Man, after all his labour, is no nearer finding rest than the sun, the wind, or the current of the river. His soul will find no rest, if he has it not from God. The senses are soon tired, yet still craving what is untried.*⁴⁷

Matthew Henry: *Men's hearts and their corruptions are the same now as in former times; their desires, and pursuits, and complaints, still the same. This should take us from expecting happiness in the creature, and quicken us to seek eternal blessings. How many things and persons in Solomon's day were thought very great, yet there is no remembrance of them now!*⁴⁸

Matthew Henry: *Solomon tried all things, and found them vanity. He found his searches after knowledge weariness, not only to the flesh, but to the mind. The more he saw of the works done under the sun, the more he saw their vanity; and the sight often vexed his spirit. He could neither gain that satisfaction to himself, nor do that good to others, which he expected. Even the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom discovered man's wickedness and misery; so that the more he knew, the more he saw cause to lament and mourn. Let us learn to hate and fear sin, the cause of all this vanity and misery; to value Christ; to seek rest in the knowledge, love, and service of the Saviour.*⁴⁹

There are some significant differences in the outlines below:

⁴⁶ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–3.

⁴⁷ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:4–8.

⁴⁸ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:9–11.

⁴⁹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:12–18.

Outlines and Summaries of Ecclesiastes 1 (Various Commentators)

Benson:

The general doctrine, All is vanity (Eccles. 1:2–3). Proved from the shortness of life, and the perpetual changes of all the creatures (Eccles. 1:4–7). From the unsatisfying toil of men, and the return of the same things over again (Eccles. 1:8–11). The vanity of knowledge (Eccles. 1:12–18).⁵⁰

Clarke:

The prophet shows that all human courses are vain (Eccles. 1:1–4). The creatures are continually changing (Eccles. 1:5–8). There is nothing new under the sun (Eccles. 1:9–11). Who the prophet was, his estate and his studies (Eccles. 1:12–18).⁵¹

Matthew Henry provides perhaps the most complex outline of Ecclesiastes 1:

- I. The inscription, or title of the book (Eccles. 1:1).
- II. The general doctrine of the vanity of the creature laid down (Eccles. 1:2) and explained (Eccles. 1:3).
- III. The proof of this doctrine, taken,
 1. From the shortness of human life and the multitude of births and burials in this life (Eccles. 1:4).
 2. From the inconstant nature, and constant revolutions, of all the creatures, and the perpetual flux and reflux they are in, the sun, wind, and water (Eccles. 1:5–7).
 3. From the abundant toil man has about them and the little satisfaction he has in them (Eccles. 1:8).
 4. From the return of the same things again, which shows the end of all perfection, and that the stock is exhausted (Eccles. 1:9, Eccles. 1:10).
 5. From the oblivion to which all things are condemned (Eccles. 1:11).
- IV. The first instance of the vanity of man's knowledge, and all the parts of learning, especially natural philosophy and politics. Observe,
 1. The trial Solomon made of these (Eccles. 1:12, Eccles. 1:13, Eccles. 1:16, Eccles. 1:17).
 2. His judgment of them, that all is vanity (Eccles. 1:14). For,
 - (1.) There is labour in getting knowledge (Eccles. 1:13).
 - (2.) There is little good to be done with it (Eccles. 1:15).
 - (3.) There is no satisfaction in it (Eccles. 1:18). And, if this is vanity and vexation, all other things in this world, being much inferior to it in dignity and worth, must needs be so too. A great scholar cannot be happy unless he be a true saint.⁵²

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary:

(Eccles. 1:1–3)	Solomon shows that all human things are vain.
(Eccles. 1:4–8)	Man's toil and want of satisfaction.
(Eccles. 1:9–11)	There is nothing new.
(Eccles. 1:12–18)	The vexation in pursuit of knowledge. ⁵³

Gary Everett:

1. Title — Eccles. 1:1.
2. Opening Statement — Eccles. 1:2–4.
3. The 3-fold Testimony of the Generations of the Earth to Vanity — Eccles. 1:5–7.
4. The Testimony of the Generations of Man to His Subjection to Vanity — Eccles. 1:8–11.⁵⁴

Matthew Poole:

⁵⁰ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1 (chapter comments).

⁵¹ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1 (chapter comments).

⁵² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1 (chapter comments).

⁵³ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1 (chapter comments).

⁵⁴ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–11.

Outlines and Summaries of Ecclesiastes 1 (Various Commentators)

All is vanity; our labour great and unprofitable (Eccles. 1:1–3). The whole course of things is always going and returning (Eccles. 1:4–7). Nothing in nature is satisfied (Eccles. 1:8). Nothing new; old things are forgot (Eccles. 1:9–11). The search after wisdom is itself a vain labour; cannot supply our natural wants, nor satisfy our desires; but increases sorrow: all this the Preacher found out by experience (Eccles. 1:12–18).⁵⁵

Dr. Peter Pett:

Chapter 1 The Vainness and Meaninglessness of Life.

All Is Vanity (Eccles. 1:1–3).

The Meaninglessness of What Men Seek To Accomplish Comes Out In The Fact That Life Simply Follows A Continual Unchanging Repetition. It Is Purposeless and Boring and Unenlightening And Accomplishes Nothing Of Value. It Simply Repeats the Same Old Thing (Eccles. 1:4–11).

The Intellectual Search (Eccles. 1:12–18).⁵⁶

David Guzik present a more complex outline:

THE VANITY OF LIFE

- A. Introduction: The Preacher, the author of Ecclesiastes.
 - 1. (Eccles. 1:1 a) The Preacher.
 - 2. (Eccles. 1:1 b) The identity of the Preacher. The son of David, king in Jerusalem.
- B. The problem presented: the meaninglessness of life.
 - 1. (Eccles. 1:2) The Preacher's summary: Life is vanity, without meaning.
 - 2. (Eccles. 1:3) Life and work under the sun. What profit has a man from all his labor In which he toils under the sun?
 - 3. (Eccles. 1:4–7) The unending cycle of creation. One generation passes away, and another generation comes; But the earth abides forever.
 - 4. (Eccles. 1:8–11) The unending cycle of man's labor. All things are full of labor.
- C. The failure of wisdom to satisfy.
 - 1. (Eccles. 1:12–15) Searching by wisdom.
 - 2. (Eccles. 1:16-18) The failure of wisdom confirmed.⁵⁷

James Gray:

THE PROLOGUE (Ecclesiastes 1:1-11)

These verses show the general result of the whole search for good on earth, the record of which is to follow (Ecclesiastes 1:1-3); a symbolic illustration from nature of the monotony of human existence (Ecclesiastes 1:4-7); and a plain statement of the facts in the case (Ecclesiastes 1:8-11).

THE INTRODUCTION (Ecclesiastes 1:12-18)

These verses describe the seeker (Ecclesiastes 1:12); his method of search (Ecclesiastes 1:13), and the result in general (Ecclesiastes 1:14-15) and in particular (Ecclesiastes 1:16-18).⁵⁸

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

929 Chapters has outlined the entire Bible.

⁵⁵ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1.

⁵⁶ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–3, 4–11, 12–18.

⁵⁷ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:1–18.

⁵⁸ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/jgc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 24, 2018.

929 Chapters Outline of Ecclesiastes 1

- I. Summary
Qohelet reflects upon the futility of mankind, the natural world, and the study of wisdom.
- II. Outline
 - 1. Superscription
 - 2-8. The futility of mankind and the world
 - 9-11. Nothing is new
 - 12-18. The futility of wisdom

From 929chapters.com accessed April 14, 2018.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

I keep saying that I need to improve this, but I have not done that yet.

A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes 1 from the Summarized Bible

- Contents:** The doctrine of the vanity of the creature, and the impossibility of finding satisfaction without God.
- Characters:** God, Solomon.
- Conclusion:** All things, considered as abstract from God, and apart from Him, all worldly employments and enjoyments, are vanity of vanities, and if there were no supernatural method of giving peace to the heart and another life to follow, were indeed made in vain.
- Key Word:** Vanity, Eccles. 1:2 ([Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.](#)).
- Strong Verses:** Eccles. 1:8 ([All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.](#)).
- Striking Facts:** All is indeed vanity if Christ is not in the heart and if there be no hope of eternal life through acceptance of Him. The things of earth are passing away and hence are vanity if they be trusted in. There is a kingdom coming in which believers shall inherit substance and where there is no vanity. Matt. 11:28–29; 1Cor. 15:19.

Keith L. Brooks, *Summarized Bible; Complete Summary of the Bible*; ©1919; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes 1.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Dr. Bob Utley: *Ecclesiastes 1-2 can be seen as a list of things that humans seek which they think will give them joy and contentment, but without God life cannot be full!*



1. *w i s d o m , Eccles. 1:13–18*
2. *p l e a s u r e , Eccles. 2:1–3*
3. *p o s s e s s i o n s , Eccles. 2:4–8 a*
4. *s e x , Eccles. 2:8 b*
5. *s u m m a r y , Eccles. 2:9–11.⁵⁹*

Vanity of Vanities...all is vanity (Eccles. 1:2—the theme of Ecclesiastes) (a graphic); from **You Tube**; accessed June 17, 2018.

This graphic very much represents the overall theme of Ecclesiastes. Apart from God, all of life is empty, devoid of true meaning or lasting happiness.

It is helpful to see what came before and what follows in a brief summary.

The Big Picture (Ecclesiastes 1–2)

Scripture	Text/Commentary
Ecclesiastes 1:1–3	Title and introduction.
Ecclesiastes 1:4–11	Circuity, monotony, it's all been done before, and a neglect of the past.
Ecclesiastes 1:12–18	First experiment: diligently search out earthly wisdom.
Ecclesiastes 2:1–3	Second experiment: trying all earthly pleasures, in search of happiness.
Ecclesiastes 2:4–6	Third experiment: the amassing of great works.
Ecclesiastes 2:7–10	Fourth experiment: the amassing of possessions.
Ecclesiastes 2:11–23	There is no true happiness to be found in any of these, particularly knowing that when one dies, perhaps a fool will come up to take your place.
Ecclesiastes 2:24–26	A better way

Either chapters 1–2 should have been combined, or Ecclesiastes 2 should have begun with Eccles. 1:12.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

⁵⁹ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1 (chapter comments).

The first chapter heading sometimes does double duty, giving an overall view of the chapter and/or telling what the first section is about.

Paragraph Divisions of Modern Translations for Ecclesiastes 1				
Amplified Bible	Tree of Life	NET Bible	Good News Bible	Common English B.
The Futility of All Endeavors	Kohelet: the Preacher	Title	Life Is Useless	Opening motto
v. 1	v. 1	v. 1	v. 1	v. 1
		Introduction: Utter Futility		
v. 2		v. 2		v. 2
		Futility Illustrated from Nature		Some things are inevitable
v. 3				
v. 4				
v. 5				
v. 6				vv. 3-9a
v. 7	vv. 2-11	vv. 3-11	vv. 2-11	vv. 9b-11
v. 8				
v. 9				
v. 10				
v. 11				
The Futility of Wisdom	Search for Meaning in Life	Futility of Secular Accomplishment	The Philosopher's Experience	The Teacher's quest
vv. 12-15	vv. 12-14	vv. 12-15	vv. 12-13a	v. 12
	v. 15		vv. 13b-15	v. 13
		Futility of Secular Wisdom		v. 14
vv. 16-18	vv. 16-17	vv. 16-18	vv. 16-18	v. 15
	v. 18			vv. 16-17
				v. 18

From <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ecclesiastes+1&version=AMP;TLV;NET;GNT;CEB> concept inspired by Dr. Bob Utley.

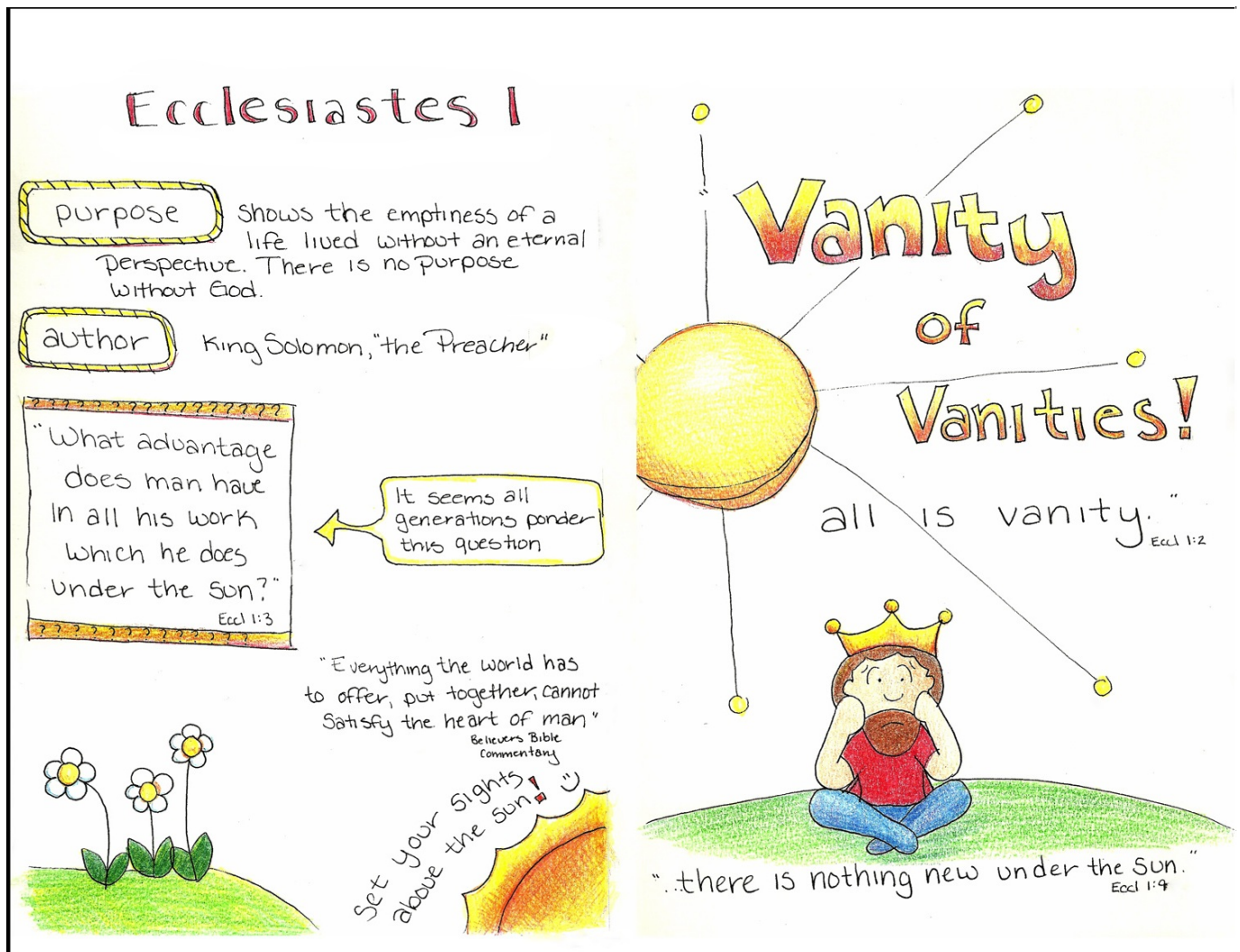
Utley wrote the following: *Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.*

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message.⁶⁰

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

⁶⁰ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1 (chapter comments).



Ecclesiastes 1 (a young person's approach) (a graphic); from [Doodle Through the Bible](#); accessed June 17, 2018. Sometimes these things designed for young people can help us to get a handle on the entire chapter.

Changes—additions and subtractions:

I began this study with quite a number of recently added charts: Titles and/or Brief Descriptions of Ecclesiastes 1 (by Various Commentators); Brief, but insightful observations of Ecclesiastes 1 (various commentators); Fundamental Questions About Ecclesiastes 1; A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes 1; Outlines of Ecclesiastes 1 (Various Commentators); A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes 1 from the Summarized Bible; and The Big Picture (Ecclesiastes —), all added to the introduction. This overall set of doctrines and tables can be found from about 2017 and forward (most of 1Kings and Ecclesiastes).

As far as I can tell, the Israel Bible is identical to the Tanakh (1985) from the JPS (except, apparently, transliterations of names for Deity in the Israel Bible). My hard copy of the Tanakh has footnotes, which are not available in the online version of the Israel Bible. The Son of Man Bible appears to be equivalent to the Unlocked Literal Bible. The Christian Standard Bible and the Holman Christian Standard Bible are almost identical.

It is very clear that some translations rarely offer anything new: A Faithful Version, Bond Slave Version, KJ3, MKJV, Modern Literal Version, or the Word of Yahweh. Once in awhile I find something interesting from the Niobi Study Bible or the Restored Holy Bible 6.0.

I have struggled with where to place the NET Bible footnotes. If they pertain to a particular word or phrase—particularly if the Hebrew is involved—then I have mostly placed those notes within the Hebrew exegesis. However, in this chapter, I begin to place many of the NET Bible footnotes directly below their translation, retaining their footnote numbers.

I drew from hundreds of sources for this chapter. I literally stand on the shoulders of thousands of men in order to put this document together.

A new source which I just came across is **Brian Bell**. His commentary appears to be his notes for giving a sermon, using slides (which are not a part of his commentary).

I found Ray Stedman to have some particularly inspired insight and quoted much of what he wrote on this chapter. The same is true of Ron Snider, John Griffith, Dr. Dan Hill, Keith Krell, David Guzik, Gary Everett and many others. Even today, when I study and include things which J. Vernon McGee has said, I am quite amazed. What a great Bible teacher he was!

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

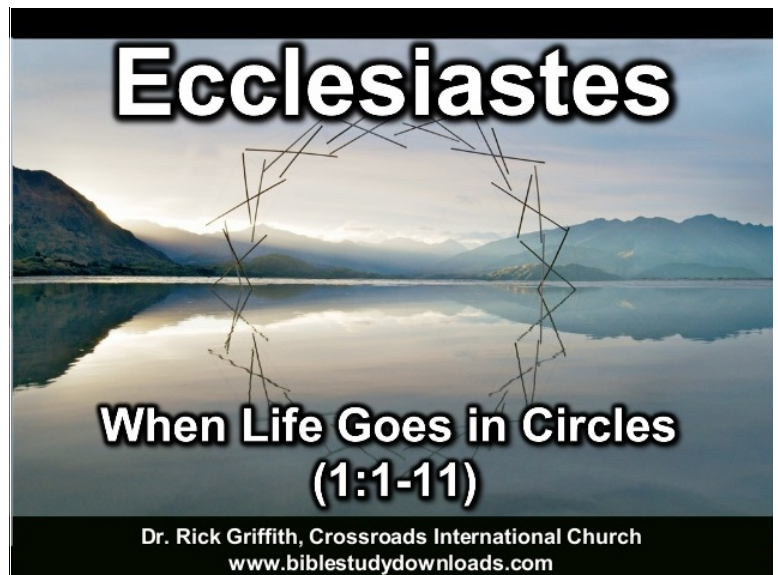
Title, Author and Theme

The first verse is the title of the book and a description of the author; the second verse states the theme of the book (some see the second and third verse as stating the theme of Ecclesiastes).

Barnes: *The introductory verses Eccles. 1:1–3 serve to describe the writer, and to state the subject of his book.*⁶¹

When Life Goes in Circles (Ecclesiastes 1:1–11) (a graphic); from **Dr. Rick Griffith on slide share**; accessed June 17, 2018.

These first 11 verses act as an introduction to the entire book of Ecclesiastes. Life is circular and lacking in meaning.



The Open Bible: *After a one-verse introduction, the Teacher states his theme: "Everything is meaningless, utterly meaningless!" (1:2). Life under the sun appears to be futile and perplexing. Verses 3–11 illustrate this theme in the endless and apparently meaningless cycles found in nature and history.*⁶²

⁶¹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1 (chapter comments).

⁶² *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 859.

John W. Ritenbaugh: *The first 11 verses act as an introduction, providing several terms that dominate the theme of the book. Three terms particularly important to grasping Ecclesiastes' message are contained within the first three verses: "vanity," "profit," and "under the sun."*

Ritenbaugh continues: *"Vanity" (Hebrew hebel) is a vivid metaphor used 33 times in the book. Literally, it suggests a breath, something akin to vapor, like one's breath on a cold day, or a puff of smoke rising from a fire. Smoke and breath not only disappear quickly, but neither can they be grasped and held on to. Thus, vanity aptly portrays life as being insubstantial, rather flimsy, and passing.*

Ritenbaugh concludes: *One of the more vivid explanations is that "vanity" suggests the scum that remains when a soap bubble bursts against a hard surface. Of what value is such a thing? Surprisingly, vanity has some value in life.⁶³*

As always, 3 separate translations will be produced for each verse. The slavishly literal translation attempts to preserve word order and number, making it more literal than Young's translation (however, I do not preserve the consistency of the translation that Young does). The moderately literal translation may add or delete a definite article, change the number of a noun to correspond with the English sense of thinking, and the order is often changed in order to better represent our English sentence structure. The paraphrase is an attempt to give a thought-for-thought interpretation of what each verse tells us.

Kukis slavishly literal:

Words of a Qoheleth, a son of David, a king in Jerusalem:...
Ecclesiastes 1:1

Kukis moderately literal:

[These are] the Words of a Lecturer, the son of David, King in Jerusalem:...

Kukis paraphrase

These are the Words of a Lecturer, who is the Son of David, the King in Jerusalem:...

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Note: I compare the Hebrew text to English translations of the Latin, Syriac (= Aramaic) and Greek texts, using the Douay-Rheims translation⁶⁴; George Lamsa's translation, and Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton's translation as revised and edited by Paul W. Esposito, respectively. I often update these texts with non-substantive changes (e.g., *you* for *thou*, etc.). I often use the text of the Complete Apostles' Bible instead of Brenton's translation, because it updates the English text. In Kings, I have used the [webpage](#) of Ernest C. Marsh.

The Septuagint was the earliest known translation of a book (circa 200 B.C.). Since this translation was made before the textual criticism had been developed into a science and because different books appear to be translated by different men, the Greek translation can sometimes be very uneven.

Sometimes, when there are serious disparities between my translation and Brenton's (or the text of the Complete Apostles' Bible), I look at the Greek text of the Septuagint (the LXX) to see if a substantive difference actually exists (and I reflect these changes in the English rendering of the Greek text). I use the Greek LXX with Strong's numbers and morphology available for e-sword. The only problem with this resource (which is a problem for similar resources) is, there is no way to further explore Greek verbs which are not found in the New Testament.

⁶³ From [Bible tools](#) accessed June 17, 2018.

⁶⁴ I have begun to doubt my e-sword Douay-Rheims version, so I now use www.latinvulgate.com.

Although I usually quote the Complete Apostles' Bible here, I have begun to make changes in the translation when their translation conflicts with the Greek and note what those changes are.

The Masoretic text is the Hebrew text with all of the vowels (vowel points) inserted (the original Hebrew text lacked vowels). We take the Masoretic text to be the text closest to the original. However, differences between the Masoretic text and the Greek, Latin and Syriac are worth noting and, once in a great while, represent a more accurate text possessed by those other ancient translators.

In general, the Latin text is an outstanding translation from the Hebrew text into Latin and very trustworthy (I say this as a non-Catholic). Unfortunately, I do not read Latin—apart from some very obvious words—so I am dependent upon the English translation of the Latin (principally, the Douay-Rheims translation).

Underlined words indicate differences in the text.

Bracketed portions of the Dead Sea Scrolls are words, letters and phrases lost in the scroll due to various types of damage. Underlined words or phrases are those in the Dead Sea Scrolls but not in the Masoretic text.

I will only list the translation from the Dead Sea Scrolls if it exists and if it is different from the Masoretic text.

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew) Aramaic targum	Words of a Qoheleth, a son of David, a king in Jerusalem:... The words of prophecy which Coheleth, that is, the son of David the King, who was in Jerusalem, prophesied.
Dead Sea Scrolls	There were portions of perhaps 5 verses from chapter 1 recovered from Qumran; but the only significant difference in this chapter is the word <i>that</i> in v. 14, which has a synonym used for that word instead in the Masoretic text.
Revised Douay-Rheims Peshitta (Syriac)	The words of Ecclesiastes, the son of David, king of Jerusalem. THE words of Kohlat, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.
Brenton's Septuagint	The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king of <u>Israel</u> in Jerusalem.

Significant differences:	Qoheleth means <i>collector (of sentences), preacher, public speaker, lecturer, speaker in an assembly</i> . The Greek form of this word is <i>eκκλῆσιαστῆς</i> (<i>ἐκκλησιαστῆς</i>) [pronounced <i>ehk-klays-ee-ahs-TACE</i>], which is transliterated into the Latin. <i>Prophecy</i> is an inaccurate rendering (Aramaic); and <i>preacher</i> (Greek) is not a very good translation.
--------------------------	---

The Aramaic targum adds some additional words, but mostly to smooth out the translation. The Greek adds the words *of Israel*.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Easy English	These are the Teacher's words. The Teacher was David's son. The Teacher was a king. He lived in a city that was called Jerusalem. There he ruled his country.
Easy-to-Read Version—2001	These are the words from the Teacher. The Teacher was a son of David and king of Jerusalem.
<i>God's Word</i> ™	Introducing the Spokesman The words of the spokesman, the son of David and the king in Jerusalem.
Good News Bible (TEV)	Life Is Useless

<i>The Message</i>	These are the words of the Philosopher, David's son, who was king in Jerusalem. The Quester
NIRV	These are the words of the Quester, David's son and king in Jerusalem. Everything Is Meaningless
New Simplified Bible	These are the words of the Teacher. He was the son of David. He was also the king in Jerusalem. The words of the Preacher (assembler) (lecturer), the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

Common English Bible	Opening motto The words of the Teacher of the Assembly, ^[a] David's son, king in Jerusalem:... Or <i>Gatherer</i> or <i>Convener</i> or <i>Assembler</i> (Heb <i>Qoheleth</i>); see also 1:2, 12; 7:27; 12:8, 9, 10
Contemporary English V.	When the son of David was king in Jerusalem, he was known to be very wise, and he said...
The Living Bible	The author: Solomon ^[a] of Jerusalem, King David's son, "The Preacher." <i>Solomon</i> , implied; literally, "the words of the Preacher, the son [or descendant] of David, King of Jerusalem."
New Life Version	Life Is of No Worth These are the words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.
New Living Translation	These are the words of the Teacher, ^[a] King David's son, who ruled in Jerusalem.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	These are the words and sayings of the descendant of King David, who is king in Jerusalem. The people call me 'The Teacher.'

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	These are the sayings of the great congregator, the son of David, the king of IsraEl in JeruSalem.
College Press paraphrase	These are the words of the one who assembled the people in order to preach to them. In addition to being identified as a preacher, he is David's son and king in Jerusalem.
International Standard V	The Theme The words of the Teacher, ^a the son of David, king in Jerusalem.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	Words of the Spokesman, ^[1] king David's son, that reigned once at Jerusalem. The word Ecclesiastes, like the Hebrew word it renders, should mean one who convokes an assembly, or addresses it, or both.
Translation for Translators	Everything is mysterious I am Solomon, the son of King David. I rule in Jerusalem and people call me 'The <Preacher/Religious Teacher>'. ◀Preacher/Religious Teacher▶.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible	The concerns of the speaker, the son of David, king in Jerusalem...
Conservapedia Translation	What follows are the words of the Preacher, Son of David, and King of Jerusalem.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	ECCLESIASTES, OR THE PREACHER. BOOK THE FIRST. THE SERMONS OF THE PREACHER, THE SON OF DAVID, THE KING, IN JERUSALEM. INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.
Lexham English Bible	Prologue The words of the Teacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.
NIV, ©2011	Everything Is Meaningless The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem:...

Tree of Life Version	Kohelet: the Preacher The words of Kohelet, son of David, king in Jerusalem.
Unlocked Literal Bible	These are the words of the Teacher, the descendant of David and king in Jerusalem.
Wikipedia Bible Project	The words of Koheleth, son of David, King in Yerushalayim (Jerusalem).

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (2013)	Vanity of vanities Here are the words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem:... <i>Life on earth goes in a seemingly endless circle; people do not remember and they do not learn.</i>
The Heritage Bible	The theme of Ecclesiastes is The Power to Enjoy Life is The Gift of God, 2:24-26 The words of the Preacher, ¹ the son of David, king in Jerusalem. Preacher , qoheleth, a proper name for Solomon, used only in Ecclesiastes, and means Preacher, one who addresses a public assembly on the issues of life.
New American Bible (2011)	The words of David's son, Qoheleth, king in Jerusalem:... Eccl 1:12; 12:9–10. David's son...king in Jerusalem: the intent of the author is to identify himself with Solomon. This is a literary device, by which the author hopes to commend his work to the public under the name of Israel's most famous sage (see 1 Kgs 5:9–14).
New English Bible	<i>The emptiness of all endeavour</i> ↑ 1. ECCLESIASTES. Life is useless. THE WORDS OF THE SPEAKER, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.
New Jerusalem Bible	Composition of Qoheleth son of David, king in Jerusalem.
New RSV	The words of the Teacher [Heb <i>Qoheleth</i> , traditionally rendered <i>Preacher</i>], the son of David, king in Jerusalem.
Revised English Bible	<i>The futility of all endeavour</i> THE words of the Speaker, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	The words of Kohelet the son of David, king in Yerushalayim:...
The Complete Tanach ⁶⁵	The words of Koheleth son of David, king in Jerusalem.

The words of Koheleth: Wherever it says, "the words of," it refers to words of reproof. (Deut. 1:1): "These are the words that Moses spoke" ... (ibid. 32:15): "And Jeshurun became fat." (Amos 1:1): "The words of Amos" ... (ibid. 4:1): "Hearken to this word, O cows of Bashan." (Jer. 1:1): "The words of Jeremiah" ... (ibid. 30: 6): "Ask now and see whether a male gives birth, etc." (II Sam. 23: 1): "And these are the words of David" ... (verse 6): "But the wicked are all as thorns thrust away." "The words of Koheleth... The sun rises... All the rivers run into the sea." He refers to the wicked as the sun, the moon, and the sea, which have no reward. So it was taught in Sifrei (Deut. 1:1). I learned from there that the section deals with the wicked and compares them to the rising of the sun, which ultimately sets. Addendum: Another explanation: All the rivers run into the sea. What is the meaning of this? This is stated concerning idolaters, the fools who prostrate themselves to the water and think that it has substance since they see the Great Sea, into which all the rivers run, and it is not full, but they do not know that to the place where the rivers flow, they repeatedly go, for the water of the rivers that flow into the sea is the very same water that already flowed. They flow from under the deep and go above the ground until the sea and repeatedly flow. Therefore, the rivers do not stop, and the sea does not become full, and not because they have substance. End of addendum.

⁶⁵ With Rashi's [Commentary](#).

Koheleth: Because he gathered (קָהַל) many wisdoms, and similarly, elsewhere (Prov. 30:1) Scripture calls him Agur the son of Jakeh, because he gathered (אָגַד) all the wisdom and vomited it (וּמָדָה), and some say that he would say all his words in an assembly (בְּקָהָל).

king in Jerusalem: the city of wisdom.

exeGesés companion Bible

THE WORDS OF THE CONGREGATIONER

Words of the Congregationer:

Son of David; Sovereign in Yeru Shalem.

Israel Bible

The words of Kohelet son of David, king in Yerushalayim.

Kohelet, the Hebrew name of this book, is a title given to King Shlomo. Although he was king of all of Israel, the wisest of all men is called the "king in Yerushalayim" since Yerushalayim is known as a city of wisdom and a place that lends itself to deeper understanding. Furthermore, many sages resided in Yerushalayim, the political and spiritual capital of the united kingdom of Israel. King Shlomo wants to add validity to his work by emphasizing that the observations recorded here were analyzed and approved by the wise residents of Jerusalem.

Orthodox Jewish Bible
The Scriptures 1998

Divrei Kohelet, Ben Dovid, Melech in Yerushalayim.

The words of Qoheleth¹, son of Dawid?, sovereign in Yerushalayim.

¹This Hebrew word means Assembler or Convener, an appellation. The author could have been Shelomoh, or else some post-exilic writer.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Amplified Bible

The Futility of All Endeavors

The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

The Expanded Bible

These are the words of the Teacher [or Preacher; ^LAssembler; ^Cof a group], a son of David, king in Jerusalem [^Can allusion to Solomon].

Kretzmann's Commentary

Verses 1-11

General Introduction

The words of the Preacher, in the sense of one who, from the rich stock of his knowledge, gives wise and profitable instruction, the reference being to Solomon, the son of David, king in Jerusalem, the capital of the entire kingdom of Israel and Judah at that time. The fact that Solomon does not mention his given name is easily accounted for by the fact that the entire book breathes the spirit of repentance, together with admonitions and warnings, such as are to be expected from an aged and experienced man rather than from a king.

NET Bible®

Title

The words of the Teacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem:...

The Pulpit Commentary

THE TITLE.

The words of the Preacher, the son of David, King in Jerusalem; Septuagint, "King of Israel in Jerusalem" (comp. Eccles. 1:12). The word rendered "Preacher" is Koheleth, a feminine noun formed from a verb kalal, "to call" (see Introduction, § 1), and perhaps better rendered "Convener" or "Debater." It is found nowhere else but in this book, where it occurs three times in this chapter (Eccles. 1:1, Eccles. 1:2, Eccles. 1:12), three times in Eccles. 12:8, Eccles. 12:9, Eccles. 12:10, and once in Eccles. 7:27. In all but one instance (viz. Eccles. 12:8) it is used without the article, as a proper name. Jerome, in his commentary, translates it, 'Continuator,' in his version 'Ecclesiastes.' It would seem to denote one who gathered around him a congregation in order to instruct them in Divine lore. The feminine form is explained in various ways. Either it is used abstractedly, as the designation of an office, which it seems not to be; or it is formed as some other words which are found with a feminine termination, though denoting the names of men, indicating, as Gesenius notes, a high degree of activity in the possessor of the particular quality signified by

the stem; e.g. Alemeth, Azmaveth (1Chron. 8:36; 1Chron. 9:42), Pochereth (Ezra 2:57), Sophereth (Neh. 7:57); or, as is most probable, the writer desired to identify Koheleth with Wisdom, though it must be observed that the personality of the author often appears, as in Eccles. 1:16–18; Eccles. 7:23, etc.; the role of Wisdom being for the nonce forgotten. The word "king" in the title is shown by the accentuation to be in apposition to "Koheleth" not to "David;" and there can be no doubt that the description is intended to denote Solomon, though his name is nowhere actually given, as it is in the two other works ascribed to him (Prov. 1:1; So Prov. 1:1). Other intimations of the assumption of Solomon's personality are found in Eccles. 1:12, "I Koheleth was king," etc.; so in describing his consummate wisdom, and in his being the author of many proverbs—accomplishments which are not noted in the case of any other of David's descendants. Also the picture of luxury and magnificence presented in Eccles. 2:1–26. suits no Jewish monarch but Solomon. The origin of the name applied to him may probably be traced to the historical fact mentioned in 1Kings 8:55, etc; where Solomon gathers all Israel together to the dedication of the temple, and utters the remarkable prayer which contained blessing and teaching and exhortation. As we have shown in the Introduction (§ 2), the assumption of the name is a mere literary device to give weight and importance to the treatise to which it appertains. The term, "King in Jerusalem," or, as in 1Kings 8:12, "King over Israel in Jerusalem," is unique, and occurs nowhere else in Scripture. David is said to have reigned in Jerusalem, when this seat of government is spoken of in contrast with that at Hebron (2Sam. 5:5), and the same expression is used of Solomon, Rehoboam, and others (1Kings 11:42; 1Kings 14:21; 1Kings 15:2, 1Kings 15:10); and the phrase probably denotes a time when the government had become divided, and Israel had a different capital from Judah

Syndein/Thieme

[The words of the teacher . . . the son of David {Solomon} . . . king in Jerusalem.](#)
 {Note: Solomon went into reversionism and a frantic search for happiness OUTSIDE of bible doctrine in your soul. As the 'older and wiser' teacher, Solomon explains what he has learned concerning finding happiness in the flesh. After all, he had a very high I.Q., was king, handsome, athletic, accomplished, and a sexual 'god' with a harem of a thousand women. Yet he could find no happiness from all of these.}

The Voice

[These are the words of the teacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.](#)

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Concordant Literal Version	The words of the Assembler, son of David, king in Jerusalem:"
Context Group Version	The words of the proclaimer, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.
Modern English Version	All Is Vanity These are the words of the Preacher, the son of David and king in Jerusalem.
New American Standard B.	The Futility of All Endeavor The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.
New European Version	The Vanity of Life 'Under the Sun' The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem:...
New King James Version	The Vanity of Life The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.
Niobi Study Bible	The Problem of Wisdom The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.
Restored Holy Bible 6.0	Scroll 18 Ecclesiastes. The words of the preacher, the son of David, king of Jerusalem.
R. B. Thieme, Jr.	The words of the Teacher [= the man with the message], son of David, king in Jerusalem.
Young's Literal Translation	Words of a preacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem:...

The gist of this passage: The title of this book is, *Words of the Qoheleth, a son of David, the king in Jerusalem.*

Ecclesiastes 1:1a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
d ^e bârîym (דְּבָרִים) [pronounced daw ^b -vawr- EEM]	words, sayings, doctrines, commands; things, matters, affairs; reports	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1697 BDB #182
qôheleth (תְּלֵהָ) [pronounced ko-HEH- leth]	collector (of sentences), preacher, public speaker, lecturer, speaker in an assembly, transliterated, Qoheleth	masculine singular noun	Strong's #6953 BDB #875

Dr. Peter Pett: *The word 'qoheleth' is a feminine singular participial form connected with the root 'qahal' which means 'to assemble'. Thus it signified one connected with an assembly either as speaker, leader or member, possibly of a group that met in the royal court to consider wisdom. So here Qoheleth is possibly to be seen as 'the preacher' or 'the speaker' or 'the appointed leader' of a recognised group of seekers after wisdom.*⁶⁶

The Cambridge Bible suggests *the debator*.⁶⁷

Kidner: *The word is connected with the Hebrew for assembling, and its form suggests some kind of office-bearer. . . . The many attempts at translating this title include: 'Ecclesiastes', 'The Preacher', 'The Speaker', 'The President', 'The Spokesman', 'The Philosopher'. We might almost add, 'The Professor'!*⁶⁸

The NET Bible (translation note) goes into much greater detail: *The meaning of תְּלֵהָ (qohelet) is somewhat puzzling. The verb לָהֵק (qahal) means "to assemble, summon" (HALOT 1078-79 s.v. לָהֵק), and is derived from the noun לָהֵק (qahal, "assembly"; HALOT 1079-80 s.v. לָהֵק). Thus תְּלֵהָ might mean: (1) convener of the assembly, (2) leader, speaker, teacher, or preacher of the assembly, or (3) member of the assembly. Elsewhere in the book, תְּלֵהָ is used in collocation with statements about his position as king in Jerusalem (Eccl 1:12), his proclamations about life (Eccl 1:2; 7:27; 12:8), and his teaching of wisdom and writing wise sayings (Eccl 12:9-10). Thus, תְּלֵהָ probably means "the leader of the assembly" or "speaker of the assembly." (See also the following study note.) Rabbinic literature treats תְּלֵהָ as a traditional surname for Solomon, that is, "Qoheleth," relating it to the noun לָהֵק. For example, this explanation is found in rabbinic literature (Qoheleth Rabbah 1:1): "Why was his name called Qoheleth [תְּלֵהָ]? Because his words were proclaimed in public meeting [לְהֵק], as it is written (1 Kgs 8:1)." The LXX rendered it ἐκκλησιαστὴς (ekklhsiasth, "member of the assembly," LSJ 509), as was the custom of relating Greek ἐκκλησία (ekklhsia, "assembly") to Hebrew לָהֵק.*

The NET Bible continues: *The book's English title, "Ecclesiastes," is simply a transliteration of the Greek term from the LXX. Symmachus' παροιμιαστὴς (paroimiasths, "author of proverbs," LSJ 1342 s.v.) is not a translation of תְּלֵהָ but refers to his authorship of many proverbs (Eccl 12:9-10). In terms of the participial form, תְּלֵהָ is used substantively to designate the profession or title of the author. The term is used in 12:8 with the article, indicating that it is a professional title rather than a personal surname: תְּלֵהָ (haqqohelet, "the Teacher"). Substantival participles often designate the title or profession of an individual: כֹּהֵן (kohen), "priest"; רוֹזֵן (rozen), "ruler"; שׁוֹטֵר (shoter), "officer"; נוֹקֵד (noqed), "sheep-breeder"; שׁוֹפֵט (shofet), "judge"; יוֹטֵסֵר (yotser), "potter"; קוֹרֵם (korem), "vine-dresser"; יוֹגֵב (yogev), "farmer"; שׁוֹרֵר (shorer), "gate-keeper"; תְּסוֹרֵף (tsoref), "smelter"; and אֶפְרֹן (rofe), "doctor" (IBHS 614-15 §37.2a).*

⁶⁶ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–3.

⁶⁷ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1.

⁶⁸ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:1.

Ecclesiastes 1:1a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
----------------------	-------------------------	------------------	--------------------------

The NET Bible continues: *In terms of its feminine ending with a male referent, Joüon 1:266-67 §89.b suggests that it is intensive, e.g., תַּעֲדוֹמָ (moda'at) "close relative" from עָדוֹמָ (moda') "kinsman."* The feminine ending is used similarly in Arabic in reference to a male referent, e.g., Arabic rawiyat "a great narrator" from rawi "narrator" (C. P. Caspari, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*, 1:233c). So תַּלְהֵקָ may mean "the leader/teacher of the assembly" from the noun לְהֵקָ. When used in reference to a male referent, feminine forms denote a professional title or vocational office (as in Arabic, Ethiopic, and Aramaic), e.g., תַּרְפָּסָ (soferet), "scribe"; תַּרְכָּפָ (pokheret), "gazelle-catcher"; הַתְּפָ (pekha), "provincial governor"; and תּוֹעָרָ (p̄yra'ot), "princes" (GKC 393 §122.r).

The NET Bible continues: *Occasionally, a professional name later became a personal name, e.g., the title תַּרְפָּסָ ("scribe") became the name "Sophereth" (Ezra 2:55; Neh 7:57), תַּרְכָּפָ ("gazelle-catcher") became "Pokereth" (Ezra 2:57; Neh 7:59), and perhaps תַּלְהֵקָ ("assembler") became the surname "Qoheleth" (HALOT 926 s.v. תַּרְכָּפָ מִיִּבְצָה).* Many translations render תַּלְהֵקָ as a professional title: "the Speaker" (NEB, Moffatt), "the Preacher" (KJV, RSV, YLT, MLB, ASV, NASB), "the Teacher" (NIV, NRSV), "the Leader of the Assembly" (NIV margin), "the Assembler" (NJPS margin). Others render it as a personal surname: "Koheleth" (JPS, NJPS) and "Qoheleth" (NAB, NRSV margin).⁶⁹

The NET Bible, went a little crazy here.

The NET Bible (Scripture note): *The verbal root להק means "to assemble; to summon" (HALOT 1078-79 s.v. להק). It is used of assembling or summoning various groups of people: "all Israel" (1 Chr 13:5; 15:3), "the elders of Israel" (1 Kgs 8:1; 2 Chr 5:2), "all the elders of their tribes" (Deut 31:28), "all the princes of Israel" (1 Chr 28:1), "your tribes" (Deut 31:28), "all the house of Judah" (1 Kgs 12:21; 2 Chr 11:1), "the people" (Deut 4:10; 31:12), "the whole congregation" (Lev 8:3; Num 1:18; 16:19; 20:8), "all the congregation of the sons of Israel" (Exod 35:1; Num 8:9), "the assembly" (Num 10:7; 20:10), and "your assembly" (Ezek 38:13). The verb is often used in reference to summoning/assembling people for a religious occasion (Exod 35:1; Lev 8:3-4; Num 8:9; Deut 4:10; Josh 18:1; 22:12; 1 Kgs 8:1; 2 Chr 5:2-3), a political occasion (2 Sam 20:14), a military occasion (Judg 20:11; 2 Chr 11:1), or a judicial occasion (Job 11:10).*

The NET Bible continues: *The Hiphil stem is used to describe the action of the leader (usually a single individual who possesses/commands authority) summoning the people, e.g., Moses (Exod 35:1; Lev 8:3; Num 20:10), Moses and Aaron (Num 1:18), Korah (Num 16:19), King David (1 Chr 13:5; 15:3; 28:1), King Solomon (1 Kgs 8:1; 12:21; 2 Chr 5:2), and King Rehoboam (2 Chr 11:1). In almost every case, he who assembles the people is a person invested with authority; he makes a public proclamation or leads the nation in an important action. The Niphal stem is most often used to describe the people assembling at the direction of the leader (e.g., Lev 8:4; Josh 18:1; 22:12; 1 Kgs 8:2; 2 Chr 5:3). The root להק is a denominative derived from the noun לְהֵקָ (qahal, "assembly, contingent"; HALOT 1079-80 s.v. לְהֵקָ).*

The NET Bible continues: *The noun has numerous referents: the congregated nation as a whole in the wilderness, assembled for ceremonies and instruction (Exod 16:3; Lev 4:13, 21; 16:17, 33; Num 10:7; 14:5; 15:15; 16:3; 17:12; 19:20; 20:4, 6, 10, 12; Deut 9:10; 10:4; 18:16); the congregation of Israel assembled for divine worship (Pss 22:23, 26; 26:5; 35:18; 40:10; 107:32; 149:1; Lam 1:10); the postexilic community assembled to hear the Torah and instruction (Neh 13:1); a military contingent assembled for warfare (Num 16:3; 20:4; Judg 20:2; 21:5, 8; 1 Sam 17:47; 2 Chr 28:14); people summoned to court (Ezek 16:40; 23:46-47); judicial authorities (Jer 26:17; Prov 5:14; 26:26; Sir 7:7). The term is often used as a designation for Israel: "the assembly of Israel" (Lev 16:17; Deut 31:30; Josh 8:35; 1 Kgs 8:14, 22, 55; 12:3; 2 Chr 6:3, 12-13; Sir 50:13, 20), "the assembly of the congregation" (Exod 12:6); "the assembly of the congregation of the sons of Israel" (Num 14:5), and "the assembly of God" (Neh 13:1).*

⁶⁹ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 14, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:1a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>The NET Bible concludes: <i>The related noun קהלה (qÿhillah) means “assembly, community” (HALOT 1080 s.v. קהלה), e.g., in the idiom נתן קהלה (natan qÿhillah) “to hold an assembly”: “I called a great assembly to deal with them” (Neh 5:7).</i>⁷⁰</p>			

Translation: [These are] the Words of a Lecturer,... This is the title of this book, which I believe is not a collection of Solomon's thoughts, per se, but a collection of some of his most famous sermons/lectures.

I think what took place here was, Solomon, for many years, presented accurately the words of Moses, similar to what we read in **1Kings 9** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)), when Solomon addressed the people of Israel when he opened up the Temple. However, at some point (and this is reasonable conjecture), Solomon began going astray and he began to collect the wisdom from other gods, religions and points of view. I believe that he began to teach these things to his people—perhaps even from the Temple platform.

If these chapters are not things that he taught, they indicate paths that he went down, on a search for truth (but a truth separate from the revelation of his God).

Eccles. 1:1a [These are the Words of a Lecturer \[= the Qôheleth\],...](#)

On the word Qôheleth (various commentators)

The masculine singular noun found here is qôheleth (קהלה) [pronounced *ko-HEH-leth*], which means, *collector (of sentences), preacher, public speaker, lecturer, speaker in an assembly*, transliterated, *Qoheleth*. Strong's #6953 BDB #875. This word is found 7 times, only in the book of Ecclesiastes. The equivalent Greek word is Ecclesiastes.

Strong's says it is the feminine of active participle from Strong's 6950, which is: qâhal (קהל) [pronounced *kaw-HAHL*], which means, *to assemble, to be assembled, to be called together, to be summoned an assembly [for war, judgement or a religious purpose]*. Niphal meanings. Strong's #6950 BDB #874. This word is widely distributed in the Old Testament (38 times; not in Ecclesiastes, by the way).

J. Vermon McGee: *Ecclesiastes indicates a preacher or a philosopher. I rather like the term philosopher because it is less likely to be misunderstood.*⁷¹

The Bible Speaks: *The word from which 'Preacher' is translated is a Hebrew term, [~Qoheleth], pronounced 'Kohleth' or 'Kohlelet.' Many attempts to translate this have given us: 'Ecclesiastes,' 'The Preacher,' 'The Speaker,' 'The President,' 'The Spokesman,' 'The Philosopher,'; and we might add, 'The Professor.'*⁷²

The Berkeley Bible: *A Greek trasnatlion of Kohleth, the Hebrew title which the author gives himself in v. 1. It means, "One who calls together an assembly," so that "Preacher" seems a suitable translation.*⁷³

Clarke: *The word תלה קהלה Kohleth is a feminine noun, from the root להק kahal, to collect, gather together, assemble; and means, she who assembles or collects a congregation; translated by the Septuagint, ekkhlesiasthv, a public speaker, a speaker in an assembly; and hence translated by us a preacher.*⁷⁴

⁷⁰ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 14, 2018.

⁷¹ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt accessed June 18, 2018.

⁷² From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

⁷³ *The Modern Language Bible (The New Berkeley Version)*, Revised Edition; ©1969 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 670 (Footnote).

⁷⁴ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1.

On the word Qôheleth (various commentators)

Benson: *The Hebrew word תלהק, here used, may either signify the person who assembles the people, or the person that addresses them when assembled.*⁷⁵

David Guzik: *In Hebrew, this translates the word Koheleth (or, Kobellet). The idea is of someone who might gather, lead, or speak to a group of people — a congregation.*⁷⁶

Ray Stedman: *The translators, unfortunately, here refer to Solomon as "the Preacher." I am sorry they used that term. I know the book sounds a little preachy at the beginning.... The word for Preacher is the Hebrew word Qoheleth, which really means, "the one who gathers, assembles, or collects things."*⁷⁷

Ken Cayce: *Preacher means "one who addresses an assembly" (as Eccles. 12:9 reflects). The Preacher is the title of one who gathers the assembly together for instruction.*⁷⁸

Some people got very weird about Solomon's name here and elsewhere. Gill writes: *The word "Koheleth", rendered "preacher", is by some taken to be a proper name of Solomon; who, besides the name of Solomon, his parents gave him, and Jedidiah, as the Lord called him, had the name of Koheleth; nay, the Jews say (i), he had seven names, and to these three add four more, Agur, Jake, Ithiel, and Lemuel.*⁷⁹

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Barnes: *No one English word represents the Hebrew תלהק qôheleth adequately. Though capable, according to Hebrew usage, of being applied to men in office, it is strictly a feminine participle, and describes a person in the act of calling together an assembly of people as if with the intention of addressing them. The word thus understood refers us to the action of Wisdom personified Prov. 1:20 8:8.*⁸⁰

We should not confound the concept of wisdom as found in Ecclesiastes with that found in Proverbs. The wisdom in Proverbs is divinely inspired; it is of God; the wisdom in Ecclesiastes is that wisdom which is found under the sun. The wisdom of Ecclesiastes is man's wisdom; it is human viewpoint; it is simply a collection of observations made about life on earth.

Let me suggest to you that this answers at least one question for us. 1Kings 9:25 [Three times a year Solomon used to offer up burnt offerings and peace offerings on the altar that he built to the LORD, making offerings with it before the LORD. So he finished the house.](#) (ESV) The logical question which occurred to me is, *Is Solomon taking a leading role in these sacrifices and offerings? Is he doing the job that a priest ought to be doing?* I believe the answer to this is yes; and these writings of Ecclesiastes are some of the sermons/lectures which Solomon has given to his people.

We know for a certainty that the first teaching that Solomon did at the inaugural celebration of the Temple was doctrinal, and based very much on the writings of Moses. I am extrapolating from there, taking the book of Ecclesiastes, and suggesting that Solomon eventually began delving into other teachings on wisdom and that he taught that as well (again, the name here that he uses is *the lecturer*). Whether or not Solomon ever taught this from the pulpit (the stand) at the Temple is conjecture on my part. Given his name, *the lecturer*, it certainly suggests that Solomon had a teaching ministry, and much of what he taught was human viewpoint.

⁷⁵ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1.

⁷⁶ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:1.

⁷⁷ Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 1.

⁷⁸ From <http://www.bible-studys.org> accessed June 24, 2018 (slightly edited).

⁷⁹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1. Even though this is from Gill's commentary; I do not believe that this is Gill's position on the matter.

⁸⁰ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1.

One might add to this thought that, the term *lecturer* may not necessarily be a complimentary one. Solomon was quite the intellectual and he did amass a great deal of knowledge, but it was knowledge that was under the sun.

Solomon's Wisdom: Solomon divinely bestowed wisdom is spoken of in 1Kings 4:29–34 *And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceedingly much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the sons of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all of man; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all the nations round about. And he spoke three thousand proverbs; and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of creeping things, and of fish. And there came of all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.* (UPDV) you will note that includes wisdom and understanding of the natural sciences. This same wisdom is found here: 1Kings 10:23–24 *Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. And the whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind.* (ESV) Also, that wisdom is found in Proverbs.

Solomon's human viewpoint wisdom—the wisdom from under the sun—this is found in Eccles. 1:13–18 *And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that has been done under the heavens; this evil task Elohim has given to the sons of man, to be humbled by it. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun. And see, all was futile and feeding on wind. The crooked could not be straightened, and what is lacking could not be counted. So I spoke to my heart, saying, "See, I have attained greatness, and have gained more wisdom than all who were before me in Yerushalayim. And my heart has seen much wisdom and knowledge." And I set my heart to know wisdom – and to know madness and folly. I know that this too is feeding on wind. For in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases suffering.* (The Scriptures 1998)

The popular explanation is that Ecclesiastes is human viewpoint thinking; and in a way, it is. But let me suggest to you that these sermons/lectures were revised late in Solomon's life, so that even the human viewpoint ideas have a view towards truth and **divine viewpoint**. At the end of this book, Solomon writes: Eccles. 12:13–14 *The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.* (ESV; capitalized) This sounds as if Solomon, at the end of his life (Eccles. 12 is mostly about Solomon's body falling apart in old age) is realizing truths that he should have held fast to all of his life.

Let me suggest to you that Solomon, on occasion (and perhaps, during every central celebration) stood before the people and taught them. At first, Solomon was right on, teaching divine truth. However, as time progressed, as he became more and more influenced by his many wives (which led him into idolatry), Solomon's views became more and more human viewpoint. Think of this very much a church (or seminary) which started off on the right foot, teaching accurate doctrine and theology, but then veered off into apostasy, teaching the JEPD origins of the Pentateuch and covenant theology as the fundamental organizational principle.

Solomon's thinking does not have to reflect complete and total inaccuracy—but there are suggestions that he found life to be empty, frustrating and without purpose. This is not necessarily wrong—this is clearly the thinking of the unbeliever; and clearly the thinking of a believer in **reversionism** (or spiritual retrogression).

In this chapter, it will appear the Solomon has learned from scientists, mathematicians and philosophers; and he has come up with a life philosophy which he finds to be entirely unsatisfactory. He pulls together truths from here and there; but in the end, what he has is a mishmash of philosophies, ideas and truths—the very definition of relativism.

Ecclesiastes 1:1b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bên (בן) [pronounced <i>bane</i>]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâviyd (דִּיּוּד) [pronounced <i>daw-VEED</i>]	<i>beloved</i> and is transliterated <i>David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187

The NET Bible: *Heb "son of David" or "a son of David."*⁸¹

Translation: ...the son of David,... At the time that this was written, there were several men who were sons of David (although some had been killed or executed for their actions against the state).

Although the term *bên* can refer to a descendant, the time that this came out, it would have been while David's actual sons were alive.

2Sam. 12:24 Then David comforted his wife, Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her, and she bore a son, and he called his name Solomon. And the LORD loved him. (ESV)

Ecclesiastes 1:1c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
melek ^e (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced <i>MEH-lek</i>]	<i>king, ruler, prince; royal, royalty</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4428 BDB #572

The NET Bible: *While 1:1 says only "king in Jerusalem" (מֶלֶךְ בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם, melekh birushalayim), 1:12 adds "king over Israel in Jerusalem" (מֶלֶךְ אֶל-יִשְׂרָאֵל בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם, melekh 'al-yisra'el birushalayim). The LXX adds "Israel" in 1:1 to harmonize with 1:12; however, the MT makes sense as it stands. Apart from David, only Solomon was "king over Israel in Jerusalem" – unless the term "Israel" (יִשְׂרָאֵל, yisra'el) in 1:12 is used for Judah or the postexilic community. Solomon would fit the description of the author of this book, who is characterized by great wisdom (1:13, 16), great wealth (2:8), numerous servants (2:7), great projects (2:4-6), and the collection, editing and writings of many proverbs (12:9-10). All of this generally suggests Solomonic authorship. However, many scholars deny Solomonic authorship on the basis of linguistic and historical arguments.⁸²*

b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
Y ^e rûwshâlayim (יְרוּשָׁלַיִם) [pronounced <i>y'roo-shaw-LAH-yim</i>]	possibly means <i>founded upon peace</i> or <i>city of the Jebusites</i> (or both); it is transliterated <i>Jerusalem</i>	proper singular noun, location; pausal form	Strong's #3389 BDB #436

⁸¹ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 14, 2018.

⁸² From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 14, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:1c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>The NET Bible: <i>The form of the title is typical: (1) "the words of [the writer]," (2) his family name or name of his father, and (3) his social/political position in Israel (e.g., Prov 22:17; 24:23; 30:1; 31:1). Sometimes, the writer's qualifications are given in the introduction to an OT book (e.g., Jer 1:1; Amos 1:1). Qoheleth lists his qualifications at the end of the book (12:9-12).</i>⁸³</p>			

Translation: ...King in Jerusalem:... Solomon further narrows the focus to *the king in Jerusalem*. Solomon was the 3rd king of Israel, the 2nd king to operate out of Jerusalem; and the only living king. In the United States, it is common for there to be a club of 3 or 4 living presidents; but in monarchies, usually a king dies, and then a near relative (often his son) succeeds him.

1Kings 1:39 [There Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, "Long live King Solomon!" \(ESV\)](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:1 [These are the Words of a Lecturer, who is the Son of David, the King in Jerusalem:...](#) Solomon had been doing a lot of studying and a lot of searching; and he had also been teaching this information at various times (possibly from the "pulpit" during the 3 great festivals each year).

It appears to me that Solomon is going to distill all of this information—both true and false—and then finally come a some conclusions in the final chapter of this book.

The Easy English Translation: *We do not know the name of the person who wrote Ecclesiastes. But we know that he was a son of David. And we know that the writer was a king. So, many students think that King Solomon wrote it. Its writer was certainly a very wise man. He calls himself 'the Teacher'. The Teacher said some strange things. This is the reason. Many people do not know about God. So they try to find reasons for all the things that happen. But they cannot find reasons. The Teacher tells us what these people think. Sometimes people do things that have no purpose. He tells us what this is like. It is like somebody who tries to catch the wind. He means that it is very silly. The Teacher tells us how these people think. He does this when he uses the words 'on the earth'. These people find that life on the earth has no purpose.*⁸⁴

Ron Snider's translation of Ecclesiastes 1:1 [The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.](#)

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:1 (Ron Snider)

1. This book opens with a superscription, which is not uncommon and often appears at the beginning of many other Old Testament books--especially books of prophecy. Isa. 1:1; Jer. 1:1
2. The superscription is somewhat like our title page in modern book; it provides information about the type of writing, the author, and occasionally, the subject matter of the book.
3. This particular superscription is quite similar to the one found at the beginning of the book of Proverbs, which should come as no surprise.
4. In fact, the phrase son of David, king of Israel are used in only three passages and all three are definitely referring to Solomon. 2Chron. 30:26, 35:3; Prov. 1:1
5. While commentators have debated at great length over whether or not these words are to be ascribed to the historical Solomon, when these two titles are used together they do not appear to be applied to anyone other than Solomon.
6. Some have stated that Solomon did not write the superscription found in verse one since it is in the third

⁸³ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 14, 2018.

⁸⁴ From <https://www.easyenglish.bible/english-learners-bible/ecc-taw.htm> (footnote); accessed May 18, 2018.

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:1 (Ron Snider)

- person, but the very similar style of Proverbs indicates that the same author could easily have written the
7. The Hebrew term **קֹהֵלֶת** (Qoheleth) is derived from the verb **קָהַל** (qahal), which conveys the idea of assembling a group or congregation. (without regard to the purpose for the assembly) Ex. 35:1
 8. While the term is not attested outside of this book, the majority of interpreters understand it in the broad sense of one that has something to do with a congregation.
 9. Rabbinic literature treats Qoheleth as a traditional surname for Solomon; however, it should not like-ly be understood as a proper name.
 10. Although the form is feminine, it is clearly referring to a male; the best suggestion is that it is used to denote a professional title or office.
 11. This has led to the idea (Jerome, Leupold) that Solomon was the recognized leader of an assembly that was devoted to the pursuit of wisdom.
 12. The next phrase identifies Qoheleth as the son of David, which is understood by conservative inter-preters to denote his literal sonship and not simply that he was a descendant of David.
 13. In fact, the only other times this phrase is used is to refer to first generation descendants of David-- his literal sons. 2Sam. 13:1; 1Chron. 29:22
 14. While we acknowledge that this phrase can be used in a broader sense, the context pretty clearly indicates when such a meaning is in view. Matt. 1:1
 15. The final phrase in the superscription is debated as well, with the majority understanding the king in Jerusalem to be in apposition to the title Qoheleth and not to the name of David.
 16. Although the grammar can be construed either way, Qoheleth later makes it explicit that he is referring to himself. Eccles. 1:12
 17. Many interpreters have sought to explain why Solomon applies this title to himself, with some suggesting that an unnamed writer simply chose to represent himself as Solomon and chose the nick-name Qoheleth for some unexplained reason.
 18. Several have noticed that the author Solomon seems to distance himself from Qoheleth for some inexplicable reason.
 19. The reason is simple, Qoheleth is the term that Solomon used to refer to his younger self; he is no longer that same person.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (this will open as a Word document on your computer); accessed June 16, 2018.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Vv. 2–3 state the theme for the book of Ecclesiastes.

Vanity of vanities; says a lecturer; vanity of vanities; the all [is] vanity. Ecclesiastes 1:2

A breath of breaths, [this] lecturer proclaims—a breath of breaths—all [life is but] vapor.

Just inhale and exhale, proclaims this lecturer—as all life is but a vapor, of no more substance than the exhale of one’s breath.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)
Aramaic Targum

Vanity of vanities; says a lecturer; vanity of vanities; the all [is] vanity.
When Solomon the King of Israel foresaw, by the spirit of prophecy, the kingdom of Rehoboam his son, which will be divided with Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and that Jerusalem and the holy temple will be destroyed, and tat the people of Israel

will be led into captivity, he said by the divine word, Vanity of vanities is this world!
 Vanity of vanities is all which I and my father David have laboured for, all of it is
 vanity!

Revised Douay-Rheims
 Peshitta (Syriac) Vanity of vanities, said Ecclesiastes vanity of vanities, and all is vanity.
 Updated Brenton (Greek) Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.
 Vanity of vanities, said the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.

Significant differences: The targum is filled with excess text.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English
 Easy English All is to no purpose, said the Preacher, all the ways of man are to no purpose.
 'Nothing has a purpose', he said.
 'None of the things that happen has a purpose.'

Easy-to-Read Version–2006 Everything is so meaningless. The Teacher says that it is all a waste of time!
meaningless ... a waste of time The Hebrew word means “vapor or breath” or
 “something that is useless, meaningless, empty, wrong, or a waste of time.”

God's Word™
 The Theme
 “Absolutely pointless!” says the spokesman. “Absolutely pointless! Everything is
 pointless.”

Good News Bible (TEV)
 The Message It is useless, useless, said the Philosopher. Life is useless, all useless.
 Smoke, nothing but smoke. [That's what the Quester says.]
 There's nothing to anything—it's all smoke.

NIRV
 “Meaningless! Everything is meaningless!”
 says the Teacher.
 “Everything is completely meaningless!
 Nothing has any meaning.”

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

Common English Bible Perfectly pointless,^[b] says the Teacher, perfectly pointless.
 Everything is pointless.
 Or *meaningless* or *vapor* or *puff of air* (Heb *hebel*, which often occurs in the book)

Contemporary English V. Nothing makes sense! Everything is nonsense. I have seen it all-- nothing makes
 sense!

College Press Bible Study “Empty and transitory,” sighs the Preacher, “Everything is fleeting as a vapor and
 unfulfilling!” (Their paraphrase.)

The Living Bible
 New Century Version In my opinion, nothing is worthwhile; everything is futile.
 The Teacher says,
 “Useless! Useless!
 Completely useless!
 Everything is useless.”

New Life Version “It is of no use,” says the Preacher. “It is of no use! All is for nothing.”

New Living Translation Everything Is Meaningless
 “Everything is meaningless,” says the Teacher, “completely meaningless!”

Unlocked Dynamic Bible The Teacher says, “Nothing is permanent. It is all like the morning mist or the wind;
 It goes and comes, but for what reason?”

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible 'All is foolishness and waste,'
 Said he, the great congregator.
 'Foolishness and waste... all that's done is in vain.

International Standard V “Utterly pointless,”^b

says the Teacher.
 “Absolutely pointless;
 everything is pointless.”

^{b 1:2} Or Utter vanity; and so throughout the book

New Advent (Knox) Bible Translation for Translators
 A shadow’s shadow, he tells us, a shadow’s shadow; a world of shadows!
 I say that everything is mysterious;
 everything is hard for me to understand;
 it is difficult to understand why everything happens.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible "Vapor of vapor!" -- is to have said the speaker, "Vapor of vapor, it is to be vapor!"
 Christian Standard Bible “Absolute futility,” says the Teacher.
 “Absolute futility. Everything is futile.”
 Conservapedia Vanity of vanities, said the Preacher, vanity of vanities; vanity is everywhere.
 Depending on how you interpret the word Vanity this book can be seen as very Nihilistic, I took it to mean vainglory but I think that someone else should make that decision final.
 Ferrar-Fenton Bible Lecture 1
On the Pursuit of Knowledge
 VANITY of Vanities! says the Preacher; Vanity of Vanities, all is vanity!
 All is but vanity (says the Preacher) all is but plain vanity.
 God’s Truth (Tyndale) Lexham English Bible **Motto Introduced**
 “Vanity of vanities!” says the Teacher, “Vanity of vanities! All [is] vanity!”.
 NIV, ©2011 “Meaningless! Meaningless!”
 says the Teacher.
 “Utterly meaningless!
 Everything is meaningless.”
 Son of Man Bible The Teacher says this. “Like a vapor of mist, like a breeze in the wind, everything vanishes, leaving many questions.
 Tree of Life Version Futile! Futile! says *Kohelet*.
 Completely meaningless!
 Everything is futile!
 Wikipedia Bible Project Vapid mirage, Koheleth said, mirage, mirage, all is mirage.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (2013) All is meaningless—says the Teacher—meaningless, meaningless!
 New American Bible (2011) Vanity of vanities, says Qoheleth,
 vanity of vanities! All things are vanity! Eccl 12:8.
Vanity of vanities: a Hebrew superlative expressing the supreme degree of futility and emptiness.
 New English Bible–1970 Emptiness, emptiness, says the Speaker, emptiness, all is empty.
 New Jerusalem Bible Sheer futility, Qoheleth says. Sheer futility: everything is futile!
 Revised English Bible–1989 Futility, utter futility, says the Speaker, everything is futile.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible Pointless! Pointless! — says Kohelet —
 Utterly meaningless! Nothing matters!
 The Complete Tanach Vanity of vanities, said Koheleth; vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

Vanity of vanities, said Koheleth: Koheleth complains about the creation of the seven days of Creation, that all is vanity of vanities.

Vanity of: Heb. לְבָהּ is punctuated with a hataph patah because it is in the construct state; i.e., the vanity of the vanities. Seven vanities [are mentioned], corresponding to the seven days of Creation.

exeGesés companion Bible **Vanity of vanities, says the Congregationist:**
Vanity of vanities; all is vanity.
 JPS (Tanakh—1985) **Utter futility!—said Koheleth— Utter futility! All is futile!**
 Orthodox Jewish Bible **Hevel havalim, saith Kohelet, hevel havalim; all is hevel.**
 The Scriptures 1998 **“Futility! Futility!” says Qoheleth. “Futility, futility, all is futile!”**

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Amplified Bible **“Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher.**
“Vanity of vanities! All [that is done without God’s guidance] is vanity [futile, meaningless—a wisp of smoke, a vapor that vanishes, merely chasing the wind].”

The Expanded Bible **The Teacher [or Preacher; ^L Assembler; 1:1] says,**
“Useless [Meaningless; or Absurd; or Enigmatic; or Transient; ^T Vanity; ^L Vapor; Bubble; ^C and so throughout this book]! Useless!
Completely useless!
Everything is useless.”

Kretzmann’s Commentary **Vanity of vanities, the most utter vanity, saith the Preacher, thereby announcing the theme of his entire book, vanity of vanities; all is vanity, that is, all earthly nature and everything pertaining to temporal things has been perverted, in consequence of sin, so that it no longer serves the original purpose of God, but the vain objects of sin.**

NET Bible® **Introduction: Utter Futility**
“Futile! Futile!” laments [Heb “says.”] the Teacher,
“Absolutely futile! Everything is futile!”

The Pulpit Commentary **PROLOGUE.** The vanity of all human and mundane things, and the oppressive monotony of their continued recurrence.
Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity (comp. Eccles. 12:8). "Vanity" is hebel, which means "breath," and is used metaphorically of anything transitory, frail, unsatisfying. We have it in the proper name Abel, an appropriate designation of the youth whose life was cut short by a brother's murderous hand. "Vanity of vanities," like "heaven of heavens" (1Kings 8:27), "song of songs" (So Eccles. 1:1), etc; is equivalent to a superlative, "most utterly vain." It is here an exclamation, and is to be regarded as the key-note of the whole subsequent treatise, which is merely the development of this text. Septuagint, ματαιότης ματαιοτήτων; other Greek translators, ἀτμίς ἀτμίδων, "vapor of vapors." For "saith" the Vulgate gives dixit; the Septuagint, εἶπεν; but as there is no reference to any previous utterance of the Preacher, the present is more suitable here. In affirming that "all is vanity," the writer is referring to human and mundane things, and directs not his view beyond such phenomena. Such reflection is common in sacred and profane writings alike; such experience is universal (comp. Gen. 47:9; Psalm 39:5–7; Psalm 90:3–10; James 3:14). "Pulvis et umbra sumus," says Horace ('Carm.,' 4.7. 16. "O curas hominum! O quantum est in rebus inane!" (Persius, 'Sat.,' 1.1). If Dean Plumptre is correct in contending that the Book of Wisdom was written to rectify the deductions which might be drawn from Koheleth, we may contrast the caution of the apocryphal writer, who predicates vanity, not of all things, but only of the hope of the ungodly, which he likens to dust, froth, and smoke (see Wis. 2:1, etc.; 5:14). St. Paul (Rom. 8:20) seems to have had Ecclesiastes in mind when he spoke of the creation being subjected to vanity (την ματαιότητα), as a consequence of the fall of man, not to be remedied till the final restitution of all things. "But a man will say, If all things are vain and vanity, wherefore were they made? If they are God's works, how are they vain? But it is not the works of God which he calls vain. God forbid! The heaven is not vain; the earth

is not vain: God forbid! Nor the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars, nor our own body. No; all these are very good. But what is vain? Man's works, pomp, and vain-glory. These came not from the hand of God, but are of our own creating. And they are vain because they have no useful end That is called vain which is expected indeed to possess value, yet possesses it not; that which men call empty, as when they speak of 'empty hopes,' and that which is fruitless. And generally that is called vain which is of no use. Let us see, then, whether all human things are not of this sort" (St. Chrysostom, 'Hem. 12. in Ephes.').

Syndein/Thieme

Meaningless . . . meaningless . . . says the teacher . . . utterly meaningless . . . everything. {Also is Futility in Achievement in Life in the Cosmic System}

The Voice

Teacher: Life is fleeting, like a passing mist.

It is like trying to catch hold of a breath;

All vanishes like a vapor; everything is a great vanity.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Concordant Literal Version

Vanity of vanities, says the Assembler; Vanity of vanities, the whole is vanity."

Context Group Version

Vanity of vanities, says the proclaimer; emptiness of emptiness, all is emptiness.

Niobi Study Bible

The Vanity of Life

"Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

R. B. Thieme, Jr.

"Absolute futility [Emptiness of emptinesses; Vanity of Vanities]," says the Teacher.

"Absolute futility [Emptiness of emptinesses; Vanity of Vanities]. Everything is futile."

This may be a combination of the HCSB and Bob's comments.

Young's Literal Translation

Vanity of vanities, said the Preacher, Vanity of vanities: the whole is vanity.

The gist of this passage:

Life is empty; life is just chasing after wind; life is meaningless, futile, pointless.

Ecclesiastes 1:2a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
hebel (הֶבֶל) [pronounced HEH ^b -vel]	vapor, breath; mist, darkness; unsubstantial, emptiness, empty, vanity, meaningless, vacuous; vain, vainly; idol	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1892 BDB #210

Used figuratively for *something transitory and unsatisfactory*. Often used of things which are transitory, evanescent or frail.

Dr. Daniel Hill: *The word VANITY is the Hebrew HE-BEL and in its simplest form looks at breath, wind, that which is empty and worthless. It is used three ways in the OT*

1. *For the false gods worshipped by the people. They were nothing, empty.*
2. *For the vain labor of man, working hard, ending up with nothing*
3. *As with its 36 uses in Ecclesiastes it views the shortness of life and those things that man so earnestly seeks after, yet are like trying to catch the wind.*⁸⁵

Kidner: *A wisp of vapour, a puff of wind, a mere breath — nothing you could get your hands on; the nearest thing to zero. That is the 'vanity' this book is about.*⁸⁶

⁸⁵ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 10, 2018.

⁸⁶ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:2.

Ecclesiastes 1:2a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Eaton: <i>Vanity (hebel) includes (i) brevity and unsubstantiality, emptiness... (ii) unreliability, frailty... (iii) futility, as in Job. 9:29 (Hebrew), where 'in vanity' means 'to no effect'; (iv) deceit (cf. Jer. 16:19; Zech. 10:2).</i> ⁸⁷			
hebel (לְבָה) [pronounced HEH ^b -vel]	vapor, breath, unsubstantial, emptinesses, empty, vanities, [that which is] meaningless, vacuous; vain thinking; idols	masculine plural noun	Strong's #1892 BDB #210
Guzik: <i>Vanity of vanities: To strengthen his point, the Preacher judged life to be the ultimate vanity, the vanity of vanities. This Hebrew phrasing is used to express intensity or the ultimate of something, as in the phrase holy of holies.</i>			
Guzik, again: <i>This phrase (or something quite like it) will be used about 30 times in this short book. It is one of the major themes of Ecclesiastes.</i> ⁸⁸			

Translation: [A breath of breaths,...](#) This is most commonly translated *Vanity of vanities*; which is how the KJV translated this verse, and when a translation is difficult, many translators default to the beautiful language of the KJV. I am not that pleased with my translation above; and am eager to see what other translators have done.

Bible in Basic English	All is to no purpose,...
Easy English	'Nothing has a purpose',...
Easy-to-Read Version—2006	Everything is so meaningless.
God's Word™	"Absolutely pointless!"
Good News Bible (TEV)	It is useless, useless,...
The Message	Smoke, nothing but smoke...
Common English Bible	Perfectly pointless,...
Contemporary English V.	Nothing makes sense!
College Press Bible Study	"Empty and transitory,"...
American English Bible	'All is foolishness and waste,'...
New Advent (Knox) Bible	A shadow's shadow,...
Awful Scroll Bible	"Vapor of vapor!"

This appears to be the title of this particular lecture; and the overarching theme of Ecclesiastes. This word will be found in nearly every chapter of Ecclesiastes (particularly in Eccles. 2), with the exceptions of chapters 9 & 10. All life is but a breath of breaths, a vanity of vanity; emptiness built upon emptiness; vanity superceding another set of vanities; the vain thinking of one man taking over the vain thinking of his predecessor.

Perhaps vain is that which is chosen instead of or in lieu of God. It is anything which we choose over our Creator.

[Ecclesiastes 1:2 Just inhale and exhale, proclaims this lecturer—as all life is but a vapor, of no more substance than the exhale of one's breath.](#)

We should expect a lot of commentary here, because this is a key word for the entire book.

⁸⁷ David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:2.

⁸⁸ David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:2.

The Meaning of Vanity (Ecclesiastes 1:2) (various commentators)

J. Vernon McGee: "Vanity" here speaks of emptiness. It is to waste life without any purpose or any goal. It means to live like an animal or a bird lives. There are a great many people who live like that.⁸⁹

Ken Cayce: Vanity is the key word of the book and the refrain "all is vanity" its theme. There have been many attempts to translate this word: "futility," "meaninglessness," "emptiness," "breath", "nothingness," "absurdity," and so on. The word means "that which is futile or worthless, of no value or profit."

Cayce continues: "Vanity", in the above Scripture, means emptiness, or something transitory. In other words, it is like sighing, because there is nothing to hope for. It speaks of hopelessness. Vanity seems to be the keynote for this entire book. Solomon is looking back, and believes that his life has been in vain.⁹⁰

Keith Krell: there is great debate on what the term hebel means. Does it mean temporary or meaningless? It would seem that the word carries both ideas and even a few others. Hebel is an inexhaustible term. It can mean "vapor, deceitful, futile, and fleeting." It points to what is without real substance, value, permanence, or significance. In other words, no person or pursuit in and of itself will bring lasting satisfaction. Everything is temporal. It may be that the modern Christian reader can do no better than to import hebel into his or her vocabulary, much as has been done with agape and to a lesser extent koinonia. Everything is hebel and therefore of no lasting value.

Krell continues: In this one verse, Solomon uses the word hebel five times. Hebel appears thirty-eight times in Ecclesiastes and only thirty-five other times elsewhere in the Old Testament. The term is used in every chapter of Ecclesiastes with the exception of chapter ten. It also brackets the book (see 12:8). Furthermore, Solomon uses a literary device to bring out a supreme emphasis: "vapor of vapors—the thinnest of vapors."⁹¹

Keith Simons: [The] word 'vanity'...means 'in vain' or 'without purpose'. It is a description of all that people can achieve in their lives. Some people translate that word 'just a breath'. A person's work is as weak as his breath, because all people must die. So the word 'breath' is a word-picture for people's weakness. But the Bible compares God's work to a great wind or a powerful storm (Psalm 29; John 3:8; Acts 2:2).

Simons then puts this into perspective: A person's breath seems very weak when we think about the wind during a great storm. And even the work of a powerful king seems very weak when we think about God's work.⁹²

John W. Ritenbaugh: A breath has a short existence. We breath in and breath out, and then we take another one. It lasts for just a second. When we carry out the application of this word, temporariness begins to come to the fore because a person's breath is very temporary and quickly replaced by another and another and another. Vanity describes something that is nothing, impermanent, temporary. But that hardly exhausts its meaning.⁹³

John Dummelow: The word vanity, occurring thirty-eight times, strikes the keynote of the book. All things living and otherwise bear the stamp of the transitory.⁹⁴

Thomas Coke: The original word לבה hebel, signifies, properly, steam or vapour, and is used to denote any thing which is transient and empty, in apparition to what is solid, substantial, and permanent.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt accessed June 19, 2018.

⁹⁰ From <http://www.bible-studys.org> accessed June 24, 2018.

⁹¹ From Bible.org, accessed June 22, 2018. Follow link to where Krell found these suggestions.

⁹² From Useful Bible, accessed June 24, 2018.

⁹³ From Bible tools accessed June 17, 2018.

⁹⁴ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/dcb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 22, 2018.

⁹⁵ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/tcc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 25, 2018.

The Meaning of Vanity (Ecclesiastes 1:2) (various commentators)

C. I. Scofield: "Vanity," in Ecclesiastes, and usually in Scripture, means, not foolish pride, but the emptiness in final result of all life apart from God. It is to be born, to toil, to suffer, to experience some transitory joy, which is as nothing in view of eternity, to leave it all, and to die.⁹⁶

The Bible Illustrator: The word "vanity" means a breath of wind, and thus it comes to mean something airy, fictitious, and unsubstantial.⁹⁷

Pastor John Griffith: [H]ebel...is used 3 ways [in Ecclesiastes]:

- #1 - in contexts where he states his inability to find fulfillment in his various pursuits - here work.
- #2 - to indicate an unknown or undefined anomaly about life that he calls vanity i.e. senseless. (sinning one being prospered while the righteous is not - is under the gun.) he struggles with this one.
- #3 - in contexts dealing with the brevity and shortness of life.

Life in its QUALITY = empty - vacuous >> unsubstantial

Life in its QUANTITY = transitory.⁹⁸

The College Press Bible Study: Listed here are terms which serve as synonyms or corresponding ideas. They are: vanity, futile, empty, meaningless, fleeting, pointless, incomprehensible, breath, vapor, unfulfilling, striving after wind, short-lived, Abel, transitory, temporary, sublunary, under the sun, under heaven and upon the earth.⁹⁹

Barnes: This word לבה hebel, or, when used as a proper name, in Gen. 4:2, "Abel", occurs no less than 37 times in Ecclesiastes, and has been called the key of the book.

Barnes continues: Primarily it means "breath," "light wind;" and denotes what:

- (1) passes away more or less quickly and completely;
- (2) leaves either no result or no adequate result behind, and therefore
- (3) fails to satisfy the mind of man, which naturally craves for something permanent and progressive: it is also applied to:
- (4) idols, as contrasted with the Living, Eternal, and Almighty God, and, thus, in the Hebrew mind, it is connected with sin.

Barnes continues: In this book it is applied to all works on earth, to pleasure, grandeur, wisdom, the life of man, childhood, youth, and length of days, the oblivion of the grave, wandering and unsatisfied desires, unenjoyed possessions, and anomalies in the moral government of the world.

Barnes concludes: Solomon speaks of the world-wide existence of "vanity," not with bitterness or scorn, but as a fact, which forced itself on him as he advanced in knowledge of men and things, and which he regards with sorrow and perplexity. From such feelings he finds refuge by contrasting this with another fact, which he holds with equal firmness, namely, that the whole universe is made and is governed by a God of justice, goodness, and power. The place of vanity in the order of Divine Providence – unknown to Solomon, unless the answer be indicated in Eccles. 7:29 – is explained to us by Paul, Rom. 8, where its origin is traced to the subjugation and corruption of creation by sin as a consequence of the fall of man; and its extinction is declared to be reserved until after the Resurrection in the glory and liberty of the children of God.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ C. I. Scofield, *Scofield Notes from the Scofield King James' Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2.

⁹⁷ *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:2.

⁹⁸ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_03.html accessed June 15, 2018.

⁹⁹ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:2.

¹⁰⁰ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2.

The Meaning of Vanity (Ecclesiastes 1:2) (various commentators)

Dr. Peter Pett: *The word for ‘vanity’ (hebel) can mean a fleeting breath, a puff of wind. What he means by vanity is that it is spiritually and rationally profitless and meaningless, of no permanent worth, not worth the trouble except as a means of survival, not having deep significance and ultimate meaning, not contributing to the essence of life, not having lasting value.*¹⁰¹

David Guzik: *The Preacher begins his sermon with his first conclusion (though not his ultimate conclusion). Looking at life all around, he judges it to be vanity — nothing, useless, meaningless.*¹⁰²

Chuck Smith: *The word vanity literally means that which vanishes. It's nothing. You go to get it and it vanishes. It's not there. It's an emptiness. The vexation of spirit is that frustration of the spirit.*¹⁰³

C. I. Scofield: *"Vanity," in Ecclesiastes, and usually in Scripture, means, not foolish pride, but the emptiness in final result of all life apart from God. It is to be born, to toil, to suffer, to experience some transitory joy, which is as nothing in view of eternity, to leave it all, and to die. See (Rom. 8:20–22—*For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.*—ESV).*¹⁰⁴

The Cambridge Bible: *The word translated “vanity,” identical with the name Abel or Hebel (Gen. 4:2) means primarily a “breath,” or “vapour,” and as such becomes the type of all that is fleeting and perishable (Psalm 62:9; Psalm 144:4).*¹⁰⁵

Kidwell: *[Vanity means] futile, empty, meaninglessness, fleeting, pointless, unfulfilling, striving after wind.*¹⁰⁶

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge lists the vanity passages: Eccles. 2:11, Eccles. 2:15, Eccles. 2:17, Eccles. 2:19, Eccles. 2:21, Eccles. 2:23, Eccles. 2:26, Eccles. 3:19, Eccles. 4:4, Eccles. 4:8, Eccles. 4:16, Eccles. 5:10, Eccles. 6:11, Eccles. 11:8, Eccles. 11:10, Eccles. 12:8 Psalm 39:5–6, Psalm 62:9–10, Psalm 144:4.¹⁰⁷

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:2 Just inhale and exhale, proclaims this lecturer—as all life is but a vapor, of no more substance than the exhale of one’s breath.

This phrase is also key to the entire book of Ecclesiastes.

The Meaning of Vanity of Vanities (Ecclesiastes 1:2) (various commentators)

This is simply extraordinary vanity or extreme emptiness.

Joseph Sutcliffe: *Vanity of vanities...is the Hebrew form of the superlative degree of comparison; as, the heaven of heavens, the song of songs.*¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–3.

¹⁰² *David Guzik’s Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:2.

¹⁰³ Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–18.

¹⁰⁴ C. I. Scofield, *Scofield Notes from the Scofield King James’ Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2 (passage added).

¹⁰⁵ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:2.

¹⁰⁶ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2.

¹⁰⁷ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 1:2.

¹⁰⁸ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jsc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 21, 2018.

The Meaning of Vanity of Vanities (Ecclesiastes 1:2) (various commentators)

John Dummelow: *[This phrase literally means] 'breath of breaths'; the form of expression being a Hebrew way of indicating the superlative degree. Of all fleeting things existence is the most fleeting. The same figure is used in Psalms 62:9; Psalms 144:4 of the brevity of man's life.*¹⁰⁹

Psalm 62:9 Those of low estate are but a breath; those of high estate are a delusion; in the balances they go up; they are together lighter than a breath.

Psalm 144:3–4 O LORD, what is man that You regard him, or the son of man that You think of him? Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow. (ESV; capitalized)

Uteley: *This is a Hebrew superlative (cf. Eccles. 1:2; Eccles. 12:8). The word means "vapor," "breath," or "mist" (BDB 210 I, cf. James 4:14). Its emphasis is either (1) nothingness or (2) the transitoriness of human life.*¹¹⁰

Barnes: *Vanity of vanities - A well-known Hebrew idiom signifying vanity in the highest degree.*¹¹¹

Benson: *Not only vain, but vanity in the abstract, which denotes extreme vanity.*¹¹²

Keith Krell: *Whatever hebel is, the world is full of it!*¹¹³

The Bible Illustrator: *As the expression, "holy of holies" conveys the meaning of that which is holy beyond every other thing, so this word in the sense of emptiness beyond comparison is applied by the writer to the course of nature and to the work of man. Again and again he takes excursions into the natural world, and again and again he returns to the old refrain, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity."*¹¹⁴

B. H. Carroll: *"Vanity of vanities" (Eccles. 1:2) is a Hebraism and means the most utter vanity. Compare "Holy of holies" and "Servant of servants" (Gen. 9:25). This does not mean that all things are vanity in themselves, but that they are all vanity when put in the place of God, or made the chief end of life instead of a means to an end.*¹¹⁵

Clarke: *As the words are an exclamation, it would be better to translate, O vanity of vanities! Emptiness of emptinesses.*¹¹⁶

E. W. Bullinger: *Figure of speech Polyptoton. Note also the Figure of speech Epanadiplosis...by which Eccles. 1:2 begins and ends with the same word. These Figures are used for the greatest emphasis, and denote utter vanity.*¹¹⁷

Dr. John Gill: *Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher,.... This is the preacher's text; the theme and subject he after enlarges upon, and proves by an induction of particulars; it is the sum of the whole book.*¹¹⁸

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *Vanity of vanities — Hebraism for the most utter vanity. So "holy of holies" (Ex. 26:33); "servant of servants" (Gen. 9:25). The repetition increases the force.*¹¹⁹

¹⁰⁹ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/dcb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 22, 2018.

¹¹⁰ Dr. Bob Uteley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:1–2.

¹¹¹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2.

¹¹² Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2.

¹¹³ From Bible.org, accessed June 22, 2018.

¹¹⁴ *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:2.

¹¹⁵ B. H. Carroll, *An interpretation of the English Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2–59.

¹¹⁶ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2.

¹¹⁷ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2.

¹¹⁸ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2.

¹¹⁹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:2.

The Meaning of Vanity of Vanities (Ecclesiastes 1:2) (various commentators)

Matthew Poole: *Vanity of vanities; not only vain, but vanity in the abstract, which notes extreme vanity, especially where the word is thus doubled; as a king of kings is the chief of kings, and a servant of servants is the vilest of servants, and a song of songs is a most excellent song.*¹²⁰

Pastor John Griffith: *[H]ere is used in the emphatic sense = purposeless, emptiness, meaningless, pointless.*¹²¹

J. Vernon McGee offers a wonderful illustration: *I was in a hotel in the Hawaiian Islands where the jet set come. They fly all over the world spending a few days or weeks in Hawaii, then at Acapulco in Mexico, and then the Riviera in France, then to Spain, North Africa, South Africa, and so on. They are world travelers. I watched these folk and listened to their conversation at the dinner table, out in the hotel lobby, and in the elevators. The thing that impressed me about them was how purposeless their lives really are. They talked about people they had seen in other places. They talked about plays they had seen. They would ask, "Where are you going from here?" Someone would say, "Wasn't that place where we went last year a bore!" There was no aim, no goal, no purpose in life. This is also the conclusion of Solomon. Vanity of vanities. Emptiness of emptiness.*¹²²

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

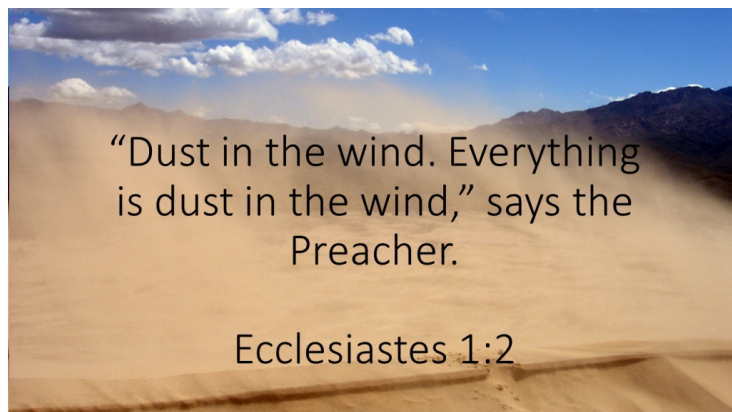
Ecclesiastes 1:2b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
'āmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
qôheleth (קֹהֵלֶת) [pronounced ko-HEH-leth]	<i>collector (of sentences), preacher, public speaker, lecturer, speaker in an assembly, transliterated, Qoheleth</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #6953 BDB #875

Translation: ...[this] lecturer proclaims... *This is my point of view, Solomon proclaims; this is how I see life, he testifies. This sort of repetition clues us in that this is not divine viewpoint, but being repeated almost to reassure himself.*

We know that life is not meaningless; we know that there is a purpose for everything under heaven. We know that God will work this all out, from beginning to end; that we are part of a wonderful mosaic, and, if we choose to be, a part of His wonderful plan.

Therefore, the preacher, the lecturer, the public speaker (Solomon) is a man who does not see this



¹²⁰ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2.

¹²¹ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_03.html accessed June 15, 2018.

¹²² From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt accessed June 19, 2018.

(even though he once did). Life to him is a series of meaningless events, one after the other, leading nowhere and having no meaning.

Everything is dust in the wind (Ecclesiastes 1:2) (a graphic); from [Religion Prof](#); accessed June 17, 2018.

At the end of this book, Solomon will be at the end of his life, and he has seen his life as a breath of many breaths; as a morning vapor of mist which disappears with the light. He has lived, he has breathed; and he will die; and for much of his life, it has meant little or nothing. His existence is naught but dust in the wind (apart from God); his life has no more substance than the breath he exhales every few seconds.

Perhaps Solomon has come to the end of his life and recognizes that his life has just been a series of breaths, one followed by another, a breath of breaths. He is a creature like all other creature, simply moving air around. His life has no more meaning than those breaths; and, at some point, these empty breaths will stop. This is in such contrast to the writer of Genesis, who records: ...then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. (Gen 2:7; ESV) All that we read in Gen. 1–2 reveals great purpose and great wisdom; but what we find in Ecclesiastes 1 is emptiness and frustration.

Ecclesiastes 1:2c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
hebel (הֶבֶל) [pronounced HEH ^B -vel]	vapor, breath; mist, darkness; unsubstantial, emptiness, empty, vanity, meaningless, vacuous; vain, vainly; idol	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1892 BDB #210
Used figuratively for <i>something transitory and unsatisfactory</i> . Often used of things which are transitory, evanescent or frail.			
John W. Ritenbaugh: "Vanity" (Hebrew hebel) is a vivid metaphor used 33 times in the book. Literally, it suggests a breath, something akin to vapor, like one's breath on a cold day, or a puff of smoke rising from a fire. Smoke and breath not only disappear quickly, but neither can they be grasped and held on to. Thus, vanity aptly portrays life as being insubstantial, rather flimsy, and passing. ¹²³			
hebel (הֶבֶל) [pronounced HEH ^B -vel]	vapor, breath, unsubstantial, emptinesses, empty, vanities, [that which is] meaningless, vacuous; vain thinking; idols	masculine plural noun	Strong's #1892 BDB #210
The NET Bible: Heb "futility of futilities." The phrase "absolutely futile" (מְהִלָּה לְהִלָּה, havel havalim) is a superlative genitive construction (GKC 431 §133.i). When a plural genitive follows a singular construct noun of the same root, it indicates the most outstanding example of the person or thing described. Examples: מִן שְׂדֵקָה שְׂדֵקָה (qodesh haqqodashim, "holy of holies"), i.e., "the most holy place" (Exod 26:33); מִן שִׁיר שִׁירֵי שָׁ (shir hashirim, "song of songs"), i.e., "the most excellent song" (Song 1:1); מִן־אֱלֹהִים וְאֵלֹהִים יְהוָה (elohe ha'elohim va'adone ha'edonim, "the God of gods and Lord of lords"), i.e., "the highest God and the supreme Lord" (Deut 10:17). See also R. J. Williams, Hebrew Syntax, 17-18, §80; IBHS 154 §9.5.3j. ¹²⁴			
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]; also kol (כֹּל) [pronounced kol]	all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481

¹²³ From [Bible tools](#) accessed June 17, 2018.

¹²⁴ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 14, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:2c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
----------------------	-------------------------	------------------	--------------------------

The NET Bible: Although לֵךְ (kol, “everything, all”) is often used in an absolute or comprehensive sense (BDB 481 s.v. לֵךְ 1), it is frequently used as a synecdoche of the general for the specific, that is, its sense is limited contextually to the topic at hand (BDB 482 s.v. 2). This is particularly true of לֵכָה (hakkol, BDB 482 s.v. 2.b) in which the article particularizes or limits the referent to the contextual or previously mentioned topic (e.g., Gen 16:12; 24:1; Exod 29:24; Lev 1:9, 13; 8:27; Deut 2:36; Josh 11:19 [see 2 Sam 19:31; 1 Kgs 14:26 = 2 Chr 12:9]; 21:43; 1 Sam 30:19; 2 Sam 17:3; 23:5; 24:23; 1 Kgs 6:18; 2 Kgs 24:16; Isa 29:11; 65:8; Jer 13:7, 10; Ezek 7:14; Pss 14:3; 49:18; 1 Chr 7:5; 28:19; 29:19; 2 Chr 28:6; 29:28; 31:5; 35:7; 36:17-18; Ezra 1:11; 2:42; 8:34-35; 10:17; Eccl 5:8).

The NET Bible: Thus, “all” does not always mean “all” in an absolute sense or universally in comprehension. In several cases the context limits its reference to two classes of objects or issues being discussed, so לֵכָה means “both” (e.g., 2:14; 3:19; 9:1, 2). Thus, לֵכָה refers only to what Qoheleth characterizes as “futile” (לְבָהּ, hevel) in the context. Qoheleth does not mean that everything in an absolute, all-encompassing sense is futile. For example, the sovereign work of God is not “futile” (3:1–4:3); fearing God is not “futile” (2:26; 3:14-15; 11:9–12:1, 9, 13-14); and enjoying life as a righteous person under the blessing of God is not “futile” (2:24-26; 11:9-10). Only those objects or issues that are contextually placed under לֵךְ are designated as “futile” (לְבָהּ). The context of 1:3-15 suggests that 1:2 refers to the futility of secular human endeavor. The content and referent of 1:3-15 determines the referent of לֵכָה in 1:2.¹²⁵

Guzik: To further strengthen the point, Solomon noted not only that life is vanity, but that all is vanity. It seemed that every part of life suffered from this emptiness.¹²⁶

hebel (לְבָהּ) [pronounced HEH ^b -vef]	vapor, breath; mist, darkness; unsubstantial, emptiness, empty, vanity, meaningless, vacuous; vain, vainly; idol	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1892 BDB #210
---	--	-------------------------	----------------------------

Used figuratively for something transitory and unsatisfactory. Often used of things which are transitory, evanescent or frail.

The NET Bible (translation note): The term לְבָהּ (hevel, “futile”) is repeated five times within the eight words of this verse for emphasis. The noun לְבָהּ is the key word in Ecclesiastes. The root is used in two ways in the OT, literally and figuratively. The literal, concrete sense is used in reference to the wind, man’s transitory breath, evanescent vapor (Isa 57:13; Pss 62:10; 144:4; Prov 21:6; Job 7:16). In this sense, it is often a synonym for “breath” or “wind” (Eccl 1:14; Isa 57:13; Jer 10:14).

The NET Bible continues: The literal sense lent itself to metaphorical senses: (1) breath/vapor/wind is nonphysical, evanescent, and lacks concrete substance thus, the connotation “unsubstantial” (Jer 10:15; 16:19; 51:18), “profitless” or “fruitless” (Ps 78:33; Prov 13:11), “worthless” (2 Kgs 17:15; Jer 2:5; 10:3), “pointless” (Prov 21:6), “futile” (Lam 4:17; Eccl 1:2, 14; 2:1, 14-15), (2) breath/vapor/wind is transitory and fleeting – thus, the connotation “fleeting” or “transitory” (Prov 31:30; Eccl 6:12; 7:15; 9:9; 11:10; Job 7:16) and (3) breath/vapor/wind cannot be seen thus, the idea of “obscure,” “dark,” “difficult to understand,” “enigmatic” (Eccl 11:10). See HALOT 236-37 s.v. לְבָהּ; BDB 210-11 s.v. לְבָהּ. The metaphorical sense is used with the following synonyms: הוֹתָהּ (tohu, “empty, vanity”; Isa 49:4), קִיר (riq, “profitless, useless”; Isa 30:7; Eccl 6:11), and לִיעוּהָ אֵל (lo’ ho’i, “worthless, profitless”; Is 30:6; 57:12; Jer 16:19). It is parallel to “few days” and “[days] which he passes like a shadow” (Eccl 6:12). It is used in reference to youth and vigor (11:10) and life (6:12; 7:15; 9:9), which are “transitory” or “fleeting.”

¹²⁵ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 14, 2018.

¹²⁶ David Guzik’s Commentary on the Old Testament; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:2.

Ecclesiastes 1:2c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>The NET Bible continues: <i>The most common parallels to לְבָהּ in Ecclesiastes are the phrases “chasing after the wind” (חֹר תוּעַר, rÿ’ut ruakh) in 2:11, 17, 26; 7:14 and “what profit?” (מַה-יִיטְרוֹן, mah-yyitron) or “no profit” (אֵין יִיטְרוֹן, ’en yitron) in 2:11; 3:19; 6:9. It is used in reference to enigmas in life (6:2; 8:10, 14) and to the future which is obscure (11:8). It is often used in antithesis to terms connoting value: בּוֹט (tov, “good, benefit, advantage”) and יוֹטְרוֹן (yotÿron, “profit, advantage, gain”).</i></p>			
<p>The NET Bible concludes: <i>Because the concrete picture of the “wind” lends itself to the figurative connotation “futile,” the motto “This is futile” (זֶה לְבָהּ הֵזֶה, zeh hevel) is often used with the metaphor, “like striving after the wind” (חֹר תוּעַר, rÿ’ut ruakh) – a graphic picture of an expenditure of effort in vain because no one can catch the wind by chasing it (e.g., 1:14, 17; 2:11, 17, 26; 4:4, 6, 16; 6:9). Although it is the key word in Ecclesiastes, it should not be translated the same way in every place.¹²⁷</i></p>			

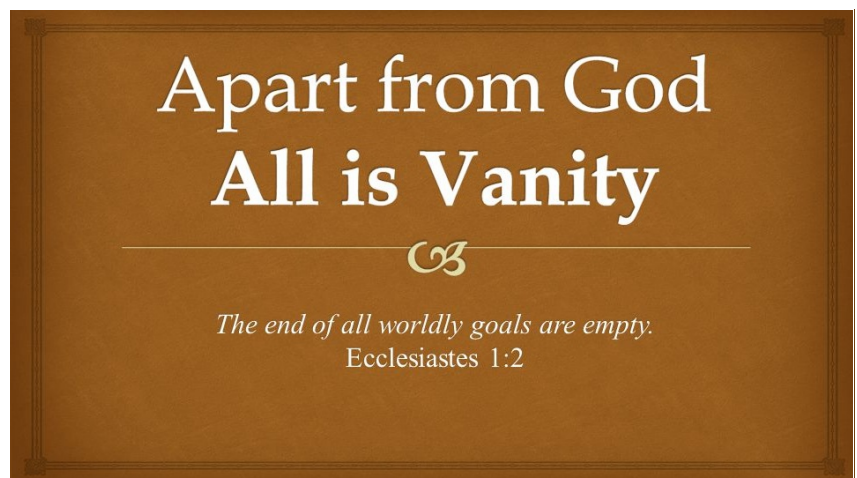
Translation: ...—**a breath of breaths—all [life is but] vapor.** Solomon proclaims that his life is nothing but a breath; a vapor. This is all life; this is everything that he has seen or experienced. It is transitory, it will pass away, and it is without meaning.

This is the beginning theme/conclusion of the book of Ecclesiastes: *everything is futile; all [life is but] vapor!* These words are here at the beginning of the book and in Eccles. 12:8 near the end of the book. Throughout, the things spoken of in this book will be called hebel (לְבָהּ) [pronounced *HEH^B-vel*], which means, *vapor, breath; mist, darkness; unsubstantial, emptiness, empty, vanity, meaningless*. Strong’s #1892 BDB #210. However, this is not where Solomon will end up. This will not be Solomon’s final conclusion. This is, however, Solomon’s initial conclusion to life’s follies.

All is Vanity (Ecclesiastes 1:3) (a graphic); from [Slide Player](#); accessed June 17, 2018.

The College Press Bible Study gave this wonderful paraphrase: “Empty and transitory,” sighs the Preacher, “Everything is fleeting as a vapor and unfulfilling!” The New Living Translation: “Everything is meaningless,” says the Teacher, “completely meaningless!” The Unlocked Dynamic Bible: The Teacher says, “Nothing is permanent. It is all like the morning mist or the wind; it goes and comes, but for what reason?”

Benson: *This verse contains the general proposition, which he [the author] intends particularly to demonstrate in the following book.*¹²⁸



Ecclesiastes 1:2 Just inhale and exhale, proclaims this lecturer—as all life is but a vapor, of no more substance than the exhale of one’s breath.

¹²⁷ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 14, 2018.

¹²⁸ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2.

All is Vanity (Ecclesiastes 1:2c) (various commentators)

Pastor John Griffith: *This is the conclusion that is required of every question and every experiment in the book which seeks to find the answers to life apart from God.*¹²⁹

Barnes: *All – Solomon includes both the courses of nature and the works of man Eccles. 1:4–11. Compare Rom. 8:22.*¹³⁰

The NET Bible (Scripture note): *The motto Everything is futile! is the theme of the book. Its occurs at the beginning (1:2) and end of the book (12:8), forming an envelope structure (inclusio). Everything described in 1:2–12:8 is the supporting proof of the thesis of 1:2. With few exceptions (e.g., 2:24–26; 3:14–15; 11:9–12:1, 9), everything described in 1:2–12:8 is characterized as “futile” (הֶבֶל, hevel).*¹³¹

Benson: *All — All worldly things—is vanity — Not in themselves, for they are God’s creatures, and therefore good in their kinds, but in reference to that happiness which men seek and expect to find in them. So they are unquestionably vain, because they are not what they seem to be, and perform not what they promise, but, instead of that, are the occasions of innumerable cares, and fears, and sorrows, and mischiefs. Nay, they are not only vanity, but vanity of vanities, the vainest vanity, vanity in the highest degree. And this is redoubled, because the thing is certain, beyond all possibility of dispute.*¹³²

The College Press Bible Study: *Many lessons in the book are based on the conclusion that “All is vanity.” It is vital, therefore, that one see the numerous possibilities contained in the word “vanity.” When all of life and its hopes are qualified by sublunary restrictions and limitations, when everything a man has to remember, enjoy today, and look forward to, is limited to and qualified by experience in this life only, then one begins to sense the impact of the term.*

College Press Bible Study continues: *The term vanity, therefore, is applicable to everything that falls beneath the curse of sin. When man sinned, he began the process of death. As noted in Gen. 3:17–19, the process was passed on to man’s world. Therefore, the “All” of Solomon’s declaration is comprehensive enough to include both man and his world. There is a genuine pity associated with this truth. As the Apostle Paul has said, “If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most to be pitied” (1Cor. 15:19). Or again, “If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (1Cor. 15:32).*¹³³

E. W. Bullinger: *all = the whole, or “the sum total”. Not everything in the universe, but all the human labours of Eccles. 1:3, Eccles. 1:8. vanity. Heb habal, used of that which soon vanishes.*¹³⁴

Dr. John Gill: *vanity of vanities, all is vanity; most extremely vain, exceedingly so, the height of vanity: this is repeated, both for the confirmation of it, men being hard of belief of it; and to show how much the preacher was affected with it himself, and to affect others with the same.*¹³⁵

Matthew Poole: *[All refers to] all worldly things, and all men’s designs, and studies, and works about them, is vanity; not in themselves, for so they are God’s creatures, and therefore good and really useful in their kinds; but in reference to men, and to that happiness which men seek and confidently expect to find in them. So they are unquestionably vain, because they are not what they seem to be, and perform not what they promise, content and satisfaction, but instead of that are commonly the causes or occasions of innumerable cares, and fears, and sorrows, and mischiefs; and because they are altogether unsuitable to the noble mind or soul of man, both in nature or quality, and in duration, as being unstable and perishing things.*

¹²⁹ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_03.html accessed June 15, 2018.

¹³⁰ Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2.

¹³¹ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 14, 2018.

¹³² Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2.

¹³³ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:2.

¹³⁴ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2.

¹³⁵ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2.

All is Vanity (Ecclesiastes 1:2c) (various commentators)

Matthew Poole continues: *And this vanity of them is here repeated again and again; partly, because it was most deeply fixed and perpetually present in Solomon's thoughts; partly, to show the unquestionable certainty and vast importance of this truth; and partly, that he might more thoroughly awaken the dull and stupid minds of men to the consideration of it, and might wean men's hearts from those things upon which he knew they excessively doted.*¹³⁶

James Burton Coffman: *"Vanity of vanities ... all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:2). This is the theme of Ecclesiastes. Is it the truth? Certainly! Especially, if it is construed as an accurate and tragic evaluation of all human life as perpetually circumscribed and condemned under the Divine sentence that fell upon humanity following the debacle in Eden. Is there any future for humanity? Apart from the redemption in Christ Jesus, our race has no future whatever.*¹³⁷

Dunagan: *[I]n light of God's searching judgment, everything isn't vain, rather, everything matters.*¹³⁸

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Dr. Daniel Hill: *This verse is blunt, it is intended to shock the reader out of complacency. It is designed to rock the boat, shake the tree, and it pull the chain. To stir us up in our often secular humanistic view point of the value of life.*¹³⁹

Hill: *I read these words and get a picture of a middle aged man sitting on a bar stool, crying in his beer, and uttering over and over again...emptiness, emptiness, all is emptiness.*

What brought Solomon to this point? (Dr. Dan Hill)

1. Solomon lived life doing things his own way
2. He knew what God wanted but thought he had better and more realistic ideas
3. He failed to deal with his disobedience and sin
4. Yet during the first 20 years of his reign God was gracious, full of mercy, and patient
5. But then, as mid life approached, something happened that became a catalyst that would bring Solomon to the edge of revisionism and despair.
6. This perhaps was the first time he could not do what he wanted to do, he could not have what he wanted to have, he could not, by wealth or force or position, have his hearts desires...for the first time, he failed.
7. And the one thing he wanted that he could not have is the subject of the Song of Solomon, the Shulamite woman. Who chose her shepherd over the king.

From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 10, 2018.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

There may be a temptation to blame this book on Solomon's mid-life crisis, but his crisis is one of negative volition, not of age. As a personal testimony, I have been on doctrine since around age 21 (I do not recall exactly when I began listening to doctrine, but it was not long after believing in Jesus Christ). I went through two landmark ages (40 and 50—I am now 67), without a disturbing thought. I have never felt that my life was empty, lacking in value; or that I had somehow missed out on these great things that everyone else was enjoying. None of this was because I am some great spiritual giant, but because I am anchored to God's Word. I have a **sin nature** and I make many bad decisions; but I recognize that I am in God's plan, and that He has graciously mapped out this life for me, showering me with far more blessings than I deserve.

¹³⁶ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2.

¹³⁷ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

¹³⁸ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2.

¹³⁹ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 10, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:2 Just inhale and exhale, proclaims this lecturer—as all life is but a vapor, of no more substance than the exhale of one’s breath.

Solomon, being rejected by the woman of Songs drives him here (Dr. Dan Hill)

Listen to the shepherd's words to his beloved.

Song 1:15 How beautiful you are, my darling, How beautiful you are! Your eyes are like doves.
And her words to him.

Song 1:16 How handsome you are, my beloved, And so pleasant! Indeed, our couch is luxuriant! The beams of our houses are cedars, Our rafters, cypresses.

Then listen to Solomon's dismal conclusion.

Song 8:6-7 For love is as strong as death, Jealousy is as severe as Sheol...Many waters cannot quench love, Nor will rivers overflow it; If a man were to give all the riches of his house for love, It would be utterly despised. He would have given all his wealth for her, but she said no. And that was the catalyst, that was what pushed him over the edge and finds him sitting in despair writing Emptiness of emptiness, all is emptiness.

1. God loves us and wants us to see the value of dependence upon Him and Him alone
2. God is long suffering and patient with us. His mercy is great in that at times it holds back even the discipline we deserve.
3. God will allow us to fail, allow us to lose, allow us to not get what we want in order to bring us to Him.
4. Often our drive and determination, our youthful ambition, our ability and self resolve will allow us to obtain even what is not in God's best interests or our best interests.
5. But then comes a time in God's mercy and love and grace, where He says NO. And we fail.
6. If a man's significance in life is built around his ability and achievements, this failure will result in a crisis.
7. And this is where Solomon is, at mid life, 40 years old, having faced failure, and instead of turning to God he turns to a pursuit of significance in the secular.

From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 10, 2018.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:1–2 These are the Words of a Lecturer, who is the Son of David, the King in Jerusalem: Just inhale and exhale, proclaims this lecturer—as all life is but a vapor, of no more substance than the exhale of one’s breath.

Solomon, in this life, is going to go on a philosophical journey. He is going to attempt to find meaning, purpose and definition to life, but apart from God. His search for these things is going to take place *under the sun*; and the result of this search will be that everything is but a vapor; emptiness built upon emptiness.

Ecclesiastes 1:2 Just inhale and exhale, proclaims this lecturer—as all life is but a vapor, of no more substance than the exhale of one’s breath.

Solomon’s conclusion in Ecclesiastes 1:2 (various commentators)

David Guzik: *We see from the first two verses that Solomon wrote this from a certain perspective, a perspective that through the book he will expose and inadequate and wrong. Most all of Ecclesiastes is written from this perspective, through the eyes of a man who thinks and lives as if God doesn’t matter.*¹⁴⁰

Chuck Smith: *[Solomon] starts out with the conclusion of his search. After searching through everything, this is his conclusion of life [Vanity of vanities; all is vanity].*¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ David Guzik’s *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:2.

¹⁴¹ Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–18.

Solomon's conclusion in Ecclesiastes 1:2 (various commentators)

Trapp: *[T]herefore, [there is] no happiness here to be had but in the reverential fear of God, {Eccles. 12:13} and this is the sum of the whole sermon.*¹⁴²

The Geneva Bible: *[Essentially, Solomon] condemns the opinions of all men who set happiness in anything but in God alone, seeing that in this world all things are as vanity and nothing.*¹⁴³

The NIV Study Bible: *The basic thrust of Ecclesiastes is that all of life is meaningless, useless, hollow, futile and vain if it is not rightly related to God. Only when based on God and His Word is life worthwhile.*¹⁴⁴

Dr. John Gill: *For though the world, and all things in it, were made by God, and are very good; yet, in comparison of him, are less than nothing, and vanity; and especially as become subject to it through sin, a curse being brought upon the earth by it; and all the creatures made for the use of men liable to be abused, and are abused, through luxury, intemperance, and cruelty; and the whole world usurped by Satan, as the god of it. Nor is there anything in it, and put it all together, that can give satisfaction and contentment; and all is fickle, fluid, transitory, and vanishing, and in a short time will come to an end: the riches of the world afford no real happiness, having no substance in them, and being of no long continuance; nor can a man procure happiness for himself or others, or avert wrath to come, and secure from it; and especially these are vanity, when compared with the true riches, the riches of grace and glory, which are solid, substantial, satisfying, and are for ever: the honours of this world are empty things, last a very short time; and are nothing in comparison of the honour that comes from God, and all the saints have, in the enjoyment of grace here, and glory hereafter.*¹⁴⁵

Whedon: *This utterance, like a prelude, gives the solemn keynote of the book. As we proceed, we shall see that it means, not that the works of God or the callings of men are unreal and delusive, but that the struggle to satisfy the heart in worldly things is vain. By repetition the writer makes his thought conspicuous and impressive.*¹⁴⁶

The Open Bible: *The thesis of the Teacher is that life lived without regard for God is of no value. It is indeed meaningless (empty).*¹⁴⁷

Solomon takes to the conclusion of his earthly search, in the 2nd verse of the 1st chapter.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

This is from one of the most outstanding books of the 20th century (Geisler has done so much excellent work).

Can of book of such skepticism be in the Word of God? (Geisler & Howe)

ECCLESIASTES 1:2 —How can this book be part of the Scriptures since it contains such skepticism?

PROBLEM: Several statements that Solomon makes throughout this book indicate a skepticism that seems contrary to the Bible as a whole. In Ecclesiastes 9:5 Solomon says, "For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing." However, the Book of Ecclesiastes is included in the canon of Holy Scriptures as an inspired book. How can such a skeptical book be inspired Scripture?

SOLUTION: Although Ecclesiastes does contain statements that, when taken in isolation, appear to be contrary to the teaching of the Bible, the book is not a book of skepticism. Once these statements are understood in their contexts, their meaning is compatible with other Scriptures. Such statements as found in Ecclesiastes 1:2 are

¹⁴² John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 1:2.

¹⁴³ Geneva Bible Translation Notes; courtesy of e-sword; 1599; Eccles. 1:2.

¹⁴⁴ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 986 (footnote).

¹⁴⁵ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2.

¹⁴⁶ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:2.

¹⁴⁷ *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 860 (footnote).

Can of book of such skepticism be in the Word of God? (Geisler & Howe)

not designed to produce or to promote skepticism. Rather, Solomon is recording his search for happiness and meaning in life by pursuing everything that this world offers. Each of these seemingly skeptical observations is aimed at demonstrating that, apart from God, everything “under the sun” is only vanity, and that the only source of true happiness and lasting peace is the Lord our God. Solomon’s investigations led eventually to the conclusion that the whole duty of man is to “fear God and keep His commandments” (Ecc. 12:13).

From [When Critics Ask](#); accessed July 2, 2018.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

This is very much what life is like for the unbeliever, for the man without God; or for the reversionist.

The words *vanity of vanity* followed by *under the sun* gives a very specific perspective to this book of Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes gives the perspective of man—one here with unlimited means and great intelligence—to pursue all worldly accomplishments, all possessions, and all worldly good, apart from God.

This is so much different from the wisdom which is to be found in the book of Proverbs. Prov. 1:1–7 [The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth—Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. \(ESV\)](#)

Ron Snider’s translation of Ecclesiastes 1:2 ["Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity."](#)

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:2 (Ron Snider)

1. This verse sets Solomon's initial assertion, which is emphasized by the repetition of the cry vanity of vanities and the all encompassing comment at the end of this verse.
2. However, what is very important to note is that this was the conclusion at which the younger Solomon arrived by virtue of his own work; this is not necessarily the view of Solomon as he writes this book.
3. There can be little doubt that the concept of vanity is one primary theme of this book since the term is used some 38 times in this book.
4. This verse forms an inclusio (a literary device that places similar or identical material at the beginning and the end of a section) with the final usage of the term in the last chapter. Eccles. 12:8
5. The function of this prologue is designed to set the tone; Solomon states his premise and begins to document his thought with what follows through verse 11.
6. Many have questioned whether or not Ecclesiastes belongs in the canon of Scripture since it seems to underscore the futility of life, the triumph of evil, the limitations of wisdom, and the transitory nature of life and its accomplishments.
7. Since these concepts are at odds with other portions of Scripture, and they present somewhat of a pessimistic view of life coupled with a mood that has been called "existential despair", many have concluded that this book is in opposition to the rest of the Word of God.
8. Interpreters have suggested that form in which Ecclesiastes is written is simply elegant prose, but the Hebrew text would suggest that the first eleven (and other) verses are recorded in poetic format.
9. Regarding the phrase vanity of vanities, when a plural genitive follows a singular construct noun of the same root, it indicates the best or most outstanding example of the person or thing described.
10. Some examples would include: song of songs (the best or greatest song; SOS 1:1), heaven of heavens (the highest heaven; Neh. 9:6), and holy of holies (most holy place). Ex. 26:33
11. Therefore, Solomon begins his book with a superlative construction that could be translated as absolute vanity, the utter pointlessness, or the ultimate absurdity!

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:2 (Ron Snider)

12. Although this phrase might have left room for some exceptions, the final portion of the verse makes his statement universal.
13. Solomon chose the term לְבָה (hebhel-vanity), which has a broad range of meanings; in that regard it would seem that he picked a term that could be used in a variety of ways, to express a variety of thoughts about the human experience.
14. This would readily suit his purpose as he seeks to express the various forms of vanity and frustration that he had encountered in human existence.
15. The basic meaning of the word is wind, breath, mist, or vapor. Prov. 21:6; Isa. 57:13
16. The first usage of this root is found in Genesis; it is the proper name for the second son of Adam and
17. In that regard, Abel was the first person to suffer physical death; he was the first believer to endure what has ultimately the lot of everyone who has ever been born (with few exceptions).
18. There are basically three contexts outside of this proper name in which the term is used; first, it is used for false gods, and usually translated by the term idols. Deut. 32:21; 1Kings 16:13,26
19. The second context in which we find the term relates to the fleeting nature of life, the fact that human existence is quite transitory. Job 7:16; Ps. 39:5; Eccles. 9:9
20. The third way in which the Hebrew noun is used relates to that which does not profit, that which lacks substance, that which has no permanent value, and that which does not provide lasting satisfaction.
21. The majority of the usages refer to that which is unsubstantial, fruitless, senseless, absurd, or that which lacks purpose and does not matter. Eccles. 2:1,11,19
22. This term is better understood when one compares it with the term יֵתְרוֹן (yithron-advantage) that is found in the following verse.
23. That term denotes that which is substantial, that which yields something of value, consequence, satisfaction, or something that really matters.
24. In that regard, Solomon begins this work with the idea that life is quite temporary and passes by quickly; further, life is repetitious and offers little in the way of lasting satisfaction. Eccles. 1:14
25. Therefore, the first fact with which Solomon choose to confront his readers is the assertion that nothing in life really amounts to much since it will all soon vanish.
26. He will demonstrate the fact that everyone is mortal, that human existence and achievement is fleeting, and that time, chance, and death overtake everyone.
27. The term vanity would also serve to drive home the fact that the transitory nature of human existence is also fraught with afflictions, inequities, difficulties, frustrations, and is often characterized by a lack of
28. However, would not the dramatic, pessimistic challenge to the value of life immediately cause the reader to consider every possible good thing that might contradict Solomon and prove him wrong?
29. In that regard, Solomon is asserting the conclusion to which he had come in his younger days; how-ever, he never exaggerates the actual vanity of which he speaks.
30. Solomon is not offering a pessimistic view of the world and its significance—he is offering a realistic expression of the fact that life passes quickly, is often not fulfilling, that men are dying while they live, and death is final.
31. In fact, this assertion is echoed by James in the New Testament. James 4:14
32. As we will observe in this book, Solomon apparently did not arrive at his conclusions quickly; he will demonstrate that he did a great deal of work to come to his conclusions.
33. Solomon will now begin to document the veracity of his assertion in the verses that follow by focusing on the repetitious nature of the transient world in which we find ourselves.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (this will open as a Word document on your computer); accessed June 16, 2018.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

The Futility and Weariness of Life

The author of Ecclesiastes has just proclaimed Ecclesiastes 1:2 *Just inhale and exhale, proclaims this lecturer—as all life is but a vapor, of no more substance than the exhale of one’s breath.* Or, more to the point, the TLV’s translation: *Futile! Futile! says Kohelet. Completely meaningless! Everything is futile!* Vv. 3–11 will explain why (secular) life is so futile and lacking in meaning.

The NIV Study Bible: *In this section the author elaborates his theme that human effort appears to be without benefit or purpose.*¹⁴⁸

Dr. Dan Hill: *When man, using secular wisdom which leaves out God, tries to find significance to life, he will eventually end up echoing the haunting chorus of this book, emptiness...And now Solomon shows us why in four areas of life: Work, nature, the senses, and history.*¹⁴⁹

Brian Bell entitles vv. 3–8: *Solomon Looks Around (3-8) Circles & Cycles.*¹⁵⁰

Ecclesiastes 1:3 is quite tricky. How does the Bible, on the one hand, recognize work as fundamental to the lives of people on earth; and yet, on the other hand, suggest that it is futile effort expended? Bear in mind, this is all coming from a king who is not trying to justify laziness or a casual life, because he can. Solomon was one of the most industrious kings in the history of man. He will expend much of his life on chasing pleasure (Eccles. 2); but first, he explores hard work and production.

Although some place vv. 1–3 and the title, the author and conclusion (or themes) of Solomon’s search for meaning (apart from God). However, I believe the v. 3 is better placed with the section that follows. This verse focuses in on Solomon’s first attempt to find meaning.

What gain [is there] to the man in all his toil which he toils under the sun? Ecclesiastes 1:3 **What gain [is there] to the man in all of his toil which he toils under the sun?**

What real gain is there to any man in all of his hard work which he must do each day under a hot sun?

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	What gain [is there] to the man in all his toil which he toils under the sun?
Revised Douay-Rheims	What <u>has</u> a man <u>more</u> of all his labour, that he <u>takes</u> under the sun?
Peshitta (Syriac)	What profit has a man of all his labor at which he toils under the sun?
Updated Brenton (Greek)	What advantage <i>is there</i> to a man in all his labour that he <u>takes</u> under the sun?

Significant differences: The Latin has, *has more* rather than *gain*. Both the Latin and Greek have *takes* rather than *toil*.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	What is a man profited by all his work which he does under the sun?
Easy English	People work for their whole lives. But they get nothing for the work that they do here on the earth.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	Do people really gain anything from all the hard work they do in this life? {No!}
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	Do people really gain anything from all the hard work they do in this life ^{[b]?}

¹⁴⁸ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 986 (footnote).

¹⁴⁹ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 10, 2018.

¹⁵⁰ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/cbb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 24, 2018.

in this life Literally, “under the sun.” Also in verses 9, 13.

God’s Word™

Life Is an Endless Circle

What do people gain from all their hard work under the sun?

Good News Bible (TEV)
The Message

You spend your life working, laboring, and what do you have to show for it?

What’s there to show for a lifetime of work,
a lifetime of working your fingers to the bone?

NIRV

What do people get for all their work?

Why do they work so hard on this earth?

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study

If all of man’s efforts are for personal gain and satisfaction, when life is over, what does he possess that he can claim as his reward?

Common English Bible

Some things are inevitable

What do people gain from all the hard work
that they work so hard at under the sun?

Contemporary English V.
The Living Bible
New Century Version

What is there to show for all of our hard work here on this earth?

For what does a man get for all his hard work?

What do people really gain
from all the hard work they do here on earth?

New Life Version

What does a man get for all his work which he does under the sun?

New Living Translation

What do people get for all their hard work under the sun?

Unlocked Dynamic Bible

What do people gain from all the work that they do here on the earth?”

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible

What value does man gain from the things he has done,
And the things he’s worked hard for under the sun?’

Beck’s American Translation
International Standard V

What does a man get for all the hard work he’s doing under the sun?

What does a man gain
from all of the work that he undertakes on earth?

Revised Knox Bible

How is man the better for all this toiling of his, here under the sun?

Translation for Translators

◀What do people gain from all the work that they do here on the earth?/It seems that people gain no lasting benefit from all the work that they do here on the earth.▶

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible

Is it to excel he of mankind in his labor, that which he is to repeatedly toil under the sun?

Conservapedia

What does man have to show for all of his earthly work?

I assume earthly is what under the sun means

Ferrar-Fenton Bible

What remains to a man from all the work that he does under the sun ?

God’s Truth (Tyndale)

For what else has a man, of all the labor that he has takes under the Sun?

Lexham English Bible

All Toil is Profitless and Repetitious

What does a person gain in all his toil with which he toils under the sun?

NIV, ©2011

What do people gain from all their labors

at which they toil under the sun?

Son of Man Bible

What profit does mankind gain from all the work that they labor at under the sun?

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (2013)

What profit is there for a man in all his work for which he toils under the sun?

The Heritage Bible

What profit is there to man of all his wearisome toil which he works under the sun?

New American Bible (2011)

VANITY OF HUMAN TOIL

What profit have we from all the toil
which we toil at under the sun? Eccl 2:11, 22; 3:9; 5:15.

Under the sun: used throughout this book to signify "on the earth."

New Jerusalem Bible

What profit can we show for all our toil, toiling under the sun?

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

The Complete Tanach

What profit has man in all his toil that he toils under the sun?

What profit: reward and remainder.

under the sun: in lieu of the Torah, which is called light, as it is stated (Prov. 6:23): "and the Torah is light." All the toil which he does instead of engaging in the Torah—what reward is there in it?

exeGesés companion Bible

What advantage has humanity
of all the toil he toils under the sun?

The Israel Bible

What real value is there for a man In all the gains he makes beneath the sun?

Orthodox Jewish Bible

What profit hath a man from all his amal (toil) which he hath toiled under the shemesh?

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Amplified Bible

What advantage does man have from all his work
Which he does under the sun (while earthbound)?

The Expanded Bible

What do people really ·gain [profit]
from all the ·hard work [toil] they do ·here on earth [under the sun]?

Kretzmann's Commentary

What profit, what lasting value, what enduring advantage, hath a man of all his labor, the toil and exertion with which he fatigues himself, which he taketh under the sun? The author does not say that man's labor is useless, but that, in itself, it has no enduring, eternal value. While the sun runs his course with unfailing regularity, the doings of men seem altogether changeable and variable. The work of their hands is good, if done in the Lord's service, but the misery and the hardships connected with it set the imprint of vanity upon their entire life.

NET Bible®

What benefit do people get from all the effort
which they expend on earth [*Heb* "under the sun."]?

This rhetorical question expects a negative answer: "Man has no gain in all his toil." Ecclesiastes often uses rhetorical questions in this manner (e.g., 2:2; 3:9; 6:8, 11, 12; see E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 949).

The Pulpit Commentary

What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun? Here begins the elucidation of the fruitlessness of man's ceaseless activity. The word rendered "profit" (*yithron*) is found only in this book, where it occurs frequently. It means "that which remains over, advantage," *περισσεία*, as the LXX. translates it. As the verb and the substantive are cognate in the following words, they are better rendered, in all his labor wherein he laboreth...Man is Adam, the natural man, unenlightened by the grace of God. Under the sun is an expression peculiar to this book (comp. Eccles. 1:9, Eccles. 1:14; Eccles. 2:11, Eccles. 2:17, etc.), but is not intended to contrast this present with a future life; it merely refers to what we call sublunary matters. The phrase is often tact with in the Greek poets. Eurip; 'Alcest.,' 151—"By far the best of all beneath the sun."

Homer, 'Iliad,' 4:44—

"Of all the cities occupied by man
Beneath the sun and starry cope of heaven."
(Cowper.)

Theognis, 'Parcem.,' 167—

"No mortal man

On whom the sun looks down is wholly blest."

In an analogous sense we find in other passages of Scripture the terms "under heaven" (Eccles. 1:13; Eccles. 2:3; Ex. 17:14; Luke 17:24) and "upon the earth" (Eccles. 8:14, Eccles. 8:16; Gen. 8:17). The interrogative form of the verse conveys a strong negative (comp. Eccles. 6:8), like the Lord's word in Matt. 16:26, "What shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?" The epilogue (Eccles. 12:13) furnishes a reply to the desponding inquiry {Also is Futility in Achievement in Life in the Cosmic System}

Syndein/Thieme

What does man gain/profit from all his labor . . . which he toils under the sun?

The Voice

What good does it do anyone to work so hard *again and again*, sun up to sundown? *All his labor to gain but a little?*

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Charles Thompson OT	What lasting advantage hath a man by all the labour with which he toileth under the sun?
Concordant Literal Version	What advantage has a human in all his toil Which he toils under the sun?
English Standard Version	What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?
New American Standard B.	What advantage does man have in all his work Which he does under the sun?
Webster's Bible Translation	What profit hath a man of all his labor, which he taketh under the sun?
Young's Updated LT	What advantage is to man by all his labour that he labours at under the sun?

The gist of this passage: Men work hard in this world; so what advantage or gain is there in this life for such a man?

Ecclesiastes 1:3a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
mâh (מַה) [pronounced <i>maw</i>]	<i>what, how, why</i>	interrogative; exclamatory particle	Strong's #4100 BDB #552
yithrôn (יִיתְרוֹן) [pronounced <i>yihth- ROWN</i>]	<i>advantage, profit; preeminence, gain</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3504 BDB #452

This word is found 10 times in the Bible; and only in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Dr. Dan Hill: [*yithrôn*] is a word taken from the ancient business world. It means money gained from work rendered.¹⁵¹

Dr. Bob Utley: The form here is found only in Ecclesiastes (cf. Eccles. 1:3; Eccles. 2:11; Eccles. 2:13[twice]; Eccles. 3:9; Eccles. 5:8; Eccles. 5:15; Eccles. 7:12; Eccles. 10:11; Eccles. 10:11; another form of the term is a substantive from the Qal participle, cf. Eccles. 6:11; Eccles. 7:11; Eccles. 7:16; Eccles. 12:9; Eccles. 12:12).¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 11, 2018.

¹⁵² Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:3–11.

Ecclesiastes 1:3a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
----------------------	-------------------------	------------------	--------------------------

The College Press Bible Study: *The term “advantage” or “profit” is only used in Ecclesiastes. It does not appear in any other Old Testament book. It is used several times by Solomon (Eccles. 1:3; Eccles. 2:11; Eccles. 3:9; Eccles. 5:9; Eccles. 5:16; Eccles. 7:11). It means preeminence or gain. It may also mean “to remain or be left.” The meaning here is that of a collected materialistic gain. The Preacher’s contention is that man does not have an advantage or profit. He cannot hold on to anything. He toils, labors, plans, but it is like grasping the wind (Eccles. 4:16; Eccles. 5:15).*¹⁵³

Keil and Delitzsch: *[The word] יִתְרוֹן, profit...is peculiar to this book (= Aram. יִתְרוֹן)... The word signifies that which remains over, either, as here, clear gain, profit, or that which has the pre-eminence, i.e., superiority, precedence, or is the foremost.*¹⁵⁴

The NET Bible: *The term “profit” (יִתְרוֹן, yotýron) is used in Ecclesiastes to evaluate the ultimate benefit/effects of human activities, as is בּוֹט (tov, “good, worthwhile”) as well (e.g., 2:1, 3). While some relative advantage/profit is recognized (e.g., light over darkness, and wisdom over folly), Qoheleth denies the ultimate advantage of all human endeavors (e.g., 2:11, 15).*¹⁵⁵

Thomas Coke: *The word יִתְרוֹן iithron, rendered profit, signifies the surplus, or that which remains after allowance is made for toils and fatigue, &c. It occurs eleven times in this book; and I think,...the original notion of residue or remainder may well be preserved in every place, and will generally set the author’s meaning in a better light than any other expression.*¹⁵⁶

lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^o]	to, for, towards, in regards to	directional/relational preposition	No Strong’s # BDB #510
’âdâm (אָדָם) [pronounced aw-DAWM]	a man, a human being, mankind; transliterated Adam	masculine singular noun	Strong’s #120 & #121 BDB #9

The word *the Adam* can mean *man, mankind, humankind, men, human beings*.

The NET Bible: *Heb “the man.” The Hebrew term could be used here in a generic sense, referring to the typical man (hence, “a man”). However, it is more likely that the form is collective and that humankind in general is in view (note NIV “man”). Note the reference to “a generation” coming and going in the next verse, as well as v. 13, where the phrase “the sons of man” (= humankind) appears. In this case the singular pronominal suffix and singular verb later in v. 3 reflect grammatical agreement, not individuality.*¹⁵⁷

b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within	a preposition of proximity	Strong’s# none BDB #88
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]	the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of	masculine singular construct followed by a definite article	Strong’s #3605 BDB #481

Literally, *in all*. Although I don’t have this in the lexicons, it is rendered by the most literal translations as *among all, through all, throughout all, with all*.

¹⁵³ The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:3.

¹⁵⁴ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 1:3.

¹⁵⁵ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 14, 2018.

¹⁵⁶ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/tcc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 25, 2018.

¹⁵⁷ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 14, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:3a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿāmāl (עמל) [pronounced <i>gaw-MAWL</i>]	<i>intense labor, exhausting toil, exhaustion, miserable work, work and toil so tiring, you just want to cry; misery, travail; production from labor</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5999 BDB #765
<p>Dr. Daniel Hill: <i>The word for WORK is the Hebrew 'AMAL and looks at hard work. No easy job is being described here but the hard toil that has been the lot of man since the fall.</i>¹⁵⁸</p>			
<p>It is no coincidence that we have the words ʿāmāl and ʾādām in the same verse. Listen to the curse placed upon man (Adam) when he disobeyed God. <i>Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you shall eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face You shall eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.</i> (Genesis 3:17-19; NASB)</p>			
<p>Knowingly or unknowingly, human author Solomon ties man to the great labor that we engage in, adding to it, the additional concept of futility.</p>			
<p>A personal note: God has both blessed me with work and the time to study and write about His Word. Both are a great blessing to me; and so far in my life, I have been given over 20 years during which I have the freedom to study and to write (during which time, God has provided exactly the right amount of work for me to pay the bills). I personally feel no anxiety or futility over my secular work. I recognize God's graciousness to enjoy my place in His plan.</p>			
she- (–ש) [pronounced <i>sheh</i>]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
<p>This is spelled shel (של) [pronounced <i>sheh</i>], but apparently is shortened further and affixed to a word or set of words. This relative particle appears to be a form of or a synonym of the relative pronoun ʾāsher (אשר) [pronounced <i>uhsh-ER</i>], which means <i>that, which, when, who</i> or <i>how</i>. Strong's #834 BDB #81. Although BDB says that its usage appears to be confined to later Hebrew and passages with a northern Palestine coloring¹⁵⁹, it occurs as early as Gen. 6:3.</p>			
<p>The NET Bible: <i>The use of the relative pronoun ש (she, "which") – rather than the more common אשר ("asher, "which") – is a linguistic feature that is often used to try to date the Book of Ecclesiastes. Noting that ש is the dominant relative pronoun in Mishnaic Hebrew and that אשר does not appear as frequently (Jastrow 130 s.v. אשר), many scholars conclude that אשר is early and ש is late. They conclude that the use of ש in Ecclesiastes points to a late date for the book. However, as Samuel-Kings suggest, the ש versus אשר phenomena may simply be a dialectical issue: אשר is commonly used in the south, and ש in the north. The use of ש in Ecclesiastes may indicate that the book was written in a northern rather than a southern province, not that it is a late book. This is supported from related Akkadian terms which occur in texts from the same periods: אשר is related to asru ("place") and ש is related to sa ("what").</i>¹⁶⁰</p>			
ʿamal (עמל) [pronounced <i>gaw-MAHL</i>]	<i>to labor, to toil, to work [hard]</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5998 BDB #765

¹⁵⁸ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 11, 2018.

¹⁵⁹ *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*; Hendrickson Publishers; ©1996; p. 979.

¹⁶⁰ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 14, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:3a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>This verb is found primarily in the poetry of the Bible (Psalms, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes). It occurs one time in Jonah 4:1 (and just once in Psalm 127:1 and Prov. 16:26) but most of its occurrences are in Ecclesiastes.</p>			
<p>The NET Bible: <i>The Hebrew root אָמַל, ('amal, "toil") is repeated here for emphasis: "What gain does anyone have in his toil with which he toils." For all his efforts, man's endeavors and secular achievements will not produce anything of ultimate value that will radically revolutionize anything in the world. The term "toil" is used in a pejorative sense to emphasize that the only thing that man obtains ultimately from all his efforts is weariness and exhaustion. Due to sin, mankind has been cursed with the futility of his labor that renders work a "toilsome" task (Gen 3:17-19). Although it was not yet revealed to Qoheleth, God will one day deliver the redeemed from this plight in the future kingdom when man's labor will no longer be toilsome, but profitable, fulfilling, and enjoyable (Isa 65:17-23).</i>¹⁶¹</p>			
<p>Matthew Poole: <i>his toilsome labour, both of body and mind, in the pursuit of riches, or pleasures, or other earthly things.</i>¹⁶²</p>			

Translation: *What gain [is there] to the man in all of his toil which he toils...* Solomon did not spend all of his time drinking, doing drugs and watching television; he was a very productive member of society. He worked and planned and he worked. My point being, Solomon was not a slacker; he was not a druggie. However, even he recognized that there was something wrong in his life.

The masculine singular noun beginning this verse is *yithrônî* (יִתְרוֹנִי) [pronounced *yithr-OWN*], which means, *advantage, profit; preeminence, gain*. Strong's #3504 BDB #452. Have you ever known a person for which every interaction is transactional? They operate from the standpoint of, "What's in it for me?" That is what this word *profit, gain, advantage* is all about. We find this word ten times in the book of Ecclesiastes, but nowhere else. That is because, this is the only book in the Bible which asks, again and again, *what do I get out of this?*

Ecclesiastes 1:3 *What real gain is there to any man in all of his hard work which he must do each day under a hot sun?*

What profit is there to all man's toil? (Ecclesiastes 1:3) (various commentators)

Whedon: *What profit hath a man* — *The matter to be investigated is now plainly stated. The question is in Hebrew rhetoric a favourite substitute for the negative — "a man has no profit" in the "toil which he toils;" (emphatic, like "with desire have I desired.")*¹⁶³

The Cambridge Bible: *The word for "profit," not meeting us elsewhere in the Hebrew of the O. T., occurs ten times in Ecclesiastes. Its strict meaning is "that which remains,"—the surplus, if any, of the balance-sheet of life. It was, probably, one of the words which the commerce of the Jews, after the Captivity, had brought into common use.*¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 14, 2018.

¹⁶² Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:3.

¹⁶³ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:3 (slightly edited).

¹⁶⁴ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:3.

What profit is there to all man's toil? (Ecclesiastes 1:3) (various commentators)

Barnes: *What profit ...* – The question often repeated is the great practical inquiry of the book; it receives its final answer in Eccles. 12:13–14. When this question was asked, the Lord had not yet spoken Matt. 11:28. The word “profit” (or pre-eminence) is opposed to “vanity.”¹⁶⁵

Benson: *What profit* — What real and abiding benefit? None at all. All is unprofitable as to the attainment of that happiness which all men are inquiring after. Of all his labour — Hebrew, his toilsome labour, both of body and mind, in the pursuit of riches, or pleasures, or other earthly things.¹⁶⁶

Ken Cayce: *The implied answer to this rhetorical question is that there is no profit for man in his work. This supports the idea that “vanity” refers to a lack of profit, value, or worth. Under the sun is used 29 times in this book and denotes the sphere of Solomon’s observations.*¹⁶⁷

This is why we are able to reach certain conclusions about work in this book—some of which are negative—but without dismissing the concept of work altogether. Work is important to mankind—to both believers and unbelievers. Therefore, we have to carefully divide the Word of God.

Then Cayce observes: *This is such a strange statement for a man with all the advantages that Solomon had. Of earthly Old Testament people, Solomon was the wisest man that ever lived. God showered him with great wealth and fame, because he asked for neither. The statement he makes here, is appropriate for mankind as a whole.*

Then Cayce makes an application for today: *It seems we work our life away and at the end of the road, when we look back over our life, many of us think; what was this all about? Many people wonder what they have accomplished toward helping society.*¹⁶⁸

Clarke: *What profit hath a man* - What is the sum of the real good he has gained by all his toils in life? They, in themselves, have neither made him contented nor happy.¹⁶⁹

Pastor John Griffith: *Many today have things totally mixed up; We worship our work and play at our worship.*¹⁷⁰

Pastor John Griffith: *“What does man gain, what’s the advantage, by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?” What is the profit of it to him? This is an interesting Hebrew word yatar translated advantage that has an interesting meaning, “that which is left over.” After he has sucked dry all the immediate delight, joy, or pleasure from something, what is left over, what endures, what will remain to continually feed the hunger of his life for satisfaction?*¹⁷¹

The College Press Bible Study: *This first question in the book gets to the heart of the Preacher’s pursuit. It is not a question directed toward a lazy person. He is a worker! He has dreams and ambitions. He envisions great wealth and power. It is the advantage or profit that he is concerned with. This same proposition is close to Jesus’ heart as he, too, raises the question, but is quick to offer an incentive to make our work worthwhile. He says, “For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”*

¹⁶⁵ Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:3.

¹⁶⁶ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:3.

¹⁶⁷ From <http://www.bible-studys.org> accessed June 24, 2018.

¹⁶⁸ From <http://www.bible-studys.org> accessed June 24, 2018.

¹⁶⁹ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:3.

¹⁷⁰ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_03.html accessed June 15, 2018.

¹⁷¹ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_04.html accessed June 15, 2018.

What profit is there to all man's toil? (Ecclesiastes 1:3) (various commentators)

The College Press Bible Study continues: *This first question of the book offers a key to the reader. It is obvious that man will be engaged in making his living by the sweat of his brow (Gen. 3:19). Man and labor are not equal but they are inseparable. But what will be man's profit? This question must be held against the interpretation of the entire book. Even when there is a temporary profit (Eccles. 5:9; Eccles. 7:11) it is short lived and unfulfilling.*

The College Press Bible Study continues: *Modern man, too, grows weary of facing the labor of each day, realizing nothing more than the financial compensation at the end of the week. The monotonous grind of daily routine of the Preacher's day resulted in the declaration, "I completely despaired of all the fruit of my labor" (Eccles. 2:20).*

The College Press Bible Study continues: *What a vastly different question is "What advantage does the Christian man have in all his labor?" Cf. Col. 1:29; Heb. 13:21; Rev. 14:13.*

The College Press Bible Study continues: *Solomon's question and answer are qualified by the phrase "under the sun." This restricts both his question and his answer. Just what restrictions the phrase places upon the inquiry and the place and meaning of the phrase in the book of Ecclesiastes now draws our attention.¹⁷²*

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *What profit ... labour — that is, "What profit" as to the chief good (Matt. 16:26). Labor is profitable in its proper place (Gen. 2:15; Gen. 3:19; Prov. 14:23).¹⁷³*

Keil and Delitzsch: *With this verse commences the proof for this exclamation and statement: "What profit has a man of all his labour which he laboures in under the sun?!" An interrogative exclamation, which leads to the conclusion that never anything right, i.e., real, enduring, satisfying, comes of it.¹⁷⁴*

Dunagan: *"What advantage"-"lasting advantage" (Sept). Carefully note this isn't a statement issued by a lazy person, a teenager trying to get out of their chores, or someone who is against commercialism, private enterprise or capitalism. The writer is not saying that man's labor results in no profit. But rather, what "kind" of profit does a man really get from his labors in this life? Whatever profit gained in this life is short-lived at best (Matthew 6:19-20; 1 Timothy 6:17).¹⁷⁵*

Matthew Poole: *What real and abiding benefit hath a man by it? None at all. All is unprofitable, as to the attainment of that happiness which Solomon here is, and all men in the world are, inquiring after.¹⁷⁶*

Brian Bell comes to an interesting conclusion, one which I am not sure is found in Ecclesiastes¹⁷⁷: *The highest reward for man's toil is not what he gets for it, but what he becomes by it.¹⁷⁸*

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge lists these Scriptures: Eccles. 2:22 3:9 5:16 Prov. 23:4–5 Isa. 55:2 Habak. 2:13, 18 Matt. 16:26 Mark 8:36–37 John 6:27.¹⁷⁹

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

¹⁷² *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:3.

¹⁷³ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:3.

¹⁷⁴ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 1:3.

¹⁷⁵ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:3.

¹⁷⁶ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:3.

¹⁷⁷ Bell appears to be quite the original thinker, but sometimes his original thoughts are only tangentially related to the passage at hand.

¹⁷⁸ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/cbb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 24, 2018.

¹⁷⁹ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 1:3.

Ken Cayce gives the solution to this question: *The only lasting efforts are those designed to accomplish God's purposes for eternity. "Labor" is not just one's livelihood, but all of man's activity in life.*¹⁸⁰

Eccles. 1:3a **What gain [is there] to the man in all of his toil which he toils...** Let me add that, the key phrase in this interrogative is *under the sun*, which is Eccles. 1:3b:

Ecclesiastes 1:3b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
tachath (תַּחַת) [pronounced TAH-khahth]	<i>underneath, below, under, beneath; instead of, in lieu of; in the place [in which one stands]; in exchange for; on the basis of</i>	preposition of location or foundation	Strong's #8478 BDB #1065
shemesh (שֶׁמֶשׁ) [pronounced SHEH-mesh]	<i>sun; sunrise, sun-rising, east, sun-setting, west (of direction); openly, publically</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #8121 BDB #1039

translation: *...under the sun?* *Under the sun* is a phrase found throughout the book of Ecclesiastes; and this simply refers to the thinking and life of a man without an eternal perspective. God is not in the picture. It is all about man down here on planet earth, unrelated to God. The lecturer tells us that, ultimately, the work that we do here is nothing; there is no true gain or profit (a particular point of view which will be explored more fully later in this book).

Ecclesiastes 1:3 **What real gain is there to any man in all of his hard work which he must do each day under a hot sun?**

Because this is a key phrase, this phrase is given a lot of discussion.

"Under the Sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:3) (various commentators)

J. Vernon McGee: Now we find Solomon, away from God, launching out with his experiments "*under the sun.*" The man under the sun is a great deal different from the child of God who has been blessed "*. . . with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*" (Eph. 1:3).¹⁸¹

Whedon: *Under the sun* — *Found in this book only of the Bible, and here some twenty-five times; is a lively equivalent to "on the earth."*¹⁸²

The Cambridge Bible: *under the sun*] *The phrase thus used, occurring 29 times in Ecclesiastes, has nothing like it in the language of other books of the Old Testament.*¹⁸³

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *under the sun* — *that is, in this life, as opposed to the future world. The phrase often recurs, but only in Ecclesiastes.*¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ From <http://www.bible-studys.org> accessed June 24, 2018.

¹⁸¹ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt accessed June 19, 2018.

¹⁸² *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:3.

¹⁸³ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:3.

¹⁸⁴ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:3.

“Under the Sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:3) (various commentators)

The NIV Study Bible: *“under the sun”...refers to this present world and the limits of what it offers.*¹⁸⁵

The Cambridge Bible further goes on to say that there is nothing like this phrase in the rest of the Old Testament (true) and that it is essentially Greek in nature (false). They quote two Greek passages where *the sun looks down*. Sorry, that is *not* the same thing; nor is the concept used in the same way in the quoted Greek passages. There is no reason to think that Solomon (or some later author) needed to be well-versed in Greek philosophy to be able to come up with this phrase.

Chuck Smith: *[This is simply] Life on the human plane, not on the divine, on the human plane under the sun.*¹⁸⁶

The Berkeley Bible: *Whatever is “under the sun” is earthly, temporal; it passes. Then in some form or other, possibly in similar form, it is seen or heard or felt again.*¹⁸⁷

Benson: *under the sun — In all worldly matters, which are usually transacted in the day-time, or by the light of the sun. By this restriction he implies, that the happiness which in vain is sought for in this lower world, is really to be found in heavenly places and things.*¹⁸⁸

John W. Ritenbaugh: *“Under the sun” is to think and act from an earthly point of view, to look at things carnally. Solomon is leaving God out of the picture for a time as his lecture unfolds. His purpose at this point is to cause us to begin to fear that vanity is all there is to life. All too often, in the busy crush of everyday events, we forget to remember God and His purpose. When we do this, even though we may be converted, we are back under the sun once again, looking at things carnally.*¹⁸⁹

Dr. Bob Utley: *Eccles. 1:3; Eccles. 1:9; Eccles. 1:13–14 “under the sun” This is the key phrase (Preposition, DBD 1065; Definite Article and Noun, DBD 1039) in interpreting the entire book. It is used twenty–five times. It reflects mankind’s efforts without God. Qoheleth examines physical life (by observation, i.e. natural revelation) and comes to the conclusion that it is vanity.*¹⁹⁰

Dr. Peter Pett: *The phrase ‘under the sun’ is repeated throughout the book and is found elsewhere in Elamite and Phoenician inscriptions. Its main meaning is undoubtedly a reference to ‘everything that exists and functions on earth’.*¹⁹¹

Pett, who is generally an excellent commentator, said a lot of weird stuff about being under the sun: *But we might also see in it a reference to the fact that it is the ‘greater light’ of God’s creative work (Gen. 1:14–17), which controls the earth system which He has created. This might be seen as confirmed by the fact that the writer unquestionably has Genesis 1 in mind elsewhere (Eccles. 6:10–12). Furthermore its constant repetition in this book possibly also acts as a polemic against the idea of a sun–god. In those days, in a context like this, its constant repetition could hardly fail to be seen as an indictment of the sun, which could add no meaning to life. Other nations and people worshipped the sun, it was extremely prominent in Egyptian thought, (which had almost certainly influenced the writer) and everywhere popular, but under the sun (Shemesh), he stresses, was only long term uselessness and a failure to find anything meaningful. The noun was thus two–pronged. The sun was to be seen as being as transient and passing and as lacking in other–worldly influence as everything else.*¹⁹²

¹⁸⁵ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 986 (footnote).

¹⁸⁶ Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–18.

¹⁸⁷ *The Modern Language Bible (The New Berkeley Version)*, Revised Edition; ©1969 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 670 (Footnote).

¹⁸⁸ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:3.

¹⁸⁹ From [Bible tools](#) accessed June 17, 2018.

¹⁹⁰ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:3–11.

¹⁹¹ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–3.

¹⁹² Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–3.

“Under the Sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:3) (various commentators)

Pett was not the only person to go weird about the sun; Culverwell wrote: *The sun does not monopolize its beams, and engross its light; but scatters them abroad, gilds the whole world with them. It shines more for others than itself; it is a public light. Look on a fountain; it does not bind its streams, seal up itself, and enclose its waters, but spends itself with a continual bubbling forth. It streams forth in a fluent, liberal, and communicative manner; it is a public spring.*¹⁹³ I think he was drawing some sort of analogy to a preacher and how he should be preaching.

The College Press Bible Study waxes poetic on this topic: *The phrase “under the sun” implies a necessary restriction. What is to be included, and what is to be excluded? Since Solomon does not define the meaning for us, we are left to discover the meaning from the use of the idea in the context of the book. One cannot go outside Ecclesiastes for his answer as the phrase is no where else employed in the Bible.*

The College Press Bible Study continues: *Two other phrases used in the book apparently carry the same meaning. They are “under heaven,” and “upon the earth.” It is Solomon’s purpose, through the use of these restricting phrases, to make his observations and conclusions believable. On occasion he expresses the futility of life “under the sun” with such, words as, “who knows what is good for a man during his lifetime, during the few years of his futile life” (Eccles. 6:12)? Yet, he never qualifies his toil “upon the earth” by contrasting it to any after life or hope of eternal blessing. It is as if he is saying, if on this earth we find our complete experience and reason for existing—if this life is all there is, then “a live dog is better than a dead lion . . . for whoever is joined with the living, there is hope” (Eccles. 9:4. Life “under the sun” may not afford man the opportunity for enjoyment, but one must be alive in order to take advantage of such opportunity if it does come.*

The College Press Bible Study continues: *The restriction “under the sun” appears to be a self-imposed framework of interpreting the meaning of life as it is lived apart from the “verbal revelation” from God. Without the benefit of “words” from God, man is caught in a futile struggle to unravel and interpret the complexities of our transitory world. Thus, the phrase “under the sun” includes that which has to do with purely earthly things. The Preacher purposely closes off the influence of Heaven for the sake of his higher purpose: i.e. the vanity of all earthly things.*

The College Press Bible Study concludes: *In a very real sense the “sun” can move about heaven mocking man, disappearing only to return again tomorrow, smiling upon the futile efforts of those who are so identified with sublunary affairs. Yet, for some, a new day dawns and as Malachi predicted, “For you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings” (Mal. 4:2). The Preacher is not ready to take us to the “new day” but intends to fully demonstrate that upon the earth, under heaven, and beneath the earthly sun, man toils and dreams but for little profit!*¹⁹⁴

E. W. Bullinger: *It refers to all that is connected with earthly things as such, and with man apart from God, but what is stated is inspired truth. If what is stated here seems to be a “discrepancy” when compared with other scriptures, then these latter must be dealt with and reconciled and harmonized as other supposed “discrepancies” usually are; not cast aside as uninspired. It may be that it is man’s theology which has yet to be conformed to these inspired statements.*¹⁹⁵

Dr. John Gill: *“What is there remains to a man after he is dead, of all his labour which he laboured under the sun in this world?” Nothing at all. He goes naked out of the world as he came into it; he can carry nothing away with him of all his wealth and substance he has acquired; nor any of his worldly glory, and grandeur, and titles of honour; these all die with him, his glory does not descend after him; wherefore it is a clear case that all these things are vanity of vanities; see Job. 1:21.*¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ *The Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1.

¹⁹⁴ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:3.

¹⁹⁵ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:3.

¹⁹⁶ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:3.

“Under the Sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:3) (various commentators)

Matthew Poole: *Which he takes under the sun; in all...worldly matters, which are usually transacted in the day time, or by the light of the sun. By this restriction he implies that that profit and happiness which in vain is sought for in this lower world, is really and only to be found in heavenly places and things.*¹⁹⁷

Steven Zeisler: *The key phrase which gives the context for all that follows is the repeated word "under the sun." In these words we have a description of what life is like if the heavens are shut off from man. If a bowl were placed over the earth, masking the heavens (i.e. the spiritual world from which God speaks and acts), what would life be like? Given this perspective, what would be the view from earth? This is the experiment which is in focus in the book of Ecclesiastes. Everything is viewed as being "under the sun." No revelation from heaven comes into the picture. Given this context, what does our intermediate Adam perceive life to be like?.*

I like Leupold's take on this phrase: *Each time the phrase occurs it is as though the author had said, 'Let us for the sake of argument momentarily rule out the higher things'.*¹⁹⁸

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:3 What gain [is there] to the man in all of his toil which he toils under the sun?

Generally speaking, the phrase *under the sun* refers to life here on earth apart from God.

The ESV; capitalized is used below:


The Doctrine of Under the Sun

Scripture/Text	Commentary
Eccles. 1:3 <i>What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?</i>	This is very much the title of the book, and explores the gain which man is able to find <i>under the sun</i> ; meaning, apart from God.
Eccles. 1:9 <i>What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.</i>	When it comes to philosophical searches and the various points of view for men, nothing is new, apart from God.
Eccles. 1:14 <i>I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind.</i>	Solomon's conclusion is that all man's effort <i>under the sun</i> is for naught; it is just like chasing the wind.
Eccles. 2:11 <i>Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.</i>	Solomon draws the same conclusion as above; but concentrates particularly upon physical labor.
Eccles. 2:17–19 <i>So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind. I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity.</i>	Solomon had come to the point where he was not simply frustrated with life; he hated his life. Part of what Solomon hated was, he knew that he would die, and that everything that he had done would be left to some ingrate, lazy son. This irked Solomon no end.

¹⁹⁷ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:3 (slightly edited).

¹⁹⁸ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:3.

The Doctrine of Under the Sun

Scripture/Text	Commentary
Eccles. 2:20 So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun,...	Because of his conclusions above, Solomon is in great despair. It makes him sad and depressed that he has spent a life working, and that the unappreciative fruit of his loins would
Eccles. 3:16 Moreover, I saw under the sun that in the place of justice, even there was wickedness, and in the place of righteousness, even there was wickedness.	We have the concept here that <i>justice is blind</i> and this is illustrated with a statue/graphic of lady justice holding a pair of scales with a blindfold. The idea is, lady justice does not see the participants in the trial; she merely weighs the facts and makes a determination on that.
<p>Lady Justice Life Size Bronze Resin Goddess Statue (a graphic); from Labe Shops; accessed June 28, 2018. If you have the money, you can purchase this life-sized statue for your home or study (I do not receive a commission on this, unfortunately).</p> <p>The sword is for the meting out of justice. However, many people in the US today are concerned about Bill and Hillary Clinton, for whom the law does not appear to apply (I write this is 2018). That injustice concerned Solomon as well.</p>	
Eccles. 4:1 Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them.	No doubt, you have heard people speak of the oppressed, and there is no doubt that, <i>under the sun</i> , some people seem to get a very raw deal in life.
Eccles. 4:3 But better than both is he who has not yet been and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun.	Solomon seems to be suggesting, it is better that you did not know of all the injustice and oppression—what can you really do about it?
Eccles. 4:7–8 Again, I saw vanity under the sun: one person who has no other, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, "For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?" This also is vanity and an unhappy business.	One very sad thing which Solomon observed is, the many people who live life alone, who do not have a close relative to help them with their lives. This leads him to ask, <i>am I working just for myself alone?</i>
Eccles. 4:15–16 I saw all the living who move about under the sun, along with that youth who was to stand in the king's place. There was no end of all the people, all of whom he led. Yet those who come later will not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and a striving after wind.	Someone can be a great leader, and he can lead and guide many people; but, at some point, he will be forgotten. This is also emptiness.

The Doctrine of Under the Sun

Scripture/Text	Commentary
Eccles. 5:13–14 There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand.	Some men have worked all of their lives, and have set aside wealth, under the sun, but they may lose this in a bad business venture and have nothing to leave behind to a son.
Eccles. 5:18–19 Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot. Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God.	Solomon comes to the conclusion that a man should enjoy what he has and enjoy his work—it is this which is the gift of God in this life.
Eccles. 6:1–2 There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, and it lies heavy on mankind: a man to whom God gives wealth, possessions, and honor, so that he lacks nothing of all that he desires, yet God does not give him power to enjoy them, but a stranger enjoys them. This is vanity; it is a grievous evil.	Some men are blessed with great wealth; and yet, for whatever reason, they are unable to enjoy all that they have (Solomon does not give a reason why). This is another evil under the sun.
Eccles. 6:12 For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?	Man's life seems so fleeting, something that we often observe as we grow older, and our friends and relatives begin to die. No one knows what will be after him under the sun.
Eccles. 8:8–9 No man has power to retain the spirit, or power over the day of death. There is no discharge from war, nor will wickedness deliver those who are given to it. All this I observed while applying my heart to all that is done under the sun, when man had power over man to his hurt.	We have no control over our death, when it comes. We cannot retain our spirit within our bodies. Sometimes, this is the result of one man simply having the ability to cause another man harm.
Eccles. 8:15 And I commend joy, for man has nothing better under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun.	Life may be given over to eating, drinking and being joyful; this is to counter-balance the toil in a man's life.
Eccles. 8:16–17 When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how neither day nor night do one's eyes see sleep, then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out.	There is no way to find out the truth under the sun, apart from God revealing it to us.
Eccles. 9:3 This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.	There is evil under the sun which includes the inherent evil in all mankind (the children of men); and sometimes this is madness. Yet all men suffer the same death.

The Doctrine of Under the Sun

Scripture/Text	Commentary
Eccles. 9:6 Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun.	Once a person dies, their hate, envy and other mental attitude sins perish with them.
Eccles. 9:9 Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.	This is the crowning verse for the man under the sun. He has two things which he may enjoy in his vain life (a life apart from God): his wife and his toil (that is, his work).
Eccles. 9:11–12 Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all. For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.	For the person apart from God, life appears to be a matter of timing and luck; and when a man dies, there is nothing which remains to him. Furthermore, the man will be taken like a fish in a net—he has no idea that his time has come.
Eccles. 9:13–15 I have also seen this example of wisdom under the sun, and it seemed great to me. There was a little city with few men in it, and a great king came against it and besieged it, building great siegeworks against it. But there was found in it a poor, wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that poor man.	Solomon offers up another example of the folly of wisdom under the sun, where a king decides to lay siege to a small city. Without specifying the means or method, a poor but wise men delivers the city. Yet, today, no one remembers him. It is vanity and chasing the wind.
Eccles. 10:5–9 There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as it were an error proceeding from the ruler: folly is set in many high places, and the rich sit in a low place. I have seen slaves on horses, and princes walking on the ground like slaves. He who digs a pit will fall into it, and a serpent will bite him who breaks through a wall. He who quarries stones is hurt by them, and he who splits logs is endangered by them.	Solomon seems to be saying, <i>it's just a crazy mixed-up world</i> . Sometimes there is a reversal of fortune, but with no logical reason. And people may engage in their work—the same work they have engaged in for years—and suddenly, there is some mishap which harms or kills them. Again, under the sun, all is vanity and a chancing after the wind.
Apart from God, so much seems random and arbitrary.	
E. W. Bullinger: [The phrase <i>under the sun</i>] is equivalent to "upon the earth" (Eccles. 5:2; Eccles. 8:14, Eccles. 8:16; Eccles. 10:7; Eccles. 11:2, Eccles. 11:3). ¹⁹⁹	
As a person who is interested in politics, I could easily add the corollary, What is the value of politics under the sun? The United States may enjoy the hard work of a great president today; and tomorrow, all that work may be undone by an idiot who thinks that socialism is the panacea for mankind (and to be clear, socialism is not a solution to anything and Jesus was not a socialist).	
Chapter Outline	Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 1:3 **What gain [is there] to the man in all of his toil which he toils under the sun?** This is a rhetorical question which demands a negative answer. There is no true gain to the man who toils under the sun; he is not advantaged at all.

¹⁹⁹ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Chapter notes, Eccles. 1:3.

Under the sun restricts this question. Solomon questions the ultimate gain which man can enjoy by means of a lifetime of work. No doubt, Solomon views his own life and thinks about his own son (or sons). Solomon has spent many hours, dawn till dusk, overseeing the building of so many splendid buildings—but then he considers those who will come up after him, and asks himself: *is there any gain or profit in all the work which I have done?* He knows who is coming up after him, and he is disappointed in the future. *If I am leaving all of this that I have saved and worked for to some worthless man, what sense does that make?*

We know that this represents the thinking of Solomon, for he writes: *So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind. I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun, because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil.* (Eccles. 2:17–21; ESV) Such a man may have no appreciation for what has been done; and take all of what he sees for granted. He may foolishly enjoy his inheritance, giving no thought to the toil involved in taking him to this point.

Ecclesiastes 1:3 *What real gain is there to any man in all of his hard work which he must do each day under a hot sun?*

The Vanity of Human Production (Ecclesiastes 1:3) (various commentators)

John W. Ritenbaugh: *Though the term "profit" (Hebrew yitron) is used only six times in Ecclesiastes, its placement at the beginning of the book adds to its weight. It is used as if Solomon is asking, "In light of the fact that so much of life is vanity, is life really worth living?...What does one gain from it?"*²⁰⁰

James Burton Coffman: *As should have been expected of a man like Solomon, he was thinking only in terms of temporal, earthly, and materialistic 'profit.' He who was "Greater than Solomon" asked a much more important question, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul" (Matthew 16:26, KJV)? There is a true evaluation here of the tragedy of all human life.*²⁰¹

Gary Everett: *The opening passage of Ecclesiastes is a cry about the vanity of life on earth. More particularly, it is a cry regarding the vanity seen in the affairs of this life, the natural realm when contrasted to the eternal realm. The Preacher cries out in despair regarding life's vanities (Eccles. 1:2–3) with the realization that man is bound by the realm of time (Eccles. 1:4–11), yet hoping for redemption in eternity.*²⁰²

Dr. Peter Pett: *All that is connected with man's labour is transient and passing. See Psalm 39:5–6; Psalm 39:11; Psalm 94:11; Psalm 144:4; Isa. 49:4; Jer. 16:19. For six days he labours, and on the seventh he rests. And then he begins to labour all over again. But it is all part of the earthly pattern 'under the sun'. Apart from enabling him to survive it takes him nowhere. (Later we will learn that it is his attitude in his labouring, whether he does it before God, that is in fact important – Eccles. 2:24–26; Eccles. 5:18–20; Eccles. 9:7–10; compare Eccles. 8:13).*²⁰³

Ray Stedman: *In Verse 3 we have the question which he continually used in his search: "What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?" What is the profit of it to him? This is an interesting Hebrew word, meaning, "that which is left over." After he has sucked dry all the immediate delight, joy or pleasure out of something, what is left over, what endures, what will remain to continually feed the hunger of his life for satisfaction? That is the right question. It is the question we all are asking.*²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ From [Bible tools](#) accessed June 17, 2018.

²⁰¹ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

²⁰² Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–11.

²⁰³ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:2–3.

²⁰⁴ Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 1.

The Vanity of Human Production (Ecclesiastes 1:3) (various commentators)

Matt. 16:26 [Jesus asks] **“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?”**

The Cambridge Bible: *The question is in substance, almost in form, identical with that of our times “Is life worth living?”*²⁰⁵

Steven Zeisler: *Life is futile, says the Preacher. “Vanity” means emptiness; that which is insubstantial. Like the vapor which is visible for a moment when one exhales on a cold night, a life leaves no mark, it accomplishes nothing. It is weightless, without substance, like a soap bubble which bursts and disappears, leaving no clue that it ever existed. In this sense, says the Preacher, life is vain. The earth remains always the same despite the many generations that come and go. Each generation scratches about on the earth for a while, and perhaps some may leave a mark, but eventually it is covered by green vegetation and can no longer be discerned. Human lives don’t have any weight, any lasting substance.*²⁰⁶

Keith Simons looks at this not from the standpoint of the work that we do for ourselves and family, but in terms of what we may attempt to do for mankind: *Some of the most noble people who have ever lived have wanted to change the world. They wanted to make the world a better place. So they worked hard, and used every effort to achieve that.*

Simons continues: *They did many good things, and they helped many people. But still, the results disappointed them. There were very many more things that they could not do. There were very many more people whom they could not help. The improvements that they made were not permanent. They tried so hard to change the world but, in the end, the world remained the same.*²⁰⁷

B. H. Carroll reminds us: *The meaning and purpose of the question in Eccles. 1:3 is to inquire as to the profit of all labor and worry which we see about us as touching the chief good, but does not mean that labor is not profitable in its proper place. (Cf. Gen. 2:15; Gen. 3:19; Prov. 14:23).*²⁰⁸

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

One must be careful about passages like this. God is neither telling the unbeliever to sit on your butt all day long, because you should not work; nor is God telling the believer, “Expend effort only in service to Me.”

I believe that Ron Adema, the pastor of **Doctrinal Bible Studies Church of Alabama** first came up with the idea that the 2nd divine institution is work. However, I was not able to verify this with a quick search of his church’s site. In fact, I am unable to find anyone else who teaches this; however, I am pretty certain that I did get this from someone else. Whoever realized this was certainly inspired by God.

The divine institutions are:

1. The function of the human soul (primarily with the focus on volition).
2. Work; one’s vocation.
3. Marriage.
4. Family.
5. Nation.

These divine institutions are fundamental to man’s life on earth—both saved and unsaved. The man who understands and appreciates them will be far happier than the man who seeks to upend them.

²⁰⁵ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:3.

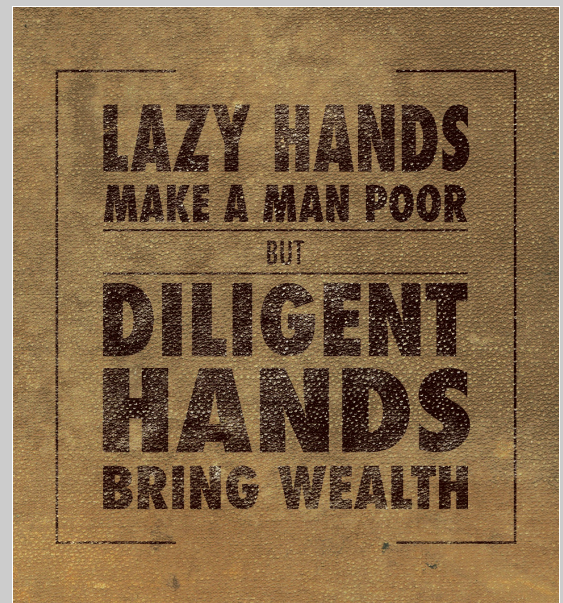
²⁰⁶ From <https://www.pbc.org/files/584509089ad2b149c6f68702/4083.html> accessed June 22, 2018.

²⁰⁷ From **Useful Bible**, accessed June 24, 2018.

²⁰⁸ B. H. Carroll, *An interpretation of the English Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2–5:9.

The Second Divine Institution: Work

1. Before and after the fall, man was designed to work.
2. Before the fall, God made man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to work. **And Jehovah God planted a garden eastward in Eden. And there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food. The tree of life also was in the middle of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden. And from there it was divided and became four heads. And Jehovah God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to work it and keep it** (Gen. 2:8–10, 15).
3. After man sinned, God gave Adam ground that was more difficult to work and He warned man that he would work hard in order to eat. **“The ground is cursed for your sake. In pain shall you eat of it all the days of your life. It shall also bring forth thorns and thistles to you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken.”** (Gen. 3:17b–19a).
4. Although the earliest professions were farmer and rancher (Cain and Abel), early man quickly developed a number of vocations: builder (Gen. 4:17), musician (Gen. 4:21) and metal-worker (Gen. 4:22). Early man also engaged in criminal activity, even before this activity was clearly defined (Gen. 4:23–24). At the very beginning, as far back as Gen. 4, man is closely associated with his vocation.
5. Work is an integral part of man’s existence. Even though man works hard, he will also receive personal satisfaction from his work. Eccles. 9:9 speaks of two things which are to bring enjoyment in life: a man’s right woman and his labor. Since this passage refers to him as *under the sun*, this refers to believers and unbelievers alike.
6. God expected even the poor to work. God told the farmers in early Israel not to harvest everything in the field, but to leave portions of the field unharvested. This was so that the poor of the land and immigrants could come through and harvest this themselves. Lev. 19:9–10 23:22 Deut. 24:19–21
7. One of the great stories in the Bible is about Ruth, a Moabite, who moved to Israel, but was quite poor. Therefore, she worked the fields of Boaz for that which he had not harvested. Ruth 2:2, 15
8. Nowhere in the Bible is there some sort of welfare system recommended where a man or a woman sits at home and receives a check. Instead, hard work is presented as honorable. Prov. 6:6–12 10:5
9. Poverty comes from laziness; hard work is the cure for poverty. **He becomes poor who works with a lazy hand, but the hand of the diligent brings wealth.** (Prov. 10:4; HNV)
10. Planning and the exercise of forethought are also a part of those who are successful. **The plans of the diligent surely lead to profit; and everyone who is hasty surely rushes to poverty.** (Prov. 21:5; HNV)
11. However, the poor were not to be ignored or abandoned. **“If there is among you a poor man of one of your brothers inside any of your gates in your land which Jehovah your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother. But you shall open your hand wide to him, and shall surely lend him enough for his need, that which he lacks. For the poor shall never cease out of the land. Therefore, I command you saying, You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor, and to your needy, in your land.”** (Deut. 15:7–8, 11).



Proverbs 10:4 Graphic from [Cody Chase Creative](#); accessed September 16, 2015.

12. There was a national fund for the poor, which amounted to 10% every third year, which averages out to 3⅓% per year. **“When you have finished paying all the tenth of your produce in the third year, the year of the tenth, you are to give it to the Levite, the foreign resident, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied.”** (Deut. 26:12).

The Second Divine Institution: Work

13. This takes into consideration that there is a small segment of society that is unable to work or limited in their ability to work. In most cases, family members take up the slack. We are left with perhaps less than 1% of the population that is unable to work and therefore needs some assistance.
 - 1) The idea that the United States provides food stamps to 1 out of 6 people is absolutely ridiculous. There are not that many people who require assistance.
14. Hard work is always presented as admirable; and laziness is spoken of as a personal failing. Prov. 24:30–34 Eccles. 5:18–20 Eph. 4:28
15. Ideally speaking, if you work hard at your job, there are going to be times that you gain some satisfaction from this; and you tend to appreciate your time of rest even more. Eccles. 9:9
16. When a person pursues a vocation which is his passion, that person often receives a great deal of satisfaction from their work.
17. I personally have known people who do not work, who collect a check from the government even though they are perfectly capable of working. These people tend to be unhappy, unfocused, angry and even a little nutty. Work is so fundamental to man's existence that, apart from it, man's soul goes awry.
18. Even Paul writes to the Thessalonians and tells them, if they don't work, then they should not eat. 2Thess. 3:10
19. When it comes to work, there are systems of authority. Sometimes, this system of authority is within the human soul. You know what you must produce, you understand the seasons, and you recognize what you must do in order to preserve your food in order to eat when food is not growing.
20. Most of us go to a job where we work for someone else. The owner, manager, boss, department head, shift manager is the authority over us; and the larger the organization, the greater the organization and the more layers of authority there are. These authorities are for believers and unbelievers alike.
21. A few of us go to work as the owner, manager, boss, department head; so we often arrive at work earlier than anyone else in order to organize those under our authority.
22. Satan has attacked the concept of work with the welfare state, section 8 housing, and food assistance programs. One of the things which has stuck in my mind, over the years, is a mother and daughter who rented a house from me, and section 8 paid the rent for them. Every morning, their job was to get up, sit on the couch, break open the smokes, and watch tv. Now, you might think that, having no job, their house would be clean and their kids well taken care of. Not a chance. The kids ran around unsupervised and the house was one of the filthiest houses I had ever been in. Furthermore, these were unhappy people. I found huge piles of beer cans all over after they moved out.
23. Satan also attacks the divine institution of work with unfair business owners and with unions. Although the owner of a business gets to call the shots because he owns the business and has made all of the investments, his choices are important. If he exploits his workforce, there can be a backlash of union activity, which completely distorts the system of authority (however, the owner of the company chose to distort his own authority first). There have been a number of companies which have been successful and part of their strategy has been to treat their workforce with dignity and respect (Coors, HEB, Whole Foods, Starbuck's, and Wal-Mart quickly come to mind).
 - 1) Union leaders have figured out that, they can organize public employees—even when these employees are well remunerated—and demand pretty much anything, as there is very little personal integrity when it comes to the management of public works (that is, they do not care what costs they incur; they simply ask the taxpayers to pay more money).
 - 2) So you see how these institutions are distorted. Bad employers caused unions to spring up, which, in turn, moved into the public sector, where salary and benefits were almost unlimited, even though there was no indication that the problems the unions originally fought to correct even existed in any form in the public sector.
24. There is this weird approach to heaven, where some people seem to think that we will float about on clouds playing harps. There is every indication that we will have responsibilities (i.e., *work*) in heaven.

The Pulpit Commentary: *It is with no small labour that the agricultural ant of Syria clears its field, keeps it well weeded, gathers in the corn, and stores this in subterranean granaries. Nature is a great factory. All life involves work. Even the silent forest apparently sleeping in the hush of noon is busy, and if only we had ears to hear, we might detect the elaboration of the sap and the growth of the leaf, showing that every tree is hard at work on its appointed task.*²⁰⁹

Passages on sloth from Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: Prov. 6:9 10:26 13:4 15:19 18:9 19:15, 24 20:4 21:25 22:13 24:30–34 26:13–16 Matt. 25:26 Rom. 12:11 Heb. 6:12.²¹⁰

This is taken from the **Doctrine of the Divine Institutions** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). I am unsure as to how much of this was taken from another teacher. In glancing through the points, it looks like my writing for the most part.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Hill generally uses the NASB.

The Four Objectives of Work (from Dr. Dan Hill)

1. We work to bring glory to God.
Colossians 3:17 **And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.**
1Corinthians 10:31 **speaks of whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.**
God can use us in the work place to bring glory to himself, through us.
2. Secondly, perhaps the most obvious, we work to gain a livelihood.
Man, under the curse, is destined to work. And work we will. Paul even told these who refused to work that they would not have a livelihood.
2Thessalonians 3:10 **For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat.**
3. Thirdly, we work to have the resources to share with others.
Ephesians 4:28 **Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need.**
To fulfill that objective we must first set aside greed. We live in society that uses man's greed as a motive to sell and to prosper.
We have to fight greed, it is all around us. And one way to fight it is to give, not letting your right hand know what the left hand is doing. I know one man who is rather successful and confided in me that he had a problem with greed, it was an easy trap of sin for him to fall into. He fought it by anonymously giving twenty, thirty buck to people who he sensed had a need.
There is nothing wrong with wealth, there is everything wrong with greed.
4. Fourth, an objective of working is to witness for Christ.
Every Christian is in full time service for Jesus Christ. Wherever we are, whatever we do as we do it unto the Lord, with an attitude of thanksgiving, we can be witness for him.
In Matthew 28:19 Jesus said As you are going, make disciples of men...going where, to work, to your job, to the office, the factory.
We have men in this congregation who meet with others for prayer during lunch times, for Bible study during breaks, they are fulfilling this objective and their work means something. And when our work means something according to these objectives, it means something now and forever.

I was a teacher for many years and a Christian during all of that time. As a witness of Jesus Christ, would it be right for me to stand up before every class and attempt to evangelize them? Of course not. However, there is a time and place; and that can even occur at work.

²⁰⁹ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Prov. 6:6.

²¹⁰ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880, with introduction by R. A. Torrey; courtesy of E-sword, Prov. 6:6.

At the end, Hill asks: *So how can we avoid the despair of these verses?*

From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 11, 2018.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Given all that we have studied, what can we say about work?

Principles concerning your work (Dr. Dan Hill)

1. If your job means everything to you, it means too much to you.
2. You cannot define yourself by what you do, but rather by who you are.
3. Who you are is determined by your relationship to the Lord not by your relationship to your job or profession.
4. Our vocation is that of being a believer, a servant of the most high God, a child of the king.
5. Our avocation is the work we do to earn money so we can sustain our lives.
6. We can not build our significance upon our jobs, they are unsure and unstable.
7. The house of our significance must be built upon the firm foundation of Jesus Christ, not the shifting sands of human endeavor.

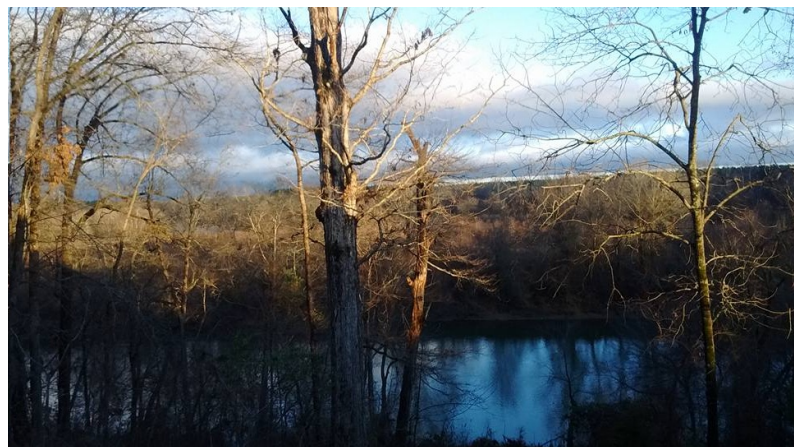
From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 11, 2018.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:3 **What real gain is there to any man in all of his hard work which he must do each day under a hot sun?** The key to this question are the words *under the sun*. We are speaking of the unbeliever who does not acknowledge God; or the believer who has moved away from God in his thinking. It is easy in this life—particularly in the United States—to focus upon one’s work and the material gain that comes from that work. This does not mean that work is bad or wrong; this does not mean that it is wrong to work hard and to come home tired; nor is it wrong to make money. The problem is, when God is not a part of all this, life can seem terribly pointless. You can accumulate wealth and luxury and material items, and it is even possible that some of your neighbors or acquaintances will envy you for all that you have—but there is no happiness in that. There is no lasting satisfaction knowing that, Charley Brown down the street wishes that he could drive your car; or that Lucy Van Pelt wishes that she could live in a house like yours. That may give you a moment’s thrill, but there is no lasting happiness in that.

I have a friend of mine who lives in a wonderfully picturesque place, where he has only one other neighbor on his street; he looks out his front porch and sees a field and many trees; and along the back of his house runs a small river (large enough for a boat; but there is very little traffic in this river). He can sit on the back decking and watch the water go by. If he wants to fish or jump into a boat, he can do that as well. It is a lovely place simply to sit down and just look around, and see God’s beautiful creation (for some reason, God’s beautiful creation seems



to be somewhat better if there are not many people in the picture). **Kenny’s Backyard** (a photo); from his [FB profile](#); accessed July 5, 2018. This person is also very talented in the field of music and, almost whenever he wants, he can get a gig to play music. Given this person’s history, this was quite a coup when it comes to having a retirement home and his retirement life. This same person committed suicide during the time that I have been working on this particular chapter of Ecclesiastes. My point being is, even if you have in life what seems important, it is not enough if what you have does not include God.

The best that an unbeliever can hope for in this life is work and a wife (the 2nd and 3rd divine institutions²¹¹). But even these things, providing the great blessing that they do, cannot overcome the emptiness in a person's soul who lacks God. This general theme is key to Ecclesiastes and found in virtually every chapter.

Ron Snider's translation of Ecclesiastes 1:3 [What advantage does man have in all his work Which he does under the sun?](#)

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:3 (Ron Snider)

1. Solomon begins to document his assertion by asking a rhetorical question at the beginning of verse 3, introducing a term that is unique to the book of Ecclesiastes.
2. The adjective יִתְרוֹן (yithron—advantage, profit) is used ten times in this book; it is used outside the Bible in a monetary sense to denote that which is left over after expenses have been met.
3. It comes to mean profit, that which is substantial, that which matters, that which provides an advantage over something else, or that which is beneficial. Eccles. 10:10
4. This rhetorical question is not asked here only for the sake of effect; Solomon wants the readers (particularly the younger ones) to consider exactly what they will get out of life.
5. While some might immediately answer in the negative (no profit), the answer is that man does not get absolutely nothing for his efforts; however, in the end, it should be evident that he gets very little.
6. What he does get may not make him happy and, in the end, he will leave it all for another.
7. Solomon then sums up the work of a man's life with the cognate phrase the work which he works under the sun.
8. The Hebrew verb and noun are derived from the same root לָמַעַ ('amal—work), which is a term for work or labor that often carries with it the negative aspects of work.
9. It communicates the difficult and unpleasant side of work, the ideas of hard work, toil, drudgery, or even misery. Gen. 41:51; Deut. 26:7; Jere. 20:18
10. The phrase under the sun is one that Solomon uses a lot in this book; it is unique to this book and is found some 29 times.
11. The phrase under the sun is likely used to communicate several things:
 - 1) Under the sun would refer to the world in a generalized way; these observations would not be unique to Israel or any other nation, they would be observable by any thinking person in any
 - 2) Under the sun would also emphasize that which is observable in this present life on earth; it does not pretend to extend its observations to death, the grave, the afterlife, or the universe.
 - 3) It is likely used as a device by which the author essentially says, "For the moment, let's just talk about what we can see."
12. Some have attempted to limit the phrase under the sun to what the natural unbeliever may observe in life; however, Solomon references God enough times in this book (40) to indicate that he is not looking at life as an unbeliever does.
13. However, it should be noted Solomon only uses the general term for God אֱלֹהִים ('elohiym) in this book; he never uses the personal name for God.
14. This would suggest that he views God (as many people do) as being transcendent beyond the scope of life under the sun; he does not mention the concept of God as immanent, present with the believer. Eccles. 5:2
15. Therefore, Solomon uses the phrase under the sun to denote the world as we can observe it from our position in it; the view we have is essentially that of ground level.
16. Further, the perspective of ground level brings us to the subject of the fall of man, and the subsequent curse on planet earth.
17. Mankind became subject to the environment that was itself subjected to futility; this led to a situation in which man became frustrated, unfulfilled, lacking satisfaction, and any spiritual direction in his life. Rom. 8:20
18. Although Solomon does not explicitly answer his question here, one answer to the question is that man has no profit because at the end of all his labor he dies! Eccles. 2:14–15

²¹¹ Even having a family can be seen as a great blessing in life. Divine institution #4.

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:3 (Ron Snider)

19. It is the reality and finality of death that makes this statement true.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (this will open as a Word document on your computer); accessed June 16, 2018.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

In consideration of Solomon, the author of Ecclesiastes, by way of Donald Trump:

Donald Trump (the current president—I write this in 2018) is known for his building; and he could often be seen out on construction sites, wearing a hard hat, discussing the plans and progress of his building. This is how I see Solomon during his *building phrase*. People too often have very negative views of the boss man—that he sits behind a desk, makes a few phone calls, goes out for a 2 hour lunch, and then schmoozes some clients in the latter half of the afternoon. This is not what most bosses do; especially those who are running their own companies. When their workers are just getting up and having coffee, the boss has often been up for an hour or two already, is fully dressed for work, and working on plans and goals for that day. A builder has the plans in front of him, he knows what was done yesterday, and he knows what needs to be done today. There might be 2000 men working on that job site, from 20 different companies, all which have different responsibilities, some which might be stepping over others. The boss man needs to know who is there, who is responsible for doing what, and how to keep them all working without stumbling over one another. Of course, there are a series of foremen for a big project, and they have a defined order of authority; but the boss man is over all of them. He makes a profit for his business if everything runs according to plan. If there is a slow down or a shut down, dollars are going out the door, but no progress is being made.

I have no experience in building high rises; but I do know a bit about building a house. Someone has to prepare the lot; the plans for the house have to be suitable for the house; and the house needs to be put in the correct place on the lot (on a zero-lot line, the house will actually butt up against the lot line); in other kinds of lots, there are various wires, gas pipes and water pipes in place, as well as other variances, so a house cannot just be plopped down anywhere on that lot. Once the lot has been surveyed and the proper place for the house is determined, the foundation people set up their forms for cement; but, sometimes electricians will be running some wires under the house in their proper pipes; and plumbers have to lay out a certain amount of their plumbing. When a waste pipe carries waste away from the house, it has to be below the sinks and toilets. Having a waste line which is at the same level as the toilet is just not the textbook way. Wastewater is removed from a house by means of gravity, so wherever there will be a water line, *below* that water line will have to be a waste line, and that waste line has to drop a certain amount of inches for every linear foot in order for gravity to work. So, before any cement is brought in, these waste lines have to be laid, and they cannot be 2 or 3 inches off the mark. A bathroom is going to have a drain for the tub (or shower), for the toilet and for the sink; and all of these have to be in the right place so that a standard bath, toilet and sink can be placed side-by-side in that small room. After that, the foundation people can come in with their cement trucks and rebar to lay the foundation.

My point in all of this is, for at least 20 years, Solomon is out there on the building site, from dawn till dusk, with a set of plans in his hand, overseeing a very large project which involves thousands of workers. The foundation people cannot be sitting there in their trucks waiting for half of the day, waiting for the plumbers to show up whenever they feel like it. So Solomon has to oversee all that is happening (no doubt, he had many foremen under him).

Now, even though Solomon may not have lifted a single hammer, he is out there working hard; organizing thousands of workers, planning out what happens when, so that, at any given moment, there are not 500 workers standing around wondering, *what do we do next, boss?*

He has built some magnificent structures; but here he is, near the end of his life (see Eccles. 12), and he knows that he is going to die; he probably knows that his son who is next in line to be king is a fool, and he is wondering, *what the hell was all of that work for?* Solomon toiled and worked and thought and was out there in the sun for 20 years (at least), overseeing so many building projects, and his idiot son, who would follow him, has no work ethic, no insight or foresight; no real plans; no real thought for the future except maybe to indulge himself, as soon as he is king—and Solomon is wondering, for whom or for why did I do all of this work?

This is the ultimate in **human good**. This kind of hard work is done often by the believer (or even unbeliever) in the hopes of catching the eye of God and impressing Him (which cannot be done). All human good produced by Church Age believers will be burned at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Paraphrased from Guzik/Eaton: *Profit is a transactional business term; life pays no dividends.*²¹²

Eccles. 1:2–3 **Vanity [= hebel, Abel] of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. What does man [= Adam] gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?** (ESV) Ecclesiastes is not the only place where we find man (Adam) and vanity (hebel, Abel) so closely associated. Let's look back to the book of Genesis. Gen. 4:1–2a **Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD."** And again, she bore his brother Abel [= hebel]. (ESV) We find these words together also in Psalm 144:4 **Man [= Adam] is like a breath [= hebel; that is, vanity, emptiness, a breath]; his days are like a passing shadow.**

Ecclesiastes 1:1–3 **These are the Words of a Lecturer, who is the Son of David, the King in Jerusalem: Just inhale and exhale, proclaims this lecturer—as all life is but a vapor, of no more substance than the exhale of one's breath. What real gain is there to any man in all of his hard work which he must do each day under a hot sun?**

A Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:1–3

1. Solomon is the author of Ecclesiastes, even though he does not specifically give his name up front.
2. There is the suggestion that Solomon may have presented this material in a series of lectures.
3. Solomon presents life as empty, without substance.
4. He asks if there is any true gain for a man in all of his hard work.
5. The author appears to have a very bleak view of life.
6. We can reasonably assume that much of what we read will come from human viewpoint.

These 3 verses prepare us for the entire book of Ecclesiastes.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:1–3 **These are the Words of a Lecturer, who is the Son of David, the King in Jerusalem: Just inhale and exhale, proclaims this lecturer—as all life is but a vapor, of no more substance than the exhale of one's breath. What real gain is there to any man in all of his hard work which he must do each day under a hot sun?**

Summarizing Ecclesiastes 1:1–3 (various commentators)

Gary Everett: *After the author introduces himself as the Preacher (Eccles. 1:1) he immediately sets the theme for the book of Ecclesiastes by asking the rhetorical question regarding the meaning of man's mortal life (Eccles. 1:2–3). He evaluates man's efforts in this life as being full of vanity. Therefore, he will answer this rhetorical question in the body of this book by giving us things we can do to overcome the vanities of life.*

²¹² Paraphrased from David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:3.

Summarizing Ecclesiastes 1:1–3 (various commentators)

Everett continues: *It is important to note that the Preacher does not refer to God at all during this introduction in Eccles. 1:1-11, although the word "God" is used forty times in this book. This is because he is making his evaluation from the perspective of this life only, without considering the divine perspective. Although his search will soon take this divine perspective into consideration, he begins by assessing the fallen state of man and creation as a result of the Fall in the garden.*²¹³

Pastor John Griffith:

1. *At some point each of us has reached the point where we ask ourselves the question -- What's the point? -- may even have the desire to just chuck it all, drop out and do what ever - some totally selfish pursuit.*
2. *through out each of our lives there will be effort - toil - exhaustion - sorrow; at various degrees at various times throughout each of our lives.*
3. *Most of us don't have the assets to just drop out and do our own thing but Solomon did and he exercised his options in many ways as he reports in this book.*
4. *If God is absent from my activities the final destination, my objective will NOT satisfy my soul.*
- emptiness - fleeting contentment - are all the kosmos can provide even when monumental goals are reached.
- Solomon's our example - he had it ALL - and his conclusion its all vanity - empty - it doesn't fulfill life.
- What we must do is look above the sun for DVPT perspective.
5. *The reason all things earthly and temporal are transitory and do not satisfy is that they are a part of creation and because of the fall and subsequent judgment are subjected to futility. Rom 8:20.*²¹⁴

Matthew Henry: *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. This is the text of the preacher's sermon, of which in this book he never loses sight. If this world, in its present state, were all, it would not be worth living for; and the wealth and pleasure of this world, if we had ever so much, are not enough to make us happy. What profit has a man of all his labour? All he gets by it will not supply the wants of the soul, nor satisfy its desires; will not atone for the sins of the soul, nor hinder the loss of it: what profit will the wealth of the world be to the soul in death, in judgment, or in the everlasting state?*²¹⁵

Dunagan: *Often people in this world will say, "It doesn't get any better than this", or, "You only go around once, so grab all the gusto that you can get!" To all such attitudes Solomon replies, "Well then...if this world is all there is, let us find out by experience whether there is anything ultimately worthwhile in this world---anything that yields real satisfaction. The result of his extensive experiment, carried on under the most favorable conditions possible, was that nothing but meaninglessness and profound disappointment await the...materialist" (Archer p. 255). "You spend your life working, labouring, and what do you have to show for it?" --so runs a free translation of this verse" (Kidner p. 25).*

Dunagan continues: *And Solomon doesn't merely make the claim---he offers the proof. This is the story of experience, a man who had unlimited earthly resources, and attempted to find meaning in this physical life, and came back empty-handed! He doesn't merely make the claim, but backs it up with concrete proof and life experience.*²¹⁶

Kidner: *Ah, but one hopes to make the world a better place, or at least leave something for those who follow. As though expecting that reply, Qoheleth points to the ceaseless making and unmaking that goes on in human history: the wave after wave of generations with their rise and fall, their coming men who are soon forgotten men.*²¹⁷

²¹³ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–11.

²¹⁴ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_03.html accessed June 15, 2018.

²¹⁵ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–3.

²¹⁶ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:3.

²¹⁷ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:3.

Robert Hawker gives us the correct conclusion: *Everlasting profit here will be found in that pursuit, which is directed in labouring for the bread that does not perish. And let what will of worldly generations pass away, and others of the same kind succeed them; yet the children of Christ shall continue, and their seed shall be established before the Lord. Psalm 102:28 [The children of Your servants shall dwell secure; their offspring shall be established before You.—ESV; capitalized].*²¹⁸

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Dr. Peter Pett: *[Solomon] constantly introduces...God into the situation (Eccles. 2:24–26; Eccles. 3:10–17; Eccles. 5:1–7; Eccles. 5:18–20; Eccles. 8:12–13; Eccles. 9:1; Eccles. 9:7–10; Eccles. 11:9; Eccles. 12:1; Eccles. 12:7). And the whole is then capped off by the final conclusion in which awesome reverence and obedience towards God is required, followed by the warning of final judgment (Eccles. 12:13–14).*²¹⁹ Although God will be mentioned in this chapter, He is not introduced as we know Him until the end of the next chapter.

Vv. 4–7 reveal God’s unending cycle of nature. However, the writer—at this point—does not see this. He sees *nature’s* unending cycle of natural phenomena. Solomon continues to leave God out of the philosophical approach to life. The first of these cycles is human life—one generation passes away while another generation rises up to take its place.

What benefit is there to the secular life? One generation dies off, the next generation rises up; and so continues the cycle of life. What has truly been gained? Only the earth *seems* to be a constant in all of this.

Ecclesiastes 1:4–7 *As one generation goes by the wayside, the next generation rises up to take its place; and the earth just keeps on turning. The sun rises and the sun sets; then it hurries back to its original place and rises up there once again. The wind goes toward the south, then turns around to the north; the wind is going around and circling about; and it eventually returns along its established route. All the rivers and streams flow into the sea, and yet the sea is not filled up. Somehow, the water returns back to where the rivers and streams begin, and from there, their flowing begins again.*

Time and Cycles; Greek and Hebrew Views of Time (John W. Ritenbaugh)

Overall, how do we, as Christians, perceive time? Every day we are witnesses to its progression. Daylight comes and passes, and night arrives only to be followed by daylight again. We can look at a clock and see that its hands are moving. But how - in what manner - is time moving?

As a culture, the Greeks have become known as a people sensitive to the rhythms of time, and this, though written by Solomon, a Hebrew, is a decidedly Greek view of life and of time's movement. This perception of life and time - their acute awareness of things like the perpetual ebb and flow of tides, the continuous cycle of the four seasons, and the constant repetition of weather patterns - became a major building block of Greek philosophy, leading them to develop the concept that time is cyclical.

They concluded that man's life is lived within a series of continuous, changeless recurrences. To them, time works like a wheel turning on an axis, and the events that mark time's progress repeat themselves endlessly. They believed that nothing could be done about it because such events will happen eternally. Thus, a person is born, lives his life on a stage, and when his part is done, he exits. Such belief inexorably leads to a fatalistic view of life.

²¹⁸ Robert Hawker *The Poor Man's Commentary*; ©1805; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:3–11 (slightly edited).

²¹⁹ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:2–3.

Time and Cycles; Greek and Hebrew Views of Time (John W. Ritenbaugh)

Ritenbaugh then quotes Jude 14-15 to show a key contrast: **Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."**

This quotation shows that the Hebrews who believed God knew that time was headed on a very different path from the Greek view. Events do not just happen in a vacuum; they are moving in a definite direction. Enoch is warning that a time is coming when men will have to answer for what they have done during their lifetimes.

Even so, he is nowhere near the earliest indicator that time and the events within it are moving in a specific direction. Notice Genesis 3:14-15:

So the LORD God said to the serpent; "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

God had revealed Himself to the Hebrew descendants of Abraham, and some among them, like Moses, believed what He said. Thus, they knew that time was not cyclical, as the Greeks perceived it, but linear: The Creator is moving time and all that happens within it in a definite direction.

The prophet Amos...called it the "Day of the Lord." Generally, he appears to mean the time when God will intervene with a strong hand in the affairs of this world - an act that is definitely not repetitious.

However, it remained for the Christian church to define time and its right usage for its members. The church's conception of time blends the cyclical concepts of the Greeks and the linear concepts of the Hebrews. It is true that many things in life - things like wars, economic depressions, and political revolutions - do recur in an inexorable manner. Yet, as the New Testament shows, much of this happens as a result of man's self-centered nature. In other words, they do not have to happen, but they do happen because man's choices make them happen. Man continually makes bad choices because his nature is unchangingly anti-God.

Thus, in general, the Christian view is that time indeed contains stressful, repeating cycles, as Solomon describes, yet the New Testament calls these cycles "evil" (Galatians 1:4). However, it also shows that time is moving in a definite direction and that God Himself is orchestrating many of the events within its progress toward the return of Jesus Christ, the Day of the Lord, and the establishment on earth of His Family Kingdom.

From [Bible tools](#) accessed June 17, 2018.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Brian Bell draws an analogy: *Luther, a doberman, that every time he barked he spun once chasing his tail. Solomon, seemed to be doing this same dance.*

Then Bell notes: *Instead of asking, what is man that You are mindful of him, he's been made a little lower than the angels...he seems to be asking, what is man...[that] he doesn't seem like much?*²²⁰ Bell is quoting Psalm 8:4a, 5 (which is quoted in Heb. 2:6a, 7).

A generation is going and a generation is coming in; and the earth, to forever, remains. Ecclesiastes 1:4

[One] generation departs and [the next] generation comes in; and the earth remains forever.

As one generation goes by the wayside, the next generation rises up to take its place; and the earth just keeps on turning.

²²⁰ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/cbb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 24, 2018 (slightly edited).

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	A generation is going and a generation is coming in; and the earth, to forever, remains.
Aramaic Targum	<u>King Solomon said, by the spirit of prophecy, The good generation of the righteous departs from the world because of the sins of the wicked generation that is to follow them, but the earth abides for ever and ever, to reserve the punishment which is to come upon the world, on account of the sins of the children of men.</u>
Revised Douay-Rheims	One generation passes away, and another generation comes: but the earth stands for ever.
Peshitta (Syriac)	One generation passes away and another generation comes; but the earth abides for ever.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	A generation goes, and a generation comes: but the earth stands for ever.
Significant differences:	All kinds of additional text in the Aramaic targum; and some missing words.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Easy English	People are born and they live on the earth. At the end of their lives, they die. But the earth continues as it has always continued.
Good News Bible (TEV) <i>The Message</i>	Generations come and generations go, but the world stays just the same. One generation goes its way, the next one arrives, but nothing changes—it's business as usual for old planet earth.
New Simplified Bible	One generation goes and another generation comes, but the earth remains forever (without end).

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	Generations are indeed transitory in their coming and going as compared to the earth, which appears to remain forever.
Common English Bible	A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains as it always has.
Contemporary English V. The Living Bible	People come, and people go, but still the world never changes. Generations come and go, but it makes no difference [literally, “but the earth remains forever.” <i>getting nowhere</i> , implied.].
New Century Version	Things Never Change People live, and people die, but the earth continues forever.
New Life Version	People die and people are born, but the earth stays forever.
New Living Translation	Generations come and generations go, but the earth never changes.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	Each year old people die and babies are born, but the earth never changes.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	For, one generation passes away, And then another arrives... Yet the earth remains through the ages.
International Standard V	<i>The Predictability of Life</i> A generation goes, a generation comes, but the earth remains forever.

New Advent (Knox) Bible Translation for Translators Age succeeds age, and the world goes on unaltered. Each year old people die and babies are born, but the earth never changes.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible A generation is to be departing, a generation is to be coming; the solid grounds are to be standing firm in its continuation.

God's Truth (Tyndale) Urim-Thummim Version One generation passes away, another comes, but the earth abides still. One generation passes away, and another generation comes: but the earth abides for the ages.

Wikipedia Bible Project A generation goes, and a generation comes, with the Earth forever standing.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

The Heritage Bible A generation walks on, and a generation comes, and the earth stands forever.

New American Bible (2002) One generation passes and another comes, but the world forever stays.

New American Bible (2011) One generation departs and another generation comes, but the world forever stays.

New Jerusalem Bible A generation goes, a generation comes, yet the earth stands firm for ever.

Revised English Bible–1989 Generations come and generations go, while the earth endures for ever.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

The Complete Tanach A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth endures forever.

A generation goes and a generation comes: As much as the wicked man toils and labors to oppress and to rob, he does not outlive his works, for the generation goes and another generation comes and takes all away from his sons, as it is stated (Job 20:10): "His sons will placate the poor."

but the earth endures forever: But who are the ones who endure? The humble and low, who bring themselves down to the earth, as it is stated (Ps. 37:11): "But the humble shall inherit the earth." And Midrash Tanhuma states: All the righteous of Israel are called earth [or land], as it is said (Mal. 3:12): "for you shall be a desirable land."

exeGesés companion Bible Generation passes and generation comes; and the earth stands eternal:...

Orthodox Jewish Bible Dor v'dor, generations come and go, passing away; but ha'aretz remaineth l'olam.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible Things Never Change
·People live [^ A generation goes], and ·people die [^ a generation comes], but the earth ·continues [endures; remains] forever.

Kretzmann's Commentary One generation passeth away, sinking down into the dust of death, and another generation cometh, replacing those who are laid in the grave; there is a continual going and coming; but the earth abideth forever, it stands the same, as long as the Lord so decrees, in the midst of the turmoil of changing centuries, calmly remaining while generations come and go.

NET Bible® A generation comes and a generation goes, but the earth remains the same¹⁸ through the ages.
¹⁸ The term "the same" does not appear in Hebrew, but is supplied in the translation for clarity and smoothness.

The Pulpit Commentary	<p>One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh. The translation rather weakens the force of the original, which is, a generation goeth, and a generation cometh. Man is only a pilgrim on earth; he soon passes away, and his place is occupied by others. Parallelisms of this sentiment will occur to every reader. Thus Ben-Sira, "All flesh waxeth old as a garment: for the covenant from the beginning is, Thou shalt die the death. As of the green leaves on a thick tree, some fall and some grow; so is the generation of flesh and blood, one cometh to an end, and another is born. Every work rotteth and consumeth away, and the worker thereof shall go withal" (Ecclesiasticus 14:17, etc.; comp. Job. 10:21; Psalm 39:13). The famous passage in Homer, 'Iliad,' 6.146, etc; is thus rendered by Lord Derby—"The race of man is as the race of leaves: Of leaves, one generation by the wind Is scattered on the earth; another soon In spring's luxuriant verdure bursts to light. So with our race: these flourish, those decay." (Comp. <i>ibid</i>; 21.464, etc.; Horace, 'Ars Poet.,' 60.) But (and) the earth abideth forever. While the constant succession of generations of men goes on, the earth remains unchanged and immovable. If men were as permanent as is their dwelling-place, their labors might profit; but as things are, the painful contrast between the two makes itself felt. The term, "for ever," like the Greek εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, does not necessarily imply eternity, but often denotes limited or conditioned duration, as when the slave is engaged to serve his master "for ever" (Ex. 21:6), or the hills are called "everlasting" (Gen. 49:26). This verse gives one instance of growth and decay in contrast with insensate continuance. The following verses give further examples</p>
Syndein/Thieme	{Life in the Cosmic System is a Hopeless Cycle}
The Voice	Generations come and generations go but the earth remains forever. One generation comes, another goes; but the earth continues to remain.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Charles Thompson OT	One generation passeth away and another cometh. But the earth hath continually kept its station.
Concordant Literal Version	One generation goes, and another generation comes, Yet the earth is standing for the eon."
Context Group Version <i>Emphasized Bible</i>	One generation goes, and another generation comes; but the land stays forever. Generation, goeth and, generation, cometh, but, the earth, unto times age-abiding, remaineth.
English Standard Version Modern English Version	A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. A generation comes, and a generation goes, but the earth continually remains.
A Voice in the Wilderness	A generation passes away, and a generation comes; but the earth stands perpetually.
Webster's Bible Translation	One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.
Young's Literal Translation	A generation is going, and a generation is coming, and the earth to the age is standing.

The gist of this passage: One generation comes up; the older generation passes away; and the earth remains.

Ecclesiastes 1:4a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
dōwr (דוד) [pronounced dohr]	generation; race; people; age, period, time period [of a generation], a time slice	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1755 BDB #189
hâlak ^e (הלך) [pronounced haw-LAHK ^e]	is walking, is going, is departing, is advancing, is traveling	Qal active participle	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229

When *water* is the subject, this can mean *to flow, to pour out*. When spoken of a lifestyle or a manner of life, *to walk* can be understood *to live, to follow a particular lifestyle or manner of life; to follow [in one's footsteps]*. This verb can also mean *to go away, to vanish; to go on, to go forward; to add to something [making it go forward, so to speak]; to grow*.

The NET Bible: *The participle הלך (holekh, "to walk, to go") emphasizes continual, durative, uninterrupted action (present universal use of participle). The root הלך (halakh) is repeated in this section (1:4a, 6a, 6b, 7a, 7b, 7c) to emphasize the continual action and constant motion of everything in nature. Despite the continual action of everything in nature, there is no completion, attainment or rest for anything. The first use of הלך is in reference to man; all subsequent usages are in reference to nature – illustrations of the futility of human endeavor. Note: All the key terms used in 1:4 to describe the futility of human endeavor are repeated in 1:5-11 as illustrations from nature. The literary monotony in 1:4-11 mirrors the actual monotony of human action that repeats itself with no real change.*²²¹

w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
dōwr (דוד) [pronounced dohr]	generation; race; people; age, period, time period [of a generation], a time slice	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1755 BDB #189
bôw' (אוב) [pronounced boh]	entering [coming, going, advancing] [in]; those entering [going, coming (in)]	Qal active participle	Strong's #935 BDB #97

The NET Bible: *The participle בא (ba', "to go") emphasizes continual, durative, uninterrupted action (present universal use of participle). The term is repeated in 1:4-5 to compare the futility of secular human accomplishments with the futile actions in nature: everything is in motion, but there is nothing new accomplished.*²²²

Translation: [One] generation departs and [the next] generation comes in;... One generation passes away; and another generation comes up to take its place. Solomon is an old man as he writes this, and he recognizes that his time is nearly past; but there is another generation waiting in the wings. There are clues in this book that, the son who seems to be the one to follow him is a pretty lousy son. Solomon will indicate potential disappointment with the next generation coming up.

Death comes to every generation; testified to in the Bible throughout. Gen. 5:3–31 Ex. 1:6–7 Psalm 89:48 Zech. 1:5.

²²¹ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 14, 2018.

²²² From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 14, 2018.

We can go back and tie this to what Solomon has written already. He has worked much of his life and has built many buildings; and provided a great foundation for the next generation of Israelites. But, what if these men are all fools? His generation will pass away and the next generation will come up.

Application: When our nation (the United States) was conceived, there was great thought given to developing the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. What our founders did for this nation and for us was absolutely brilliant. When it comes to the law, Congress makes the laws. However, it is the executive branch which enforces these laws. And, if there is a problem with one of these laws, the Judicial branch takes another look at them, with the Bill of Rights open right next to them, to see that these laws have not violated our rights. In the realm of government, we as a people could not ask for anything more. What our founders did was brilliant and has protected our nation and our rights for over 200 years. But, if a generation of fools rises up, then that greatest political set of documents will go by the wayside, and our country and our lives will be no different than any other.

Application: We in the United States are also the recipients of a great spiritual heritage as well. The history books tell us that there were two great (spiritual) awakenings in the United States, but let me submit to you that there were three. During the time of Billy Graham, a huge number of people were evangelized. Today, we would have a hard time imagining this, but when Billy Graham was doing crusades, they were often broadcast live during prime time television. And if they ran an hour and 13 minutes for the sermon and the calling for souls at the end, that is how long the television station ran it. So there might be a few thousand at the evangelical meeting; but there would be a few million watching it around the US (and this was back when there were only 3 stations). During that period of time, a huge number of people were evangelized, and television broadcast this all over the world. I know unbelievers who watched these evangelical meetings.

Application: Many people do not realize it, but we have receive great blessing from God for the past few decades, based upon so many people being evangelized and a few of them catching onto the plan of God.

You will note that this observation made by Solomon does not take into account God, God's elect, the future of the godly, etc. Solomon views this simply as a man under the sun—he gives no expressed thought to God's relationship to men. Simply, a generation departs and the next generation comes along. Solomon's thinking throughout most of Ecclesiastes is that of the soulish man—the man who lacks a relationship with God (Solomon lacks this relationship insofar as, he is clearly out of fellowship with God).

Ecclesiastes 1:4 *As one generation goes by the wayside, the next generation rises up to take its place; and the earth just keeps on turning.*

The futility of human existence (Ecclesiastes 1:4a) (various commentators)

Barnes: *Vanity is shown in mankind, the elements, and all that moves on earth; the same course is repeated again and again without any permanent result or real progress; and events and people alike are forgotten.*²²³

Benson: *One generation passeth away, &c. — Men continue but for one, and that a short age, and then they leave all their possessions, and therefore they cannot be happy here, because the source of happiness must needs be unchangeable and eternal, and the certain knowledge of the approaching loss of all these things must rob a man of solid contentment in them.*²²⁴

H. Macmillan: *Look back to the past. Many generations that once existed in this world are gone. Men; famous for their various exploits, are now no more. In the past generations, some rose from mean and low stations to the highest rank; while others fell from posts of dignity to a state of poverty and depression. All of them—high and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, kings and their people—all are swept away. In former ages, immense armies of men; one army is said to have consisted of a million; but they have all passed away, and nothing is known of any one of them, except their commander. Nations once great and flourishing are now almost forgotten: even Babylon can scarce be found. "One generation passes away."*

²²³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:4.

²²⁴ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:4.

The futility of human existence (Ecclesiastes 1:4a) (various commentators)

Macmillan continues: *This is true also of the present. The generation to which we belong is moving off the world. There is no continuance, no abiding here. Our old friends and acquaintances are gone, and we all feel that we live in a dying generation. Yes, great and useful men are taken away; parents are taken from children. There is no standing still, even if you live. "One generation passeth away."*

Macmillan concludes: *This is true of all future generations. They all will pass away, and all in the same manner.*²²⁵

Gill: *[A]s soon almost as he has got anything by his labour, he must leave it: not only particular persons, but families, nations, and kingdoms; even all the inhabitants of the world, that are contemporaries, live together in the same age, in a certain period of time; these gradually go off by death, till the whole generation is consumed, as the generation of the Israelites in the wilderness were.*²²⁶

Matthew Henry: *[T]he time of our enjoyment of these things is very short, and only while we accomplish as a hireling his day. We continue in the world but for one generation, which is continually passing away to make room for another, and we are passing with it. Our worldly possessions we very lately had from others, and must very shortly leave to others, and therefore to us they are vanity; they can be no more substantial than that life which is the substratum of them, and that is but a vapour, which appears for a little while and then vanishes away.*²²⁷

Kidwell: *One generation enters as another exits, the tragedy manifests itself when men, the highest of God's creation and made from the earth, continually pass away as the earth remains.*²²⁸

Matthew Poole: *[M]en continue but for one, and that a short age, and then they leave all their possessions to the succeeding age; and therefore they cannot be happy here, because happiness must needs be unchangeable and eternal; or else the perpetual fear and certain knowledge of the approaching loss of all these things will rob a man of all solid contentment in them.*²²⁹

Whedon: *One generation passes away* — *The oldest Greek poet compares the growths of men to successions of forest leaves. Koheleth suggests, with more than Homeric vigor, that he is to investigate where all, even man, is whirling, and only the dull earth permanent. Man, to his eye, is toiling, strutting, fretting, vanishing, while the stage on which he appears abides, and is ever filled with new actors.*²³⁰

Thomas Nelson: *The transitory nature of human generations contrasts with the permanence and apparent immutability of the physical world. Solomon writes, "A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever." You are born into the world, you live your life, and then you die, but the earth keeps right on going. Birth announcements are on one page and obituaries are on the next. Generations passing parade. It's like you're walking across the desert, leaving footprints in the sand that the wind erases as though you were never there.*²³¹

Keith Krell provides an example: *I own a recumbent bike...I cycle miles on this bike and burn calories and increase my heart rate. The cool thing is: I don't even have to leave my house...But if I am honest, it is a terribly boring and tedious way to exercise. When I look down at the odometer and it says I've cycled five miles, I've actually gone nowhere. I work up a sweat and ride until I am weary, yet I know that I am going to have to hop back on the bike all over again tomorrow.*

²²⁵ *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:4–10 (slightly edited).

²²⁶ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:4.

²²⁷ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:4–8.

²²⁸ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:4.

²²⁹ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:4.

²³⁰ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:4 (slightly edited).

²³¹ From Bible.org, accessed June 22, 2018.

Krell continues: *Life is like riding on a recumbent bike. It is a boring, tedious, and repetitive ride. A thoughtful person will ask, "What is the purpose in life?" Have you ever asked this question? Most people have. For some of us, this question has plagued us over the course of our lives...even our Christian lives.*²³²

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 1:4b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or וַ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
'erets (אֶרֶץ) [pronounced EH-rets]	<i>earth (all or a portion thereof), land, territory, country, continent; ground, soil; under the ground [Sheol]</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #776 BDB #75
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
'ôwlâm (אֵלָם) [pronounced ô-LAWM]	<i>long duration, forever, everlasting, eternal, perpetuity, antiquity, futurity; what is hidden, hidden time</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5769 BDB #761

'ôwlâm together with the lâmed preposition mean *forever, always*.

Barnes: *Ever* – *The word does not here absolutely signify "eternity" (compare Eccles. 3:11 note), but a certainly short period (compare Ex. 21:6): here it might be paraphrased "as long as this world, this present order of things, lasts."*²³³

The NET Bible: *The term אֵלָם ('olam) has a wide range of meanings: (1) indefinite time: "long time, duration," often "eternal" or "eternity"; (2) future time: "things to come"; and (3) past time: "a long time back," that is, the dark age of prehistory (HALOT 798–99 s.v. אֵלָם; BDB 761–63 s.v. III מֵלַע). It may also denote an indefinite period of "continuous existence" (BDB 762 s.v. III מֵלַע 2.b). It is used in this sense in reference to things that remain the same for long periods: the earth (Eccl 1:4), the heavens (Ps 148:6), ruined cities (Isa 25:2; 32:14), ruined lands (Jer 18:16), nations (Isa 47:7), families (Ps 49:12; Isa 14:20), the dynasty of Saul (1 Sam 13:13), the house of Eli (2 Sam 2:30), continual enmity between nations (Ezek 25:15; 35:5), the exclusion of certain nations from the assembly (Deut 23:4; Neh 13:1), a perpetual reproach (Ps 78:66).*²³⁴

E. W. Bullinger: *Hebrew 'olam = for ages; 'olam occurs in Ecc. seven times: Eccles. 1:4, Eccles. 1:10; Eccles. 2:16; Eccles. 3:11, Eccles. 3:14; Eccles. 9:6; Eccles. 12:5.*²³⁵

'amad (עָמַד) [pronounced gaw-MAHD]	<i>taking a stand, standing, is remaining, enduring, withstand; stopping, ceasing</i>	feminine singular, Qal active participle	Strong's #5975 BDB #763
-------------------------------------	---	--	----------------------------

²³² From [Bible.org](https://bible.org), accessed June 22, 2018.

²³³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:4.

²³⁴ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 14, 2018.

²³⁵ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:4.

Ecclesiastes 1:4b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>The NET Bible: <i>The participle עֹמֶדֶת ('omadet, "to stand") emphasizes a continual, durative, uninterrupted state (present universal condition). Man, despite all his secular accomplishments in all generations, makes no ultimate impact on the earth.</i>²³⁶</p> <hr/> <p>Barnes: <i>Abides - The apparent permanence of the earth increases by contrast the transitory condition of its inhabitants.</i>²³⁷</p>			

Translation: ...and the earth remains forever. One generation replaces the previous generation; but the earth just keeps on going.

The idea that the earth remains forever is completely human viewpoint. We know that the earth has been here in our lives; in the life of our parents, and grandparents; and this goes back all the way to Adam. When Adam was created, the earth was already here. However, that does not mean that the earth is eternal. The earth will last as long as God wants it to last. God created us; and God created the earth.

Dunagan: *"but the earth remains forever" ...does not imply an eternal existence for the planet, for the Hebrew word here rendered "forever" simply means a long age or period. The same word is used in reference to other things which are not eternal in duration, the land promise (Genesis 17:8), circumcision (17:13), the Passover feast (Ex. 12:14), the priesthood of Aaron (Ex. 29:9), the Sabbath Day (Ex. 31:16-17). The word "forever" was rightly used of such things, because all these things lasted during the entire age for which they were designed.*²³⁸

Ecclesiastes 1:4 **As one generation goes by the wayside, the next generation rises up to take its place; and the earth just keeps on turning.** It does not seem to matter which generation passes away; or the quality of the generation coming of age. The earth continues; and one generation passes away and the next generation rises up.

For at least 4 or 5 millennia, this has been the case; but there will come a time when God will remove the earth and start with a new heavens and a new earth.

Ecclesiastes 1:4 **As one generation goes by the wayside, the next generation rises up to take its place; and the earth just keeps on turning.**

The idea is—apart from God—one generation dies out and the next generation rises up. The earth simply remains as somewhat of a constant. Apart from God, this is all that there is.

From the perspective of a man under the sun, this is all there is that he can claim to state as constants: **one generation dies out; the next generation rises up; and the earth, as we know it, just keeps on.**

The transitory nature of man; the permanence of earth (Eccles. 1:4) (commentators)

Ray Stedman: *Humanity is transient, but nature is permanent. A generation goes and a generation comes -- the human race passes on from this life, comes into life, lives its term and goes on -- but the earth remains forever.*²³⁹

²³⁶ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 14, 2018.

²³⁷ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:4 (slightly edited).

²³⁸ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:4 (slightly edited).

²³⁹ Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 1.

The transitory nature of man; the permanence of earth (Eccles. 1:4) (commentators)

Arno Gaebelein: *Everything then under the sun is restless, unstable (except the earth itself, which abideth forever: Eccles. 1:4) hollow and empty, therefore all is vanity. Here is a picture of unrest, weariness, if not melancholy and despair.*²⁴⁰

Dr. Bob Utley: *This verse is expressing the fleetingness of conscious life (cf. Job. 14:2; Psalm 90:5–6; Psalm 103:15–16; Isa. 40:6–7) versus the stability of the spiritual creation (as an aspect of YHWH's permanence, cf. Psalm 104:5; Psalm 119:90).*²⁴¹

Psalm 103:15–16 *As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.*

Isa. 40:6b–7 *All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass.*

Psalm 104:5 *He set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be moved.*

Psalm 119:90 *Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast.*

J. Vernon McGee: *The earth "abides forever" and has a stability that man does not have because man is temporary. Contemporary man is a little different from the man of the past and probably he will be a great deal different from the man of the future, but man is temporary. The continuity of mankind is maintained through births. Most of us were not here a hundred years ago, and we will not be here a hundred years from today. In fact, many of us won't be around much longer. However, mankind will continue through succeeding generations. Solomon has noted that: "One generation passes away, and another generation comes [on the scene]."*

McGee continues: *Man is a transitory creature. Looking at life in terms of this life only, man is the most colossal failure in God's universe. He has been around only a few years. There are redwood trees in Northern California that were here when Christ was on earth, but they are newcomers compared to rocks around us which geologists tell us have been here millions, maybe billions of years. Although no one knows how long the earth has been here, it was here before man got here, and it will be here after most of us leave. My friend, this adds a certain dimension to life that is rather discouraging and disappointing. Man is not what he thinks he is.*²⁴²

S. Cox: *It is the old contrast—old as literature, old as man—between the ordered steadfastness of nature and the disorder and brevity of human life. As compared with the calm order and uniformity of nature, man's life is a mere fantasy, passing for ever through a limited and tedious range of forms each of which is as unsubstantial as the fabric of a vision, many of which are as base as they are unreal, and all of which, for ever in a flux, elude the grasp of those who pursue them or disappoint those who hold them in their hands. The burden of all this unintelligible life lies heavily on the Preacher's soul. The miseries and confusions of our lot baffle and oppress his thoughts. Above all, the contrast between nature and man, between its massive and stately permanence and the frailty and brevity of our existence, breeds in him the despairing mood of which we have the keynote in his cry, "Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities; all is vanity."*²⁴³

Benson: *But the earth abides* — *Through all successive generations of men; and therefore man is more mutable than the very earth upon which he stands, and which, together with all the comforts which he enjoyed in it, he leaves behind him to be possessed by others.*²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Eccles 1:1–18.

²⁴¹ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:3–11.

²⁴² From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt accessed June 19, 2018 (slightly edited).

²⁴³ *The Sermon Bible Commentary*; ©1888-1893; in the Public Domain; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll, M.A., LL.D., from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–11.

²⁴⁴ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:4 (slightly edited).

The transitory nature of man; the permanence of earth (Eccles. 1:4) (commentators)

Clarke: *Men succeed each other in unceasing generations: but the earth is still the same; it undergoes no change that leads to melioration, or greater perfection. And it will continue the same מלועל leolam, during the whole course of time; till the end of all things arrives.*²⁴⁵

The College Press Bible Study: *Both man and earth share in the gloomy, monotonous routine of activities. Both man and earth are transitory. The tragedy manifests itself when men, the highest of all God's creatures and made from the earth, continually pass away while the earth remains. Solomon pictures the world as the stage upon which the tragic drama occurs. One generation enters as the former generation exits. The events that take place within each generation are described in Eccles. 3:1–8. They encompass one's life from the time of birth to the time of death...Man doesn't seem to have any advantage, and the only advantage the earth has over man is in its duration. But even here, the word "forever" does not mean eternal. In Ex. 21:6, instruction is given whereby a servant is to serve his master "forever." It simply means "a good long time."*²⁴⁶

Keil and Delitzsch: *The author rather intends to say that in this sphere nothing remains permanent as the fixed point around which all circles; generations pass away, others appear, and the earth is only the firm territory, the standing scene, of this ceaseless change. In reality, both things may be said of the earth: that it stands for ever without losing its place in the universe, and that it does not stand for ever, for it will be changed and become something else. But the latter thought, which appertains to the history of redemption, Psalm 102:26., is remote from the Preacher; the stability of the earth appears to him only as the foil of the growth and decay everlastingly repeating themselves.*²⁴⁷

Alexander MacLaren: *Look from one point of view, and it seems a long history of vanishing generations. Look to the rear of the procession, and it seems a buoyant spectacle of eager, young faces pressing forwards on the march, and of strong feet treading the new road. But yet the total effect of that endless procession is to impress on the observer the transiency of humanity. And that wholesome thought is made more poignant still by the comparison which the writer here draws between the fleeting generations and the abiding earth. Man is the lord of earth, and can mould it to his purpose, but it remains and he passes. He is but a lodger in an old house that has had generations of tenants, each of whom has said for a while, 'It is mine'; and they all have drifted away, and the house stands.*²⁴⁸

Dunagan: *The earth is the permanent ground or scene on which all generations will come and go. This is the permanent stage for man's physical history. But one day that stage will be removed (2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 20:11; 21:1). What this tells us is that the earth will last as long as God needs it to last. Another planet won't be needed for our habitation-prior to the Second Coming. And, man won't destroy himself or the earth (Genesis 8:22).*²⁴⁹

Matthew Poole: *The earth abides for ever, i.e. through all successive generations of men; and therefore man in this respect is more mutable and miserable than the very earth upon which he stands; and which, together with all the glories and comforts which he enjoyed in it, he leaves behind him to be possessed by others.*²⁵⁰

Dr. Peter Pett: *Here we discover the essence of his thinking. Men may labour but nothing really changes. Nothing permanent is accomplished. One generation after another goes on in the same way as the previous generation, labouring on seemingly endlessly. Life just goes on pointlessly, on and on as man struggles to survive.*

²⁴⁵ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:4.

²⁴⁶ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; comment 1:4–8.

²⁴⁷ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 1:4.

²⁴⁸ Alexander MacLaren, D. D., Litt. D., *Expositions Of Holy Scripture*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:4.

²⁴⁹ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:4.

²⁵⁰ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:4.

The transitory nature of man; the permanence of earth (Eccles. 1:4) (commentators)

Pett continues: *This is then illustrated by a number of examples of the endless repetition of life. (Later he will point out that the one way of escape from this endless meaninglessness of life is to live before God and find comfort in His presence. It is that alone which can bring permanent worthwhileness to life – Eccles. 2:24–26; Eccles. 5:18–20; Eccles. 9:7–10).*²⁵¹

James Burton Coffman: *"One generation goeth ... another cometh ... the earth abideth forever" (Ecclesiastes 1:4). Solomon was wrong about the permanence of the earth. "No one must think of the earth as something permanent." [J. A. Loader] That is the same foolish error of today's frenzied "Environmentalists." Heb. 12:26-27, 2 Peter 3:8-10 stress the ultimate `removal' of the earth itself. It is primarily this earth-centered concern of Solomon which the Book of Ecclesiastes is designed to correct.*²⁵²

John W. Ritenbaugh: *A great deal of repetitious activity takes place on earth's surface, but overall, the earth itself and the lives lived on it just keep moving on. Nothing changes. The repetitive activity largely occurs in nature's cycles, but human life remains generally unchanged, static, going nowhere. The earth and its systems permanently cycle as God designed them, but man is transient, a pilgrim living in a constant state of repeated change. It presents a picture of monotony.*

Ritenbaugh continues: *Every 20 to 25 years, a new generation is born into the world, giving the impression that something is actually happening, but nothing really is except that the older generation is dying off. A seemingly endless procession of people comes and goes. Jerome, the translator of the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible, wrote, "What is more vain than this vanity: that the earth, which was made for humans, stays—but humans themselves, the lords of the earth, suddenly dissolve into the dust?"*²⁵³

What kind of important observations can a man without God make? This appears to be it.

Interestingly enough, in reality, it is redeemed man whose life is everlasting; and it is the earth of today that will pass away. The earth will clearly be done away with and replaced. Psalm 102:24–28 Matt. 24:35 2Peter 3:10–13.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:4 [As one generation goes by the wayside, the next generation rises up to take its place; and the earth just keeps on turning.](#)

Solomon will give many instances of this; of the cyclical nature of this world (cyclical in the sense that, *what does it matter? Who cares?*); and the earth keeps on keeping on, but one generation rises up after the previous generation. What has come before may have seemingly no effect upon the next generation coming up.

For some of us, there is a place, a mountain, an ocean scene, a river, which appears to be the same year after year after year. Now, of course, these things certainly do change, but there are some which do not (or they change very little). I can recall this culvert that ran under a logging road, and walking through that culvert led to an ocean beach; and coming out of that culvert led me to the very same vision of the ocean and the beach as I had enjoyed many years previous. And I often thought, when emerging from this culvert, "I bet this looked just like this for the past 50 (or however many) years." Obviously, there are changes always occurring on this earth; but, these changes take place over a much longer period of time; giving a greater sense of permanence to the earth.

Ecclesiastes 1:4 [As one generation goes by the wayside, the next generation rises up to take its place; and the earth just keeps on turning.](#)

²⁵¹ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:4–11.

²⁵² From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

²⁵³ From [Bible tools](#) accessed June 17, 2018.

Perhaps "The Brook" by Tennyson was inspired by this portion of Scripture: *And out again I curve and flow To join the brimming river, For men may come and men may go, But I go on forever.*²⁵⁴

Or, consider Homer, who wrote:

"As are the leaves, so is the race of men;
Some the wind scatters on the ground,
and some the fruitful forest, when the springtide comes,
Puts forth; so note we also with mankind;
One comes to life, another falls away."²⁵⁵

Interestingly enough, we do not know when Homer actually lived. He lived between the 12th and 8th centuries B.C.²⁵⁶; and Solomon lived during this time as well. So we do not know which man inspired the other (if at all). I would suspect, based upon Solomon's thirst for knowledge, that he read Homer and summed up his notions in this passage. On the other hand, I have taken inspiration from my study of Ecclesiastes 1, and it has brought back a flurry of memories and thoughts; so perhaps it was the other way around.

Now take a moment and consider these two verses together:

Ecclesiastes 1:4 **A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever.** (ESV)

1John 2:17 **And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.** (ESV)

The Transitory Nature of the Earth (Ecclesiastes 1:4 and 1John 2:17)

Don't these verses say exactly the opposite? In a way, yes. But consider, Solomon is viewing what he sees as a man apart from God, one generation comes, another generation goes; but the earth continues. This is what he observes as a man under the sun. This is his philosophical understanding of man and the earth, but based only upon what he observes. We must bear in mind that this is the primary observation point of Ecclesiastes—it is the view of a man under the sun; it is the view of the humanist philosopher. But this is not God's plan for mankind. For believers, even the earth will pass away, while they will live on forever.

Alexander MacLaren speaks about these two verses: *So John says: 'No, no; that is not all. Here is the true state of affairs: "The world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides for ever."'* The doctrine of the passing generations and the abiding earth is fronted squarely in my second text by the not contradictory, but complementary doctrine of the passing world and the abiding men. I do not suppose that John had this verse of Ecclesiastes in his mind, for the word 'abide' is one of his favourite expressions, and is always cropping up. But even though he had not, we find in his utterance the necessary correction to the first text. As I have said, and now need not do more than repeat in a sentence, the antithesis is not so complete as it seems. John's 'world' is not the Preacher's 'earth,' but he means thereby, as we all know, the aggregate of created things, including men, considered apart from God, and in so far as it includes voluntary agents set in opposition to God and the will of God. He means the earth rent away from God, and turned to be what it was not meant to be, a minister of evil, and he means men, in so far as they have parted themselves from God and make up an alien, if not a positively antagonistic company.

²⁵⁴ B. H. Carroll, *An interpretation of the English Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2–5:9.

²⁵⁵ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:4. I believe that this came from the Iliad.

²⁵⁶ From <https://www.biography.com/people/homer-9342775> accessed May 27, 2018.

The Transitory Nature of the Earth (Ecclesiastes 1:4 and 1John 2:17)

MacLaren continues: *But just for a moment we may take the lower point of view, and see here a flat contradiction of the Preacher. He said, 'Men go, and the world abides.'* 'No,' says John; 'your own psalmists might have taught you better: **"As a vesture You will change them, and they shall be changed."**²⁵⁷ The world, the earth, which seems so solid and permanent, is all the while in perpetual flux, as our later science has taught us, in a sense of which neither Preacher nor Apostle could dream. For just as from the beginning forces were at work which out of the fire-mist shaped sun and planets, so the same forces, continuing in operation, are tending towards the end of the system which they began; and a contracting sun and a diminished light and a lowered temperature and the narrower orbits in which the planets shall revolve, prophesy that 'the elements shall melt with fervent heat,' and that all things which have been made must one day cease to be.

MacLaren goes on: *But let us lift the thought rather into the region of the true antithesis which John was contemplating, which is not so much the crumbling away of the material, and the endurance of the spiritual, as the essential transiency of everything that is antagonism to the will of God, and the essential eternity of everything which is in conformity with that will. And so, says he, 'The world is passing, and the lust thereof.'* The desires that grasp it perish with it, or perhaps, more truly still, the object of the desire perishes, and with it the possibility of their gratification ceases, but the desire itself remains. But what of the man whose life has been devoted to the things seen and temporal, when he finds himself in a condition of being where none of these have accompanied him? Nothing to slake his lusts, if he be a sensualist. No money-bags, ledgers, or cheque-books if he be a plutocrat or a capitalist or a miser. No books or dictionaries if he be a mere student. Nothing of his vocations if he lived for 'the world.'

MacLaren concludes: *'The world is passing and the lust thereof,' and all that is antagonistic to God, or separated from Him, is essentially as 'a vapour that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away,' whereas the man who does the will of God abides for ever, in that he is steadfast in the midst of change.*²⁵⁸

Furthermore, the transitory nature of the earth is not suddenly a New Testament concept. It was known in the Old Testament as well. "O my God," I say, "take me not away in the midst of my days— you whose years endure throughout all generations!" Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but You are the same, and Your years have no end. The children of Your servants shall dwell secure; their offspring shall be established before You. (Psalm 102:24–28; ESV; capitalized)

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:3–4 What real gain is there to any man in all of his hard work which he must do each day under a hot sun? As one generation goes by the wayside, the next generation rises up to take its place; and the earth just keeps on turning.

It is so common for man to define himself, his existence and his purpose in life as his work. When people meet for the first time, it is common for one of the first questions to be, "What do you do?" (meaning, what is your job?) Certainly, some see their work as a means to the end of supporting one's family; but single men also similarly define themselves. But Solomon views this in the wider perspective of life, and generation following generation. As we have heard so many times in the past, "You cannot take it with you." At death, whatever it is that you have worked for and accumulated, it stays here; wherever you go, your stuff does not go with you. *That's the way it is*, Solomon is saying; *and that's the way it will always be.*

Dr. Dan Hill offers this as an example of the futility of work: *Every year thousands of small businesses begin and end. And every business is started with high hopes of success and profit. No one begins*

²⁵⁷ This is Psalm 102:26 quoted in Heb. 1:12.

²⁵⁸ Alexander MacLaren, D. D., Litt. D., *Expositions Of Holy Scripture*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:4 (slightly edited). This appears to have been a sermon; and I am quoting a portion of it.

a business planing on failure. Yet they do fail, by the thousands. Solomon observed this and noted that no one can build their significance on something as unstable as their job.

Hill continues: *Our generation, with all its achievements, will pass, and another one will come, and yet the earth, the dirt in which man is cursed to toil, outlasts him.*

Hill continues: *In Ecclesiastes 2:11 Solomon has more to say of work: Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun.*

Hill concludes: *Job had it right when he said naked came I into the world and naked will I leave it. So what is the point...why even bother. But remember what Solomon is doing. he is meeting the secular man on the secular level and apart from significance in God there is no point in all this. And apart from significance in God there will be great disappointment waiting for the man or woman who tries to find their significance, their identity, their meaning for existence in what they do.²⁵⁹*

Bear in mind that, if your entire life depends upon the material things which you have gathered, then this life would seem to be very futile and fruitless near the end. There are so many things which you might gather; and, in your final days or even years, have no way to enjoy them. Worse yet if you are leaving them behind to some undisciplined ingrate.

Ecclesiastes 1:4 *As one generation goes by the wayside, the next generation rises up to take its place; and the earth just keeps on turning.* This is the set up for what is to come. The earth is seen as eternal (it is not); and the processes on earth will be seen as eternal as well. They never seem to end.

Solomon has just indicated that one generation passes away, and another rises up; but the earth lasts forever. So, at this point, Solomon will turn to the earth to give some natural observations which illustrate this philosophical view.

The second in Solomon's list of cycles is that of the sun—it rises up here and sets there, and, the next day, it does this again.

There are two ways to view this earth and all of its functions. Solomon sees these as never-ending, almost meaningless process, which just continue on and on. Even nature's never-ending cycles seem to mock Solomon and his search for truth. However, his father David presents the heavens and earth in a very different light: Psalm 19:1–2 *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.* The prophet Jeremiah sees life and nature as a testament to God's faithfulness. Lam. 3:22–23 *The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.* (ESV; capitalized) So Solomon takes a much different view of the world than his father David or, later in history, Jeremiah.

Your view of life is very much based upon what is in your soul. On the one hand, liberals seem to think that being born in the United States is by random chance; and that we, for that reason, have no more claim on our birthplace than someone from an inferior country. But then, **ask them if they are proud of their country**, and they make it sound as if they were born in the worst country and worst environment ever and worst time ever. It makes very little sense for them to, on the one hand, believe that anyone and everyone ought to be able to come to America; and yet, not have any personal pride in their country. I, for one, would be in favor of such disadvantaged liberals doing a one-for-one exchange with people who would love to move here to the United States.

²⁵⁹ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 11, 2018.

But my actual point is this: you can place two people in the exact same circumstances, and one will be happy and grateful to God; and the other will not. It is all about what is in their souls, not what is in their environment.

Thus far, Solomon has stated some philosophical axioms which are false; but now he will state some scientific principles which are (more or less) true. Essentially, he will state some things which he has observed, with the intention of backing up these monotonous, meaningless cycles of life. .

And has risen the sun and has come in the sun, and unto his place hastening, rising he there.	Ecclesiastes 1:5	The sun rises and the sun sets [lit., goes in], and [he] hurries to his place, rising up there [again].
--	---------------------	--

The sun rises and the sun sets; then it hurries back to its original place and rises up there once again.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	And has risen the sun and has come in the sun, and unto his place hastening, rising he there.
Aramaic Targum	And the sun rises <u>in the day from the east</u> , and the sun <u>goes down in the west by night</u> , and hastens to its place, <u>and goes through the path under the sea</u> and rises <u>the following day from the place where it rested yesterday</u> ;...
Revised Douay-Rheims	⁵ The sun rises, and goes down, and returns to his place: and there rising again, ⁶ makes his round by the south, and turns again to the north:... A portion of v. 6 is included for context.
Peshitta (Syriac)	The sun rises and the sun <u>goes down</u> and hastens to the place where it rose that from thence it may rise again.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	⁵ And the sun arises, and the sun <u>goes down</u> and draws toward its place; ⁶ arising there it proceeds southward, and goes round toward the north. A portion of v. 6 is included for context.

Significant differences: The second verb seems to indicate the movement of the sun. The Syriac and Greek both translate that verb *goes down*, which does not match the Hebrew.

The targum is filled with additional text (and it has *goes down* as the second verb).

Both the Greek and Latin understand v. 5 to continue in v. 6. Most commentators reject that idea.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	The sun comes up and the sun goes down, and goes quickly back to the place where he came up.
Easy English	The sun still rises in the morning and it goes down in the evening. And it does the same thing each day.
Good News Bible (TEV)	The sun still rises, and it still goes down, going wearily back to where it must start all over again.
<i>The Message</i>	The sun comes up and the sun goes down, then does it again, and again—the same old round.
NIRV	The sun rises. Then it sets. And then it hurries back to where it rises.
New Simplified Bible	The sun rises and the sun goes down, and it quickly goes back to the place where it began.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	The sun rises and sets, staying within its orbit or tent, ^[6] and panting along mocks the futility of man. A portion of v. 6 is included for context. ^[6] This concept is not foreign to the Bible. In the New American Standard Bible, Psalm 19:4 is translated. "He (God) has placed a tent for the sun." Cf. Psalm 104:2. This is a picturesque description of what one should envision when considering man "under the sun." The "tent" closes out the higher values and confines man to knowledge and wisdom discovered only within the tent.
Common English Bible	The sun rises, the sun sets; it returns panting to the place where it dawns.
Contemporary English V.	The sun comes up, the sun goes down; it hurries right back to where it started from.
New Berkeley Version	The Sun rises and the sun sets and breathlessly hurries to the place where it rises.
New Life Version	The sun rises and the sun sets, and travels in a hurry to the place where it rises.
New Living Translation	The sun rises and the sun sets, then hurries around to rise again.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	Each morning the sun rises, and each evening it sets, and then it hurries around to where it started from.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	The sun keeps on rising and setting As it draws to it's place.
Beck's American Translation	The sun comes up and the sun goes down, eager to get back to the place where it comes up again.
International Standard V	The sun rises, the sun sets, then rushes back to where it arose.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	Sun may rise and sun may set, but ever it goes back and is reborn.
Translation for Translators	<i>Each morning</i> the sun rises, and <i>each evening</i> it sets, and <i>then</i> it hurries around to where it started from.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible	The sun has scattered its rays, the sun has gone aspiring to its place, even is it to be scattering its rays.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	And the Sun rises, and the Sun sets; and when the breeze of morn arises there he is !
God's Truth (Tyndale)	The *Son arises, the Sun goes down, and returns to his place, that he may there rises up again.
Jubilee Bible 2000	The sun arises, and the sun goes down, and with desire returns to his place from which he arises again.
Lexham English Bible	The sun rises, and the sun goes down; to its place it hurries, and there it rises again.
Wikipedia Bible Project	And the sun rises and the sun comes to its place, striving to rise, there.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

The Heritage Bible	And the sun rises, and the sun goes <i>down</i> , and inhales eagerly <i>to go</i> to its place where it rose.
New American Bible (2011)	The sun rises and the sun sets; then it presses on to the place where it rises.
New English Bible–1970	The sun rises and the sun goes down; back it returns to its place [back ... place: prob. rdg, Heb to its place panting] and rises there again.
New Jerusalem Bible	The sun rises, the sun sets; then to its place it speeds and there it rises.

Revised English Bible—1989 **The sun rises and the sun goes down; then it speeds to its place and rises there again.**

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible **The sun rises, the sun sets; then it speeds to its place and rises there.**

The Complete Tanach **The sun rises and the sun sets, and to its place it yearns and rises there.**

The sun rises, etc.: A generation goes and a generation comes as the sun rises at dawn and sets at eventide, and it goes throughout the night, yearning to rise from the place whence it rose yesterday, that it will rise from there also today.

exeGeses companion Bible **...also the sun rises and the sun goes and swallows to the place it rose...**

JPS (Tanakh—1985) **The sun rises, and the sun sets— And glides back to where it rises.**

Orthodox Jewish Bible **The shemesh also ariseth, and the shemesh goeth down, and hasteth to its place, there to arise again.**

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible **The sun rises, the sun sets, and then it hurries back [pants] to where it rises again [Ps. 19:5–6].**

Kretzmann's Commentary **The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, steadily pursuing his course, and hasteth to his place where he arose, to come up again in the east, governing time as the Lord ordered, Gen_1:16.**

NET Bible® **The sun rises²⁰ and the sun sets;²¹ it hurries away²² to a place from which it rises²³ again.²⁴**
²⁴tn The word "again" does not appear in Hebrew, but is supplied in the translation for clarity and smoothness.

The Pulpit Commentary **The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down.** The sun is another instance of ever-recurring change in the face of an enduring sameness, rising and setting day-by-day, and resting never. The legendary 'Life of Abram' relates how, having been hidden for some years in a cave in order to escape the search of Nimrod, when he emerged from his concealment, and for the first time beheld heaven and earth, he began to inquire who was the Creator of the wonders around him. When the sun arose and flooded the scene with its glorious light, he at once concluded that that bright orb must be the creative Deity, and offered his prayers to it all day long. But when it sank in darkness, he repented of his illusion, being persuaded that the sun could not have made the world and be itself subject to extinction. **And hasteth to his place where he arose;** literally, and panteth (equivalent to hasteth, longeth to go) to its place arising there; i.e. the sun, sinking in the west, eagerly during the night returns to the east, duly to rise there in the morning. The "place" is the region of reappearance. The Septuagint gives, "The sun arises, and the sun sets, and draws (ἐλκει) unto its place;" and then carries the idea into the following verse: "Arising there, it proceedeth southward," etc. The Vulgate supports the rendering; but there is no doubt that the Authorized Version gives substantially the sense of the Hebrew text as accentuated. The verb ψῆλα (shaaph), as Delitzsch shows, implies "punting," not from fatigue, but in eager pursuit of something; and all notions of panting steeds or morning exhalations are quite foreign from the conception of the passage. The notion which Koheleth desires to convey is that the sun makes no real progress; its eager punting merely brings it to the old place, there to recommence its monotonous routine...

Syndein/Thieme But our passage does not contrast the revival of the sun every morning with man’s eternal sleep in death
 {Solomon Provides Correct Scientific Information}
 The sun rises and the sun sets and hurries back to where it rises.

The Voice The sun rises and the sun sets,
 laboring to come up quickly to its place again *and again*.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

C. Thompson (updated) OT Concordant Literal Version The sun rises and the sun sets and comes round to his place.
 The sun rises, and the sun sets And gasps back to its place, That it may radiate there once more."

Emphasized Bible And the sun, breaketh forth, and the sun, goeth in,—yea, unto his own place, he panteth, from whence he brake forth.

English Standard Version The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises.
 Green’s Literal Translation The sun also arises, and the sun goes even panting to its place; it arises there *again*.

Modern English Version The sun comes up, and the sun goes down, and hurries to the place where it rises.

New American Standard B. Also, the sun rises and the sun sets; And hastening to its place it rises there *again*.

Third Millennium Bible The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteneth to his place where he arose.

World English Bible The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, and hurries to its place where it rises.
 Young’s Updated LT Also, the sun has risen, and the sun has gone in, and unto its place panting it is rising there.

The gist of this passage: Solomon observes that the sun rises, it sets, and then it comes around again to rise in the same place where it was the morning before.

Ecclesiastes 1:5a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong’s # BDB #251
zârach (זָרַח) [pronounced zaw- RAHKH]	<i>to rise, to come out; to appear; to scatter rays, to shine forth, to break out; to majestically appear; and even, when speaking of a plant, to spring forth</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong’s #2224 BDB #280

The NET Bible: *The Hebrew text has a perfect verbal form, but it should probably be emended to the participial form, which occurs in the last line of the verse. Note as well the use of participles in vv. 4-7 to describe what typically takes place in the natural world. The participle זֹרֵחַ (zoreakh, “to rise”) emphasizes continual, durative, uninterrupted action (present universal use of participle): the sun is continually rising (and continually setting) day after day.*²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 14, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:5a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shemesh (שֶׁמֶשׁ) [pronounced SHEH-mesh]	<i>sun; sunrise, sun-rising, east, sun-setting, west (of direction); openly, publically</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #8121 BDB #1039
According to BDB, this noun can be masculine or feminine.			
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
bôw' (אוּב) [pronounced boh]	<i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter, to advance; to attain</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #935 BDB #97
The NET Bible: <i>Heb "the sun goes." The participle אָב (ba', "to go") emphasizes continual, durative, uninterrupted action (present universal use of participle): the sun is continually rising and continually setting day after day. The repetition of אָב in 1:4-5 creates a comparison between the relative futility of all human endeavor ("a generation comes and a generation goes [אָב]) with the relative futility of the action of the sun ("the sun rises and the sun goes" [i.e., "sets," אָב]).</i> ²⁶¹			
shemesh (שֶׁמֶשׁ) [pronounced SHEH-mesh]	<i>sun; sunrise, sun-rising, east, sun-setting, west (of direction); openly, publically</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article; pausal form	Strong's #8121 BDB #1039

Translation: *The sun rises and the sun sets* [lit., *goes in*],... Solomon makes a simple observation. Each day, the sun rises in the east and then it sets in the west. I may have assumed too much by translating the second verb as *sets*. The verb could simply indicate that the sun continues to move across the sky in its arc (it appears to us as if moving across the sky in an arc).

Ecclesiastes 1:5b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
'el (אֶל) [pronounced eh]	<i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
mâqôwm (מִקְוֹמ) [pronounced maw-KOHM]	<i>place, situated; for a soldier, it may mean where he is stationed; for people in general, it would be their place of abode (which could be their house or their town)</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4725 BDB #879
shâ'aph (שֶׁאֵפ) [pronounced shaw-AHF]	<i>gasping, panting, breathing [heavily]; hurrying, running, hastening; crushing, trampling down</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #7602 BDB #983

²⁶¹ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 14, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:5b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
----------------------	-------------------------	------------------	--------------------------

From examining the 14 times this word is used, I think that it would be safe to say that the root of shâ'aph is to *breath heavily, to pant*; and, by way of application, the many things which breathing heavily might point to. Women breathe heavily when giving birth, men and women breathe heavily in sexual union (implying the meaning *desire*); people breathe heavily while running and after running (see Eccl. 1:5 here). In context of Job 5:5, *desire* is the likely derived meaning.

Dr. Bob Utley: “*hastening*” This can mean “*panting*” (BDB 983 I, Qal active participle), as in weariness or desire (i.e., Psalm 119:131). This is the first in a series of eleven Qal active participles reflecting nature (cf. Eccles. 1:5–7).²⁶²

The NET Bible: Heb “*hastens*” or “*pants*.” The verb שָׂאֵף (sha’af) has a three-fold range of meanings: (1) “to gasp; to pant,” (2) “to pant after; to long for,” and (3) “to hasten; to hurry” (HALOT 1375 s.v. שָׂאֵף; BDB 983 s.v. I שָׂאֵף). The related Aramaic root שׁ יִף means “to be thirsty; to be parched.” The Hebrew verb is used of “gasp[ing]” for breath, like a woman in the travail of childbirth (Isa 42:14); “panting” with eagerness or desire (Job 5:5; 7:2; 36:20; Ps 119:131; Jer 2:24) or “panting” with fatigue (Jer 14:6; Eccl 1:5). Here שָׂאֵף personifies the sun, panting with fatigue, as it hastens to its destination (BDB 983 s.v. I שָׂאֵף 1). The participle form depicts continual, uninterrupted, durative action (present universal use). Like the sun, man – for all his efforts – never really changes anything; all he accomplishes in his toil is to wear himself out.²⁶³

zârach (צָרַח) [pronounced zaw- RAHKH]	rising, coming out; appearing; scattering rays, shining forth, breaking out; majestically appearing; and even, when speaking of a plant, springing forth	Qal active participle	Strong's #2224 BDB #280
--	---	-----------------------	----------------------------

The NET Bible: The verb צָרַח (zoreakh, “to rise”) is repeated in this verse to emphasize that the sun is locked into a never changing, ever repeating monotonous cycle: rising, setting, rising, setting.²⁶⁴

hûw' (אוּה) [pronounced hoo]	he, it; him, himself as a demonstrative pronoun: that, this (one); same	3 rd person masculine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb to be, is implied	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
shâm (שָׁם) [pronounced shawm]	there; at that time, then; therein, in that thing	adverb of place	Strong's #8033 BDB #1027

The Greek and Latin continue this verse to include Eccles. 1:6a. Clarke writes: *These verses are confused by being falsely divided. The first clause of the sixth should be joined to the fifth verse.*

“The sun also arises, and the sun goes down, and hastes to his place where he arises; going to the south, and circulating to the north.”²⁶⁵

The way that this verse has been historically divided up is correct; v. 6a pertains to the winds, not to the sun.

²⁶² Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:3–11.

²⁶³ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 14, 2018.

²⁶⁴ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 14, 2018.

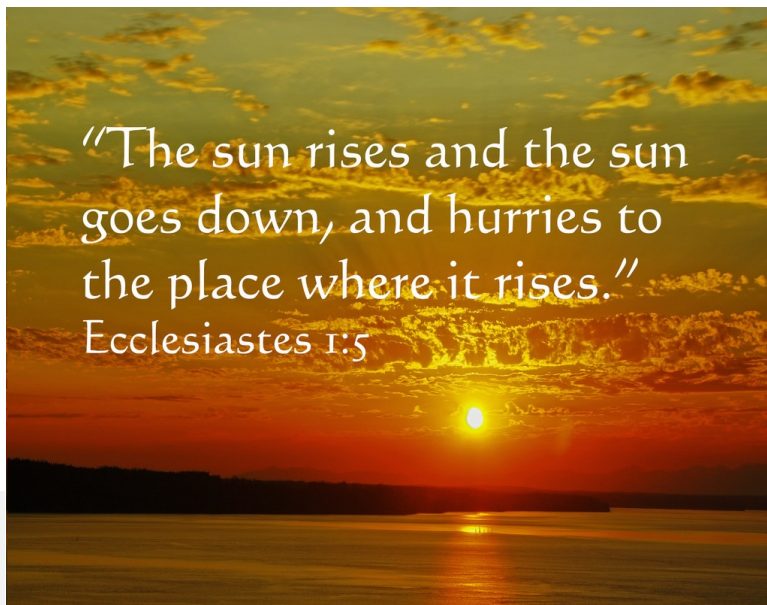
²⁶⁵ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:5 (slightly edited).

Translation: ...and [he] hurries to his place, rising up there [again]. Then the sun hurries to where it was before and it rises up there once again.

This is not literally what happens; this is what appears to happen from our vantage point here on earth. Bear in mind that all of the observation in this chapter is recorded by a man under the sun. Therefore, we should not expect them to be scientifically accurate; but accurate based upon the powers of human observation. Today, obviously, we know that the sun does not revolve around the earth, even though it appears to. However, virtually every person, including scientists, speak of the sun rising and setting.

Ecclesiastes 1:5 (a graphic); from [flickr](#); accessed June 17, 2018.

Solomon observes what he believes to be the absolute futility of life. Life continues in these cycles; there seems to be little reason for them. After this and two more examples, Solomon will conclude life to be wearisome or tiresome. Essentially, Solomon takes what is in his soul, at this time, and projects it upon all creation.



Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 1:5 The sun rises and the sun sets; then it hurries back to its original place and rises up there once again.

The lecturer's view of the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:5) (various commentators)

Benson: *The sun is in perpetual motion, rising, setting, and rising again, and so constantly repeating its course in all succeeding days, and years, and ages.*²⁶⁶

Expositor's Bible Commentary: *The sun runs his race with joy, sinks exhausted into its ocean bed, but rises on the morrow, like a giant refreshed with old wine, to renew its course.*

The Expositor's Bible Commentary continues: *The figure of verse 5 (Eccles. 1:5) is, of course, that of the racer. the sun rises every morning to run its course, pursues it through the day, "pants," as one well-nigh breathless, toward its goal, and sinks at night into its subterranean bed in the sea; but, though exhausted and breathless at night, it rises on the morrow refreshed, and eager, like a strong, swift man, to renew its daily race.*²⁶⁷

Dr. Peter Pett: *Both sun and wind continue their daily and nightly activities in the same old way. The sun follows a continual pattern, rising, setting, and then racing round to rise again. There is possibly here a hint of Egyptian influence, although the idea of the sun speeding underneath in order to rise again must have been a common one, for men saw it go down in one place at night, and in the morning come up at the opposite side from which it went down.*

²⁶⁶ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:5.

²⁶⁷ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–11.

The lecturer's view of the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:5) (various commentators)

Pett continues: *The description of the sun is reminiscent of ideas in Egypt about Ra, who makes his daily journey over the earth, and his nightly journey under the earth. But here it the idea is demythologised. Ra is degraded to a thing. However, the writer must have been conscious of the ideas of others. Thus 'under the sun' must be seen as containing at least some stress on the sun's meaninglessness, however seen, as well as on its long term uselessness. It is simply seen by him as a part of the pattern of nature.*²⁶⁸

This is not actually what the sun does, but what it appears to do to the man under the sun. He can, at best, make observations from planet earth.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Solomon is actually affording a more subjective view of the sun than found above.

Ecclesiastes 1:5 [The sun rises and the sun sets; then it hurries back to its original place and rises up there once again.](#)

Solomon views the motion of the sun as wearisome (Eccles. 1:5) (commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *[T]he sun accordingly appears as presenting not a contrast, but a parallel, to human mutability and resultless labour.*²⁶⁹

Dunagan: *"the sun rises"-Even the powerful sun is caught up in this treadmill of vanity. The word "hastening" means to breathe hard, pant, as one in haste. The sun and the wind (1:6) are in constant motion but never arrive at any fixed goal or lasting rest.*²⁷⁰

Kidner: *Qoholeth picks out three examples of this endless round in nature, starting with the most obvious, that of the sun, which stoops from its great upward curve into its decline; and having done so, hastens to repeat itself day after day.*²⁷¹

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *[A]s to man's "labor," which is only wearisome and profitless; "no new" good can accrue from it (Eccles. 1:9); for as the sun, etc., so man's laborious works move in a changeless cycle.*²⁷²

Keith Krell: *The sun is on a monotonous cycle of rising, setting, and then racing back to the place from which it rises. The verb translated "hastening" means "to pant." The sun is like a runner endlessly making his way around a racetrack. As each generation comes and goes, so also each day comes and goes with a regular and monotonous passing. It has been said, "The problem with daily living is that it is so DAILY."*²⁷³

Dr. Bob Utley: *[H]ere the sun's daily task is seen as vain, meaningless, wearisome repetition.*²⁷⁴

College Press Bible Study: *The sun stays within its own appointed limits but as it pants along it appears to actually mock as man works in endless endeavor to discover the profit of his labor.*²⁷⁵

²⁶⁸ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:5–6.

²⁶⁹ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:5.

²⁷⁰ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:5.

²⁷¹ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:5.

²⁷² Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:8.

²⁷³ From Bible.org, accessed June 22, 2018.

²⁷⁴ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:3–11.

²⁷⁵ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; comment Eccles. 1:4–8.

Although this view of the sun by Solomon is not clearly found within this verse alone, that is the proper view of it in context.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

The philosophical tenets which Solomon posed in vv. 2–4 were false; perhaps these are scientific tenets which seem true by observation, but are also false. When it comes to the movement of the sun, the earth and our universe, the movement of the sun is immaterial; it is actually the movement of the earth which is critical; and in relation to the earth, the sun remains in a fix position (the sun is moving along with our universe; but the earth remains in a fixed path relative to this movement).

J. Vernon McGee: *"The sun also arises, and the sun goes down." There is a monotony in nature, but also that which you can depend upon. You can count on the sun coming up and you can depend on it going down — we still use that terminology although we know that the coming up and going down of the sun really is caused by the rotation of the earth. We are standing on a pretty solid piece of earth, and it looks to us as if the sun comes up and the sun goes down. The terminology has accommodated man in all ages. The amazing thing is the precise, regular way that the sun appears and disappears; it is obeying certain laws.*²⁷⁶

Dr. John Gill: *By this instance is exemplified the succession of the generations of men one after another, as the rising and setting of the sun continually follows each other; and also sets forth the restless state of things in the world, which, like the sun, are never at a stand, but always moving, and swiftly taking their course; and likewise the changeable state of man, who, like the rising sun, and when at noon day, is in flourishing circumstances, and in the height of prosperity, but as this declines and sets, so he has his declining times and days of adversity. Moreover, like the rising sun, he comes into this world and appears for a while, and then, like the setting sun, he dies; only with this difference, in which the sun has the preference to him, as the earth before had; the sun hastens and comes to its place from whence it arose, but man lies down and rises not again till the heavens be no more, and never returns to his place in this world, that knows him no more, Job. 7:10.*²⁷⁷

The Greek and Latin Bibles both understood the first couple phrases of the next verse to properly belong with v. 5, continuing to speak of the movement of the sun. This is incorrect, as has been noted in the Hebrew exegesis.

Whereas, Solomon might be making a point about the futility of life and its many repetitions; and suggesting that all nature is equally repetitive and futile, this is not how the sun is spoken of elsewhere in the Bible.

Psalm 19:1–9 (from English Standard Version; capitalized)

Scripture	Text/Commentary
To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.	David writes this psalm, clearly inspired by the beauty and revelations of God to be found in nature.
Psalm 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.	Everything that is above us reveals God's glory. It is indeed is the work of His hands.
Psalm 19:2 Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.	All creation above us is filled with information; all that happens above us, day and night, contains great knowledge.

²⁷⁶ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt accessed June 19, 2018 (slightly edited).

²⁷⁷ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:5.

Psalm 19:1–9 (from English Standard Version; capitalized)

Scripture	Text/Commentary
<p>We have found, with our modern telescopes and from the advances in astronomy just an amazing amount of information about what is overhead. No scientist views the universe as a random arena where anything goes; everything that we observe is subject to a set of laws—some very complex—which scientists believe that they can observe and draw conclusions about.</p>	
<p>Psalm 19:3 There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.</p>	<p>We don't hear the sun; the stars do not actually speak to us.</p>
<p>Psalm 19:4–5 Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.</p>	<p>The knowledge from the heavens goes to all the ends of the earth. Different from Solomon's impressions, the sun in David's eyes is not wearisome, but it is like a strong man, running its course with joy.</p>
<p>Psalm 19:6 Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat.</p>	<p>The heat from the sun is found everywhere on the earth. Even in its coldest regions.</p>
<p>Now note the shift in topic (I have added the emphasis):</p>	
<p>Psalm 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;...</p>	<p>Just as we live in a well-ordered universe, where everything follows a set of laws, so is the law of God equally perfect. We may trust Him.</p>
<p>Psalm 19:8 ...the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;...</p>	<p>God precepts are accurate, they give us reason to rejoice, and we are enlightened by them.</p>
<p>Psalm 19:9 ...the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether.</p>	<p>The fear of the Lord is the description of the faith of the Old Testament believer in maturity. He understands God's power and involvement in his life.</p>

As an aside, many religions show great reverence for the sun; even to the point of worship. The psalmist sees the sun merely as an example of God's handiwork. God is to be revered; the sun, as God's handiwork, is to be appreciated, along with all of God's creation. God's incredibly well-planned creation reveals Him.

This entire psalm is exegeted here. [Psalm 19 \(HTML\)](#) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD—zipped](#)).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Perhaps one might develop a Doctrine of the Sun using these passages: Gen. 8:22 Joshua 10:13–14 Psalm 19:4–6 89:36–37 104:19–23 Jer. 33:20 Habak. 3:11.²⁷⁸

The third item in Solomon's list of natural cycles is the wind, how it seems to blow through Solomon's place (and every other place); and, at some point, and later on, it blows through again.

²⁷⁸ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 1:5.

Going unto [the] south and turning around unto [the] north, going around, circling around goes the wind; and upon his circuit returns the wind.

Ecclesiastes
1:6

[The wind] goes toward the south and turns around to the north, [this] wind going around [and] circling around [again]; and [finally] the wind returns along its circuit.

The wind goes toward the south, then turns around to the north; the wind is going around and circling about; and it eventually returns along its established route.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)

Going unto [the] south and turning around unto [the] north, going around, circling around goes the wind; and upon his circuit returns the wind.

Aramaic Targum

it goes all the side of the south in the day, and goes round to the side of the north by night, through the path under the sea; it turns round and round to the wind of the south corner in the revolution of Nisan and Tamuz, and returns on its circuits to the wind of the north corner in the revolution of Tishri and Tebeth, it comes through the windows of the east in the morning, and goes into the windows of the west in the evening.

Revised Douay-Rheims

The sun rises, and goes down, and returns to his place: and there rising again, makes his round by the south, and turns again to the north: the spirit goes forward surveying all places round about, and returns to his circuits. V. 5 is included for context.

Peshitta (Syriac)

The wind blows toward the south, and turns about to the north; it whirls continually, and returns again according to its circuits.

Updated Brenton (Greek)

And the sun arises, and the sun goes down and draws toward its place; arising there it proceeds southward, and goes round toward the north. The wind goes round and round, and the wind returns to its circuits. V. 5 is included for context.

Significant differences:

There is a lot of additional text in the Aramaic targum.

The Latin and Greek mistakenly present v. 6a as a part of v. 5 (and thereby, relating v. 6a to the sun). Both the Latin and Greek add additional words to make this connection.

Dr. Bob Utley remarks: *The Septuagint and Vulgate relate the first part of this verse to the sun, but in context it refers to the wind (a word play with “vanity”) as another meaningless activity (as is the flowing of rivers to the sea).*²⁷⁹

The Latin has *spirit* instead of *wind*; which is a legitimate translation.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English
Easy English

The wind goes to the south, turning back again to the north; circling round for ever. The wind blows to the south and it turns to the north.
It blows round and round, but it always returns.

Easy-to-Read Version—2006

The wind blows to the south, and the wind blows to the north. The wind blows around and around. Then it turns and blows back to the place it began.

God's Word™

The wind blows toward the south and shifts toward the north.
Round and round it blows. It blows in a full circle.

Good News Bible (TEV)

The wind blows south, the wind blows north—round and round and back again.

²⁷⁹ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:3–11.

The Message The wind blows south, the wind blows north.
Around and around and around it blows,
blowing this way, then that—the whirling, erratic wind.

NIRV The wind blows to the south.
 Then it turns to the north.
Around and around it goes.
 It always returns to where it started.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study Likewise, the wind stays within its appointed circular courses and going toward the south and turning back toward the north it continues swirling along.

Common English Bible The wind blows to the south,
goes around to the north;
around and around blows the wind;
the wind returns to its rounds again.

Contemporary English V. The wind blows south, the wind blows north; round and round it blows over and over again.

The Living Bible The wind blows south and north, here and there, twisting back and forth, getting nowhere.

New Century Version The wind blows to the south;
 it blows to the north.
It blows from one direction and then another.
 Then it turns around and repeats the same pattern, going nowhere.

New Living Translation The wind blows south, and then turns north. Around and around it goes, blowing in circles.

Unlocked Dynamic Bible The wind blows south, and then it turns around to start blowing to the north. It goes around and around in circles.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible And the winds blow in from the south,
As they move to the north in a circle...
Then they go back and come 'round again.

Beck's American Translation Going to the south and circling to the north, the wind goes round and round; and the wind returns on its circuit.

International Standard V The wind blows southward,
 then northward, constantly circulating,
 and the wind comes back again in its courses.

New Advent (Knox) Bible Round to the south it moves, round to the north it turns; the wind, too, though it makes the round of the world, goes back to the beginning of its round at last.

Translation for Translators The wind blows south,
and then it *turns around to start blowing* to the north.
It goes around and around in circles.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible The wind is to be conducting toward the south, it is to be turning toward the north; in its proceeding the wind is to have turned back in its circuit.

Christian Standard Bible Gusting to the south,
turning to the north,
turning, turning, goes the wind,
and the wind returns in its cycles.

Conservapedia	The wind blows to the South, then turns to the North; it whirls about continually, returning on its own time, in its own way.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	The Wind travels to the South, and revolves towards the North, travel-ling in circles; and in its revolutions returns to its place of origin.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	The wind goes toward the South, and fetches his compass about unto the North, and so turns in to himself again.
NIV, ©2011	The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course.
Tree of Life Version	The wind goes toward the south, and circles around to the north. Round and round it swirls about, ever returning to its circuits.
Unlocked Literal Bible	The wind blows south and circles around to the north, always going around along its pathway and coming back again.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (2013)	Blowing to the south, turning to the north, the wind goes round and round and after all its rounds it has to blow again.
The Heritage Bible	The wind walks toward the south, and turns around to the north; turning around, the wind turns around, and upon its circuits the wind turns back.
New American Bible (2002)	Blowing now toward the south, then toward the north, the wind turns again and again, resuming its rounds.
New American Bible (2011)	Shifting south, then north, back and forth shifts the wind, constantly shifting its course.
New Jerusalem Bible	Southward goes the wind, then turns to the north; it turns and turns again; then back to its circling goes the wind.
New RSV	The wind blows to the south, and goes round to the north; round and round goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns.
Revised English Bible—1989	The wind blows to the south, it veers to the north; round and round it goes and returns full circle.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	The wind blows south, then it turns north; the wind blows all around and keeps returning to its rounds.
The Complete Tanach	It goes to the south and goes around to the north; the will goes around and around, and the will returns to its circuits.

the will: Heb. חוֹהָ, the will of the sun, talant in Old French, like (Ezek. 1: 12): “wherever would be the will (חוֹהָ) to go.”

returns to its circuits: Also on the morrow, the entire circuit and encircling that it encircled yesterday, it encircles and goes around today.

it goes to the south: forever in the day.

and goes around to the north: forever in the night.

goes around and around: to the eastern and western sides, which it sometimes goes through by day, and sometimes goes around at night. In Tammuz it goes through them, and in Teveth it goes around them. Also the wicked, no matter how much their sun rises, they will ultimately set. No matter how much they gain power, they will ultimately return to the place of filth. From the place of filth they came, and to the place of filth they will go. And so...

exeGesés companion Bible	...the wind goes toward the south and turns around to the north - turning around and turning around: and the wind returns again according to its circuits...
The Israel Bible	Southward blowing, Turning northward, Ever turning blows the wind; On its rounds the wind returns.
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	Southward blowing, Turning northward, Ever turning blows the wind; On its rounds the wind returns.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	The ruach (wind) goeth toward the darom (south), and turneth about unto the tzafoh (north); it whirlleth about continually, and the ruach returneth again according to its circuits.
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	Going to the south, and turning round to the north, turning, turning, and on its rounds the wind returns.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	The wind blows toward the south, Then circles toward the north; The wind circles <i>and</i> swirls endlessly, And on its circular course the wind returns.
The Expanded Bible	·The wind [^L It] blows to the south; it ·blows [^L goes around] to the north. ·It blows from one direction and then another [^L The wind goes round and round]. ·Then it turns around and repeats the same pattern, going nowhere [^L The wind keeps blowing in circles].
Kretzmann's Commentary	The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north, following certain fixed laws of the universe; it whirlleth about continually, in an ever-returning change, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits, in courses whose general regularity has been learned even by human observers.
NET Bible®	The wind goes to the south and circles around to the north; round and round the wind goes and on its rounds it returns.
The Pulpit Commentary	The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; literally, going towards the south, and circling towards the north. These words, as we have seen above, are referred to the sun by the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Syriac; but it is best to make this verse refer only to the wind—a fresh example of motion continually repeated with no real progress to an end. Thus each verse comprises one subject and idea, Eccles. 1:4 being concerned with the earth, Eccles. 1:5 with the sun, Eccles. 1:6 with the wind, and Eccles. 1:7 with the waters. There seems to be no particular force in the naming of north and south, unless it be in contrast to the sun's motion from east to west, mentioned in the preceding verse. The words following show that these two directions are not alone intended. Thus the four quarters are virtually included. <i>It whirlleth about continually.</i> The original is more forcible, giving by its very form the idea of weary monotony. The subject is delayed till the last, thus: Going towards the south ... circling, circling, goeth the wind; i.e. it blows from all quarters at its own caprice. <i>And the wind returneth again according to his circuits.</i> And on its circlings returneth the wind; it comes back to the point whence it started. The wind, seemingly the freest of all created things, is bound by the same law of immutable changeableness, insensate repetition.

Syndein/Thieme	{Solomon Identifies High and Low Pressure Areas Long before Meteorology did} The wind goes toward the south and turns to the north. Round and round it goes ever returning on its course.
The Voice	The wind in its travels blows toward the south, then swings back around to the north. Back and forth, returning in its circuit <i>again and again</i> .

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Albert Barnes	Going toward the south and veering toward the north, veering, veering goes the wind; and to its veerings the wind returns.
Cambridge Bible (updated)	It goes to the south, and it circles to the north, circling, circling goes the wind, and on its circlings returns the wind.
C. Thompson (updated) OT	Rising there he marches southward, then wheels about to the north. The wind wheels in circuits, and in its circuits it returns.
Concordant Literal Version	Going to the south and turning around to the north, Around and around the wind is going, Yet on its courses the wind returns."
John Dummelow (updated)	Going toward the south, and circling toward the north; circling, circling goes the wind, and on its circlings returns the wind.
English Standard Version	The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north; around and around goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns.
Modern Literal Version	It moves to the south, and then moves around to the north; the wind continually travels around, and it keeps turning on its circuit.
New American Standard B.	Blowing toward the south, Then turning toward the north, The wind continues swirling along; And on its circular courses the wind returns.
A Voice in the Wilderness	The wind goes toward the south, and it turns around to the north; it whirls around continually; and the wind returns according to its circuits.
Webster's Bible Translation	The wind goeth towards the south, and turneth about to the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to its circuits.
World English Bible	The wind goes toward the south, and turns around to the north. It turns around continually as it goes, and the wind returns again to its courses.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Going unto the south, and turning round unto the north, turning round, turning round, the wind is going, and by its circuits the wind hath returned.

The gist of this passage: The wind blows towards the south, then towards the north; whirling about, and then returning on its circuit.

Ecclesiastes 1:6a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Although the Latin and Greek affix this first section of v. 6 to the sun, the traditional division of the verses is correct. There are good commentators who agree with this: Clarke ²⁸⁰ , Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge ²⁸¹ and E. W. Bullinger, who writes: <i>The first part of Eccles. 1:6 continues the motion of the sun, going to the south (in winter) and turning about to the north (in summer).</i> ²⁸² However, most do not.			
Keil and Delitzsch: <i>along with the sun, the wind is also referred to as a third example of restless motion always renewing itself. The division of the verses is correct; Eccles. 1:6 used of the sun would overload the figure, and the whole of Eccles. 1:6 therefore refers to the wind.</i> ²⁸³ Keil and Delitzsch hold the correct view, in my opinion.			
hâlak ^e (הלך) [pronounced haw-LAHK ^e]	<i>is walking, is going, is departing, is advancing, is traveling</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229
'el (אל) [pronounced eh]	<i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
dârôm (דָּרוֹם) [pronounced daw-ROHM]	<i>south; south wind (in poetry)</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1864 BDB #204
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or וּ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
çâbab (בָּבַב) [pronounced saw ^p -VAH ^B V]	<i>turning around, going around, surrounding, encompassing, circling around</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #5437 BDB #685
'el (אל) [pronounced eh]	<i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
tsâphôwn (צָפוֹן) [pronounced tsaw-FOHN]	<i>north, northern, northward; north wind</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6828 BDB #860

Translation: [The wind] goes toward the south and turns around to the north,... We know by what follows, that we are speaking of the wind here; so inserting it up top is legitimate. It goes toward the south, but then it turns around and goes toward the north.

There are a handful of translations who make this a part of v. 5 and associate it with the sun; but that is incorrect.

Ecclesiastes 1:6 [The wind goes toward the south, then turns around to the north; the wind is going around and circling about; and it eventually returns along its established route.](#)

²⁸⁰ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:6.

²⁸¹ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 1:6.

²⁸² E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:6.

²⁸³ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 1:5.

The wind blows to the south and north (Ecclesiastes 1:6) (various commentators)

Trapp: *[The wind] is a little very small thing at first, a vapour rising out of the earth; but, by circuiting and whirling about, it gathers strength - now rushing toward the south, and anon toward the north, &c.; the original is very lively in expressing the manner of it.*²⁸⁴

The Cambridge Bible: *“South and north” only are named, partly, perhaps, because east and west were implied in the sunrise and sunset of the previous verse, more probably because these were the prevailing currents of air in Palestine. Comp. “Awake, O north wind; blow, O south,” in Song of Songs. 4:16; Sir. 43:20; Luke 12:55.*²⁸⁵

Matthew Poole: *The wind goes toward the south, and turns about unto the north; the wind also sometimes blows from one quarter of the world, and sometimes from another; all of them being synecdochically comprehended under these two eminent quarters. But because this word, the wind, is not expressed in the Hebrew, but is only borrowed or understood from the latter clause of the verse.*²⁸⁶

The Expositor's Bible Commentary continues: *[T]he wind is represented as having a regular law and circuit, though it now blows South, and now veers round to the North. The East and West are not mentioned, probably because they are tacitly referred to in the rising and setting sun of the previous verse.*²⁸⁷

Joseph Sutcliffe: *Captain Dampier, a circumnavigator, has written on winds, with a view to assist sailors in their course. The subject did not escape the notice of Solomon. The sun rules the seasons, and the variations of the winds affect their mildness, or their rigour. Periodical winds are inscrutably regulated by the Creator. The whirl of the earth occasions easterly winds for twenty eight degrees, on each side the equator; then the eddies return and fall on the north of France and England, in south-west gales and showers, which make our climate so happy. In Canada they have north-west gales, from the snow-capt mountains, which make their winters severe. Dampier notices the land breezes all along the west coast of South America. Other phenomena of breeze and gale, of calm and hurricane, are occasioned by the rarity and density of the atmosphere.*²⁸⁸

Interestingly enough, God warmed the waters of the earth, created our atmosphere, and then created the sun, in that order. The writer of Ecclesiastes takes them up in the reverse order.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 1:6b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
çâbab (בָּבַב) [pronounced saw ^b -VAH ^B V]	<i>turning around, going around, surrounding, encompassing, circling around</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #5437 BDB #685
çâbab (בָּבַב) [pronounced saw ^b -VAH ^B V]	<i>turning around, going around, surrounding, encompassing, circling around</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #5437 BDB #685

²⁸⁴ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 1:6.

²⁸⁵ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:6.

²⁸⁶ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:6 (slightly edited).

²⁸⁷ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–11.

²⁸⁸ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jsc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 21, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:6b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>The NET Bible: <i>The Hebrew root בָּבַט (savav, "to circle around") is repeated four times in this verse to depict the wind's continual motion: "The wind circles around (בָּבוֹט, sovev)...round and round (בִּבְטוֹ...its circuits (וַיִּתְבַּטְט, sÿvivotayv)." This repetition is designed for a rhetorical purpose – to emphasize that the wind is locked into a never ending cycle. This vicious circle of monotonous action does not change anything. The participle form is used three times to emphasize continual, uninterrupted action (present universal use of participle). Despite the fact that the wind is always changing direction, nothing really new ever happens. The constant shifting of the wind cannot hide the fact that this is nothing but a repeated cycle; nothing new happens here (e.g., 1:9-10).</i>²⁸⁹</p>			
hâlak ^e (הָלַךְ) [pronounced haw-LAHK ^e]	is walking, is going, is departing, is advancing, is traveling	Qal active participle	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229
rûwach (רוּחַ) [pronounced ROO-ahkh]	wind, breath, spirit, apparition	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #7307 BDB #924

Translation: ...[this] wind going around [and] circling around [again];... The wind goes around and around—it is not always coming from the same direction and going in the same direction. This does not mean, however, that the winds are completely random in their movements.

According to Gill, Plato wrote: *the wind is the motion of the air round about the earth.*²⁹⁰ I was unable to confirm that quote in an internet search.

Keith Krell: *The repetition in "going round and round" heightens the sense of monotony and purposelessness.*²⁹¹

Ecclesiastes 1:6c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʿal (לְעַל) [pronounced gah]	upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside	preposition of relative proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
çâbîyb (בִּיבֹט) [pronounced saw ^b -VEE ^B V]	those surrounding, surrounds; places round about, a circuit; all around; on every side	plural substantive with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5439 BDB #686

Keil and Delitzsch: *And "on its circuits" is not to be taken adverbially: it turns back on its circuits, i.e., it turns back on the same paths...the wind returns back to its circling movements to begin them anew.*²⁹²

²⁸⁹ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 15, 2018.

²⁹⁰ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:6.

²⁹¹ From [Bible.org](https://www.bible.org), accessed June 22, 2018.

²⁹² Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 1:6.

Ecclesiastes 1:6c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shûwb (שׁוּב) [pronounced shoo ^b v]	returning, turning [back, away, aside]; reminiscing; restoring something, bringing back something, reviving, recovering something, making restitution	Qal active participle	Strong's #7725 BDB #996
The NET Bible: <i>The use of שׁוּב (shav, Qal active participle masculine singular from שׁוּב, shuv, "to return") creates a wordplay (paronomasia) with the repetition of סָבַב (savav, "to circle around"). The participle emphasizes continual, durative, uninterrupted action (present universal use).</i> ²⁹³			
rûwach (רוּח) [pronounced ROO-akhk]	wind, breath, spirit, apparition	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #7307 BDB #924

Translation: ...and [finally] the wind returns along its circuit. But, at some point, the wind appears to have traveled a circuit and returns to its previous pattern.

Is there a precise pattern to the wind? That would be a *no*, although clearly there are some passageways, like the **gulf stream**, but nothing which is an exact circuit; there are some patterns, but nothing which can be depended upon to repeat its circuit exactly, year after year (or season after season). So, like the previous verse, this is an observation made at the time, but not completely accurate.

Ecclesiastes 1:6 The wind goes toward the south, then turns around to the north; the wind is going around and circling about; and it eventually returns along its established route.

The lecturer's view of the wind (Ecclesiastes 1:6) (various commentators)

Pastor John Griffith: *Here he speaks of the circuit of the winds. This is unusual, because we have no evidence that people in Solomon's time understood scientifically the fact that the wind, the clouds, and the great jet streams of earth run in circles.*²⁹⁴

We should bear in mind that, throughout the rest of the Bible, where the very words are inspired by God the Holy Spirit, there are some very sophisticated scientific statements. This does not mean that the writer of those words has a 21st century understanding of the phenomenon that he describes; it simply means that God the Holy Spirit guides him so that his words are accurate.

College Press Bible Study: *[T]he wind is confined to circular courses, and although it appears to pass on never to return, it inevitably finds its way back in its trek about the earth.*²⁹⁵

Expositor's Bible Commentary: *The variable and inconstant wind, which bloweth where it listeth, blows from the same quarters, runs through the very circuit which was its haunt in the time of the world's grey fathers.*²⁹⁶

Brian Bell Commentary: *[The wind is in] constant motion. It follows its circuits that man can't fully understand.*²⁹⁷

²⁹³ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 15, 2018.

²⁹⁴ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_04.html accessed June 15, 2018.

²⁹⁵ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; comment 1:4–8.

²⁹⁶ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–11.

²⁹⁷ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/cbb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 24, 2018.

The lecturer's view of the wind (Ecclesiastes 1:6) (various commentators)

Dr. Peter Pett: *The wind varies slightly more in its course, first going south, and then north, and so on, but even then only in order to continually follow a similar course time and again. It is continually coming and going in the same old way, continually following its regular courses.*²⁹⁸

Keil and Delitzsch: *"It goes to the south, and turns to the north; the wind goes ever circling, and the wind returns again on its circuits." Thus designedly the verse is long-drawn and monotonous. It gives the impression of weariness... That the wind goes from the south (...the region of the most intense light) to the north (...the region of darkness), is not so exclusively true of it as it is of the sun that it goes from the east to the west; this expression requires the generalization "circling, circling goes the wind," i.e., turning in all directions here and there; for the repetition denotes that the circling movement exhausts all possibilities.*²⁹⁹

Trapp: *The restlessness of these insensible forces, and diligence in doing their duties, as it taxeth our dulness and disaffection, so it reminds us of the instability of our states, and that we should seek and set up our rest in God alone. All earthly things are to the soul but as the air to the stone, - can give it no stay till it come to God the centre.*³⁰⁰

Whedon: *The permanency of the courses of certain winds — perhaps of the Etesian winds of the Eastern Mediterranean — seems familiar to the writer.*³⁰¹

As Jesus said, "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes" (John 3:8a; ESV)

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:6 The wind goes toward the south, then turns around to the north; the wind is going around and circling about; and it eventually returns along its established route.

Even the wind can be monotonous (Ecclesiastes 1:6) (various commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *The iteration and order of the words seem to breathe the languor of one who was weary with watching the endless and yet monotonous changes.*³⁰²

Keil and Delitzsch: *To all regions of the heavens, to all directions of the compass, its movement is ceaseless, ever repeating itself anew; there is nothing permanent but the fluctuation, and nothing new but that the old always repeats itself. The examples are thoughtfully chosen and arranged. From the currents of air, the author now passes to streams of water.*³⁰³

Dunagan: *Someone might say, "But what is freer than the wind?" But even the wind finds itself on a monotonous cycle. What Solomon says above is also scientifically true. There are basic patterns of air circulation. Warm air that has been heated at the equator rises, and at high altitudes flows north, cools and drops, only to flow southward. The wind, seemingly the freest of all created things, is also in a rut. Which means that differences in weather patterns aren't "new" differences, they are really only "old" differences. Even the wind doesn't really get to do anything "new".*³⁰⁴

²⁹⁸ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:5–6.

²⁹⁹ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 1:6 (slightly edited).

³⁰⁰ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 1:6.

³⁰¹ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from e-Sword; Eccles. 1:6.

³⁰² *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882–1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:6.

³⁰³ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 1:6 (slightly edited).

³⁰⁴ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:6.

Even the wind can be monotonous (Ecclesiastes 1:6) (various commentators)

The Bible Illustrator: *Cohemoth says that even nature itself became monotonous through its always being the same thing in the same way, as if incapable of originality and enterprise. The wind was veering, veering, veering,—spending itself in running round and round, but never getting beyond a small circuit; if it was not in the north it was in the south, or wherever it was it could be found in a moment, for it “whirleth about continually.”*³⁰⁵

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *according to his circuits* — that is, it returns afresh to its former circuits, however many be its previous veerings about. The north and south winds are the two prevailing winds in Palestine and Egypt.³⁰⁶

Whedon: *It is as if the tireless winds were in sympathy with changeful man, and were a fitting companion for him. “O, remember that, my life is wind,” groaned Job, as he thought of its rapid changes and its early vanishing.*³⁰⁷

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

J. Vernon McGee: *“The wind goes toward the south, and turns about the north.”* Today we know that the wind follows certain patterns. Even with our modern gadgets we are not able to predict it well enough to forecast the weather as we would like to. Here in Southern California where we have a monotony of good weather, the weatherman misses the exact prediction about half the time. I have watched this very carefully over the years. The Lord Jesus said, *“The wind blows where it will”* — that is, where it wants to blow. It is blowing according to laws. *“And you hear the sound thereof, but you cannot tell from where it comes, or where it goes ...”* (John 3:8) — we can’t tell where it is coming from and where it is going. As I am making this study of Ecclesiastes, we have had quite a bit of disturbance across the country. Here in Southern California we never get rain in June or July or August — but we’ve been having showers! I couldn’t believe it when I got in my car the other night and had to use the windshield wipers. The weatherman tells us that there is a low pressure here and a high pressure there. There is movement; winds are blowing. *“The wind blowes where it will.”* Or, as Solomon put it, *“The wind goes toward the south, and turns about unto the north.”* At one place the wind is moving south and in another it is moving north. In Arizona they even had flooding in desert communities, all because of the wind. It is obeying certain laws as it is blowing. How did Solomon know that? He didn’t have the gadgets which we have nor the background on which to base his conclusions.³⁰⁸

A doctrine of the wind may be formed from these verses: Job. 37:9, 17 Psalm 107:25, 29 John 1:4 3:8 Matt. 7:24, 27 Acts 27:13–15.³⁰⁹

The 4th endless cycle is that of the water—they continually flow into the sea, but the sea is never filled up—that is, the oceans do not rise up over their coastlines.

Be forewarned—we will spend nearly 30 pages on this one verse. There is so much to be discussed.

³⁰⁵ *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:1.

³⁰⁶ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:6.

³⁰⁷ *Whedon’s Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:6.

³⁰⁸ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt accessed June 19, 2018 (slightly edited).

³⁰⁹ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 1:6.

National Ocean Service: *[A]bout 97 percent of the Earth's water can be found in our oceans. Of the tiny percentage that's not in the ocean, about two percent is frozen up in glaciers and ice caps. Less than one percent of all the water on Earth is fresh. A tiny fraction of water exists as water vapor in our atmosphere.*³¹⁰ Brian Bell further tells us that there is about enough water vapor in the air at any time for about 10 days of rain.³¹¹

All the rivers [and streams] their flowing unto the sea, and the sea [is] not filled. Unto the place that the rivers [and streams] their flowing; there they are returning to flow.

Ecclesiastes
1:7

The rivers [and streams] all flow into the sea, and [yet] the sea [is] not filled. [Back] to the place where the rivers [and streams] are flowing, there they return to [begin to] flow [once again].

All the rivers and streams flow into the sea, and yet the sea is not filled up. Somehow, the water returns back to where the rivers and streams begin, and from there, their flowing begins again.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	All the rivers [and streams] their flowing unto the sea, and the sea [is] not filled. Unto the place that the rivers [and streams] their flowing; there they are returning to flow.
Aramaic Targum	All the rivers <u>and streams</u> of water go and flow into the <u>waters of the ocean which surround the world like a ring</u> , and the ocean is not full, and to the place where the streams go and flow there they go again <u>through the channels of the sea</u> .
Revised Douay-Rheims	All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea does not overflow: unto the place from whence the rivers come, they return, to flow again.
Peshitta (Syriac)	All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; to the place from whence the rivers flow, there they return to flow again.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	All the rivers run into the sea; and yet the sea is not filled: to the place whence the rivers come, there they return again.

Significant differences: The targum has additional text; this time, most of it appears to be reasonable.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	All the rivers go down to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the rivers go, there they go again.
Easy English	All rivers go to the sea, but they never fill the sea. In the end, the water returns. It returns to where it came from.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	All rivers flow again and again to the same place. They all flow to the sea, but the sea never becomes full.
God's Word™	All streams flow into the sea, but the sea is never full. The water goes back to the place where the streams began in order to start flowing again.
Good News Bible (TEV)	Every river flows into the sea, but the sea is not yet full. The water returns to where the rivers began, and starts all over again.
The Message	All the rivers flow into the sea, but the sea never fills up. The rivers keep flowing to the same old place, and then start all over and do it again.

³¹⁰ From <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/oceanwater.html> accessed June 25, 2018.

³¹¹ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/cbb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 25, 2018.

NIRV	Every stream flows into the ocean. But the ocean never gets full. The streams return to the place they came from.
New Simplified Bible	All the rivers run into the sea yet the sea is not full. The rivers return to the place where they began.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	The little wet-weather streams run to the sea, but the sea is never full. In due season they fill their banks and flow to the sea again, but the sea is never full!
Contemporary English V.	All rivers empty into the sea, but it never spills over; one by one the rivers return to their source.
New Century Version	All the rivers flow to the sea, but the sea never becomes full.
New Living Translation	Rivers run into the sea, but the sea is never full. Then the water returns again to the rivers and flows out again to the sea.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	All the streams flow into the sea, but the sea is never full. The water returns under the earth and comes up again into the rivers; then it flows to the sea again.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	Though all the rivers flow into the sea, The sea does not become filled. For, to the places from which they all came, They return and flow back again.
Beck's American Translation	All the streams flow into the sea, but the sea is never full. The streams return again to the place from where they have been flowing.
International Standard V	All the rivers flow toward the sea, but the sea is never full; then rivers return to the headwaters [Lit. place] where they began.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	All the rivers flow into the sea, yet never the sea grows full; back to their springs they find their way, and must be flowing still.
Translation for Translators	All the streams flow into the sea, but the sea is never full. The water returns <i>to the sky</i> , and <i>when it rains</i> , the water returns to the rivers, and it flows again to the sea.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible	The torrents are to be progressing to the sea - is the sea to be filled? - From the place the torrents are to be proceeding, is it to be turning back to go out.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	All rivers run to the Sea, but the Sea is not full. To that place from which the rivers came, there they return in due course!
God's Truth (Tyndale)	All floods run into the sea, and yet the sea is not filled: for look unto what place the waters run, from that place they come again.
NIV, ©2011	All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again.
Tree of Life Version	All the rivers flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place where the rivers flow, there they go again.

Wikipedia Bible Project All the rivers flow to the sea, and the sea is not full. to the place that the rivers flow—there they continue to go.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (2013) All rivers go to the sea but the sea is not full; to the place where the rivers come from, there they return again.

The Heritage Bible All the streams walk into the sea, and the sea is not full; to the place from where the rivers walk, there they return walking.

New American Bible (2002) All rivers go to the sea, yet never does the sea become full. To the place where they go, the rivers keep on going.

New Jerusalem Bible Into the sea go all the rivers, and yet the sea is never filled, and still to their goal the rivers go.

Revised English Bible—1989 All streams run to the sea, yet the sea never overflows; back to the place from which the streams ran they return to run again.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible All the rivers flow to the sea,
yet the sea is not full;
to the place where the rivers flow,
there they keep on flowing.

The Complete Tanach All the rivers flow into the sea, yet the sea is not full; to the place where the rivers flow, there they repeatedly go.

All the rivers flow into the sea: because they do not remain therein, for the ocean is higher than the entire world, as it is said (Amos 5:8): “He calls the water of the sea and pours it, etc.” Now from where does a person pour? From above downward, and the rivers flow in the tunnels under the mountains from the ocean and repeatedly flow, and this is the meaning of: “to the place where the rivers flow, there they repeatedly go.” Also, the wicked man, (below 5:15) “just as it came, so shall it go.”

exeGesés companion Bible ...all the wadies go into the sea;
yet the sea is not full:
from the place the wadies come,
they return to go.

Hebraic Roots Bible All the rivers are going to the sea; yet the sea is not full. To the place where the rivers are going, there they are returning to go again.

JPS (Tanakh—1985) All streams flow into the sea, Yet the sea is never full; To the place [from] which they flow The streams flow back again.

Orthodox Jewish Bible All the neharot (rivers) run into the yam; yet the yam is not full; unto the place from whence the neharot come, there they return to go again.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible All the rivers flow to the sea,
but the sea never becomes full.
The rivers return to the place from which they flow.

Kretzmann’s Commentary All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full, it does not overflow on account of the immense masses of water which it constantly receives; unto the place from whence the rivers come, there they return again, in a constant evaporation and condensation, the cycle of ocean, clouds and fog, rain and dew, springs, creeks, and rivers continuing without intermission.

NET Bible® All the streams flow into the sea, but the sea is not full,
and to the place where the streams flow, there they will flow again.²⁸

^{28sn} This verse does not refer to the cycle of evaporation or the return of water by underground streams, as sometimes suggested. Rather, it describes the constant flow of river waters to the sea. For all the action of the water – endless repetition and water constantly in motion – there is nothing new accomplished.

The Pulpit Commentary

All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full. Here is another instance of unvarying operation producing no tangible result. The phenomenon mentioned is often the subject of remark and speculation in classical authors. Commentators cite Aristophanes, 'Clouds,' 1293—...This Dr. Busby thus versifies—

"Now in due order, Muse, proceed to show

Why the deep seas no augmentation know,

In ocean that such numerous streams discharge

Their waters, yet that ocean ne'er enlarge," etc.

No particular sea is intended, though some have fancied that the peculiarities of the Dead Sea gave occasion to the thought in the text. Doubtless the idea is general, and such as would strike every observer, however little he might trouble himself with the reason of the circumstance (comp. Ecclesiasticus 40:11). **Unto the place from whence the rivers come, there they return again;** rather, unto the place where the rivers go, there they go again. As Wright and Delitzsch observe, *וּפְּ* after verbs of motion has often the signification of *וּמִן*; and the idea is that the streams continue to make their way into the sea with ceaseless iteration. The other rendering, which is supported by the Vulgate *undo*, seems rather to favor the Epicurean poet's solution of the phenomenon. Lucretius, in the passage cited above, explains that the amount of water contributed by rivers is a mere drop in the ocean; that a vast quantity rises in exhalations and is spread far and wide over the earth; and that another large portion finds its way back through the pores of the ground to the bed of the sea. Plumptre considers that this theory was known to Koheleth, and was introduced by him here. The rendering which we have given above would make this opinion untenable; it likewise excludes the idea of the clouds being produced by the sea and feeding the springs. Thus Ecclesiasticus 40:11, "All things that are of the earth do turn to the earth again; and that which is of the waters doth return into the sea."

Syndein/Thieme

{Solomon mentions Evaporation and Precipitation}

All streams run into the sea yet the sea is never full. Unto the place from where the rivers come there they return again.

The Voice

All rivers flow to the sea,

but the sea is never full.

To the place where the rivers flow,

there the water returns to flow once again.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

C. Thompson (updated) OT	All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not filled. To the place where the rivers come, there they return to continue their course.
Concordant Literal Version	All the watercourses are flowing to the sea, Yet there is no filling of the sea; To the place from which the watercourses are flowing, There they return to go forth again."
Context Group Version	All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; to the place where the rivers go, there they go again.
Green's Literal Translation	All the rivers are going to the sea; yet the sea <i>is</i> not full. To the place where the rivers are going, there they <i>are</i> returning to go <i>again</i>.
Modern Literal Version	All the streams flow into the sea, and the sea is never filled up. And to the place where the streams flow, there they continually return to flow.

New European Version	All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full. To the place where the rivers flow, there they flow again.
Restored Holy Bible (6.0)	All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; to the place whence the rivers come, there they return back.
World English Bible	All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full. To the place where the rivers flow, there they flow again.
Young's Updated LT	All the streams are going unto the sea, and the sea is not full; unto a place where the streams are going, there they are turning back to go.

The gist of this passage: The streams, torrents and rivers run into the sea; but it is never full; and somehow, the water continues to return to the beginnings of those streams, rivers and torrents.

Ecclesiastes 1:7a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]	<i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of</i>	masculine singular construct followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
n ^e châlîymî (נְחַלְיָמַי) [pronounced ne-khaw- EEM]	<i>brooks, torrents, rivers, streams, valleys</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #5158 BDB #636
hâlak ^e (הָלַךְ) [pronounced haw-LAHK ^e]	<i>those walking, those going, those who are departing; walkers, travelers</i>	masculine plural, Qal active participle	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229
When <i>water</i> is the subject, this can mean <i>to flow, to pour out</i> . When spoken of a lifestyle or a manner of life, <i>to walk</i> can be understood <i>to live, to follow a particular lifestyle or manner of life; to follow [in one's footsteps]</i> . This verb can also mean <i>to go away, to vanish; to go on, to go forward; to add to something [making it go forward, so to speak]; to grow</i> .			
'el (אֶל) [pronounced eh]	<i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
yâm (יָם) [pronounced yawm]	<i>sea, lake, river, seaward, west, westward</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3220 BDB #410

Translation: The rivers [and streams] all flow into the sea,... Solomon continues with his observations of what happens in the world. The streams, rivers and torrents continually flow into the seas. No matter where you are, if you see a river or a stream, it is generally going downhill toward the ocean (sometimes, they feed into lakes).

Ecclesiastes 1:7b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וְ, or וּ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

Ecclesiastes 1:7b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yâm (יָם) [pronounced yawm]	sea, lake, river, seaward, west, westward	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3220 BDB #410
'êyin (אֵין) [pronounced AYH-yin]	in the condition of being not = without, nothing, no, not; there is no [none, no one, not]	substantive of negative with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #369 BDB #34
mâlê' (מָלֵא) [pronounced maw-LAY]	filled [with]; full, filling; fullness, that which is full; abundant; a multitude, a crowd	masculine singular, verbal adjective	Strong's #4392 BDB #570

Translation: ...and [yet] the sea [is] not filled. Yet, no matter how much water flows into the sea, the sea is never filled up. Remember that Solomon wrote this around 1000 B.C., so this has been going on for a very long time.

The Bible Illustrator: [T]he rivers...could make no impression upon the sea: they galloped, and surged, and foamed, being swollen by a thousand streams from the hills; and yet the sea swallowed them up in its thirst, and waited for them day by day, with room enough and to spare for all their waters.³¹²

Ecclesiastes 1:7c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
'el (אֶל) [pronounced eh]	unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
mâqôwm (מָקוֹם) [pronounced maw-KOHM]	place, situated; for a soldier, it may mean where he is stationed; for people in general, it would be their place of abode (which could be their house or their town)	masculine singular construct	Strong's #4725 BDB #879
'âsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced uh-SHER]	that, which, when, who, whom; where; in that, in which, in what	relative pronoun; sometimes the verb to be is implied	Strong's #834 BDB #81
n ^e châlîym (נְחָלִיִּם) [pronounced ne-khaw-EEM]	brooks, torrents, rivers, streams; valleys	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #5158 BDB #636
hâlak ^e (הֹלְכִים) [pronounced haw-LAHK ^e]	those walking, those going, those who are departing; walkers, travelers	masculine plural, Qal active participle	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229

When water is the subject, this can mean to flow, to pour out. When spoken of a lifestyle or a manner of life, to walk can be understood to live, to follow a particular lifestyle or manner of life; to follow [in one's footsteps]. This verb can also mean to go away, to vanish; to go on, to go forward; to add to something [making it go forward, so to speak]; to grow.

³¹² The Biblical Illustrator; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:1.

Ecclesiastes 1:7c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
The NET Bible: <i>Heb “are going” or “are walking.” The term מִיֵּלֵךְ (holÿkhim, Qal active participle masculine plural from הלך, halakh, “to walk”) emphasizes continual, durative, uninterrupted action (present universal use of participle). This may be an example of personification; this verb is normally used in reference to the human activity of walking. Qoheleth compares the flowing of river waters to the action of walking to draw out the comparison between the actions of man (1:4) and the actions of nature (1:5-11).</i> ³¹³			
shâm (שָׁם) [pronounced shawm]	<i>there; at that time, then; therein, in that thing</i>	adverb of place	Strong's #8033 BDB #1027
hêm (הֵם) [pronounced haym]	<i>they, those; themselves; these [with the definite article]</i>	3 rd person masculine plural personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> is implied	Strong's #1992 BDB #241
shûwb (שׁוּב) [pronounced shoo ^b v]	<i>those returning, the ones turning [back, away, aside]; those reminiscing; those restoring [bringing back] something, the ones reviving, those recovering something, those making restitution</i>	masculine plural, Qal active participle	Strong's #7725 BDB #996

The NET Bible: *Heb “there they are returning to go.” The term מִיָּשׁוּב (shavim, Qal active participle masculine plural from בוש, shuv, “to return”) emphasizes the continual, durative action of the waters. The root בוש is repeated in 1:6-7 to emphasize that everything in nature (e.g., wind and water) continually repeats its actions. For all of the repetition of the cycles of nature, nothing changes; all the constant motion produces nothing new.*³¹⁴

lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
hâlak ^e (הָלַךְ) [pronounced haw-LAHK ^e]	<i>to go, to come, to depart, to walk; to advance</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229

When *water* is the subject, this can mean *to flow, to pour out*. When spoken of a lifestyle or a manner of life, *to walk* can be understood *to live, to follow a particular lifestyle or manner of life; to follow [in one's footsteps]*. This verb can also mean *to go away, to vanish; to go on, to go forward; to add to something [making it go forward, so to speak]; to grow*.

Translation: [Back] to the place where the rivers [and streams] are flowing, there they return to [begin to] flow [once again]. Somehow, the water continues to return to where the rivers and streams are flowing, and they continue to flow. These streams and rivers seem to come from nowhere and they keep pouring their waters into the sea.

³¹³ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 15, 2018.

³¹⁴ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 15, 2018.

Eccles. 1:7 All the rivers and streams flow into the sea, and yet the sea is not filled up. Somehow, the water returns back to where the rivers and streams begin, and from there, their flowing begins again.

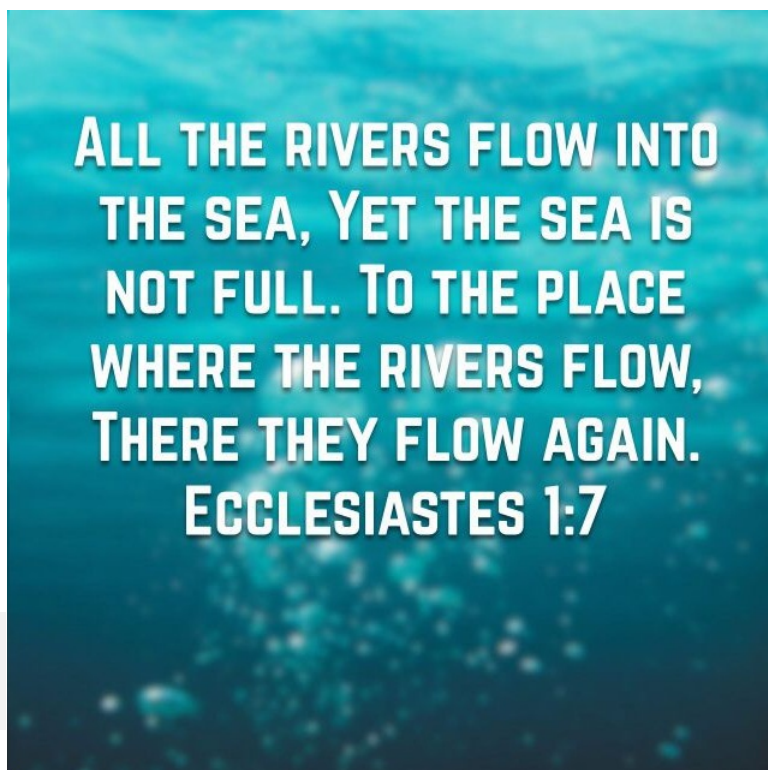
My guess is, those who pondered this problem in the age of Solomon had few answers. Seems like I have read that some believed that these waters returned by means of underground rivers—but, quite obviously, that would not explain it. After all, how would these underground rivers flow uphill?

Ecclesiastes 1:7 (a graphic); from [Pinterest](#); accessed June 17, 2018.

This is a profound observation; one of those that, to Solomon, really had no definitive answer.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines



There is one mystery which I once pondered, and eventually learned the answer to (much like Solomon here—although I don't think he himself understood this mystery). There is a temperature or a temperature range at which you are perfectly happy with. You could sit around in shorts all day and all night at 74° or maybe it is 78° if you were raised up in warmer weather. Now, if you got into water at that exact same temperature, you would be chilled. It would be cold water to you. So why is that temperature fine while you are sitting around, but too cold when you are in water?³¹⁵ There is, by the way, a very logical explanation for this.³¹⁶

Ecclesiastes 1:7 All the rivers and streams flow into the sea, and yet the sea is not filled up. Somehow, the water returns back to where the rivers and streams begin, and from there, their flowing begins again.

The lecturer's view of the water cycle (Ecclesiastes 1:7) (various commentators)

Expositor's Bible Commentary: *The streams ebb and flow, which go and come, run along time-worn beds and are fed from their ancient source.*

The Expositor's Bible Commentary continues: *[In Eccles. 1:7,] the streams are described as returning on their sources; but there is no allusion here, as we might suppose, to the tides, -and indeed tidal rivers are comparatively rare, -or to the rain which brings back the water evaporated from the surface of the streams and of the sea. The reference is, rather, to an ancient conception of the physical order of nature held by the Hebrew as by other races, according to which the ocean, fed by the streams, sent back a constant supply through subterraneous passages and channels, in which the salt was filtered out of it; through these they supposed the rivers to return to the place whence they came.*³¹⁷

³¹⁵ My original question about this involved a water bed. Why couldn't I let the water bed just stay at room temperature in the summer? If there was only a sheet between myself and the waterbed mattress, why was it so cold?

³¹⁶ I heard a similar question on the radio the other day. They asked, if your body temperature is 98.6°, then why does 98° weather seem so warm?

³¹⁷ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–11.

The lecturer's view of the water cycle (Ecclesiastes 1:7) (various commentators)

College Press Bible Study: *The streams, which once flowed freely and often furiously to the sea, may at times beg for water and appear to have lost their intended purpose, but in time they fill their banks and rush toward the sea again. Thus, they demonstrate, that unlike man they continue on forever!*³¹⁸

Wesley: *[Solomon] seems to speak of the visible and constant motion of the waters, both to the sea and from it, and then to it again in a perpetual reciprocation.*³¹⁹

Dr. Peter Pett: *The rivers also follow the round of life. They go into the sea, evaporate, rise as clouds, fall again in rain, and again go into the sea. They follow the same continual process. And the sea never fills up. All their effort seems in vain. So the process is meaningless, it has no final purpose.*

Then I think Pett nails it with his final conclusion: *The point behind all this is not to criticise nature. It is to point out that these things, like man's labour, have no achievable final end in view. They are not leading anywhere, but just going on and on in an endless round.*³²⁰

Pastor John Griffith: *hydrology is a fairly young science—really only understood to any degree in the last century.*³²¹

J. Vernon McGee: *"All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full." Solomon is tacitly speaking of the law of evaporation, of the elevation of moisture into the air. Then the wind comes along, blows that moisture over the land, and it pours out on the earth. The whole process follows certain definite, specific laws. There is nothing haphazard happening, although we may think so. Including verse 4, we have four remarkable statements concerning the laws of nature that make sense and fit right into what men know today. Compare this with other writings that come from one thousand years before Christ. You will find a great deal of false conclusions and superstitions in contrast to the accuracy you find in the Word of God.*³²²

Even in this era of great scientific enlightenment, there are still tons of unexplained things.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:7 *All the rivers and streams flow into the sea, and yet the sea is not filled up. Somehow, the water returns back to where the rivers and streams begin, and from there, their flowing begins again.*

The ESV; capitalized is used below.

Are the Scriptures cognizant of evaporation? (Ecclesiastes 1:7) (commentators)

Matthew Poole: *[Solomon] seems to speak of the visible and constant motion of the waters, both to the sea and from it, and then to it again in a perpetual reciprocation; which agrees best with the former similitudes, Eccles. 1:5,6.*³²³

³¹⁸ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; comment 1:4–8.

³¹⁹ John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Eccles. 1:7.

³²⁰ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:7.

³²¹ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_04.html accessed June 15, 2018 (paraphrased).

³²² From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt accessed June 19, 2018.

³²³ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:7. Poole, by the way, did not understand the water cycle fully, apart from it being perpetual, visual, with a constant motion of waters, both into and out of the ocean.

Are the Scriptures cognizant of evaporation? (Ecclesiastes 1:7) (commentators)

Barnes wisely points out: *The place – i. e., The spring or river–head. It would seem that the ancient Hebrews regarded the clouds as the immediate feeders of the springs (Prov. 8:28, and Psalm 104:10, Psalm 104:13). Gen. 2:6 indicates some acquaintance with the process and result of evaporation.*³²⁴

Gen. 2:5–6 When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground—...

I don't think that it was general knowledge or accepted science that it is possible to provide enough water for vegetation through *a mist going up*.

The point of Prov. 8 is, God created the world with great intelligence and wisdom.

Prov. 8:27–29 When He [God] established the heavens, I [knowledge/wisdom] was there; when He drew a circle on the face of the deep, when He made firm the skies above, when He established the fountains of the deep, when He assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth,...

The *foundations of the earth* refers to basic principles and laws which govern all things on this earth.

Drawing a circle on the face of the deep is the establishment of a cycle; something of a cyclical nature.

Note that the *skies above* are a part of this water cycle, which God established, using great wisdom.

We have found, over the centuries, that the universe is guided and kept on course by a set of laws which are complex, interconnected and dependable. Many of these laws are also knowable.

We have seen contemporary scientists tell us that the earth has a fever and it is going to overheat, and that in 50–100 years, much of the earth will no longer be inhabitable. The general solutions offered for this future of great science fiction dimensions is, give the government lots and lots more money, distribute this money to poorer nations, and allow government to fix the problem (our current government, for the past 8–10 years cannot even pass a budget; let alone solve global warming).

Can you not imagine a similar scientific body, at the time of Solomon, warning of an impending doom, where the oceans would eventually fill up and overflow, because so much water is rushing into them? Such an ancient fear of ultimate doom scenario (which ancient man did not have), is very much the scenario described by current merchants of future doom (but this same doom will take place because of melting glaciers resulting from increased CO₂ production).

The Bible presents the future of the earth being quite different (although, the earth will wear out, according to the Bible, after long use, and it will be replaced by God).

Psalm 104:5–13 He [God] set the earth on its foundations, so that it should never be moved. You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At Your rebuke they fled; at the sound of Your thunder they took to flight. The mountains rose, the valleys sank down to the place that You appointed for them. You set a boundary that they may not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth. You make springs gush forth in the valleys; they flow between the hills; they give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell; they sing among the branches. From Your lofty abode You water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your work.

Setting the earth on its foundations is the establishment of specific, unchangeable principles by which all things of the earth function. We call these scientific laws today, even though science did not originate those laws nor does science enforce them.

³²⁴ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:6.

Are the Scriptures cognizant of evaporation? (Ecclesiastes 1:7) (commentators)

So that water would not cover the entire earth again, mountains had to rise up higher; and valleys had to sink down lower. If the earth was a smooth, flat surface, it would be covered with water. God sets up boundaries for the waters to be contained in. During the Great Flood, there were no such boundaries.

Watering the mountains is the rain and the snow; which has to be taken up from the oceans, rivers and lakes. There must be evaporation and later rain and snow in order for this to happen.

Dunagan: *Job had noted the same truth (36:27-28). Solomon recognized the basic mechanics of the water-vapor cycle. Aristotle (350 B.C.), long after Solomon is accredited as being the first to comprehend the water-vapor cycle. But his understanding was only of a local cycle. Until 1520 A.D., many thought that the rivers flowing into oceans didn't cause the oceans to rise because the excess water was running off the edge of the earth. In 1770 A.D. it was understood that clouds can transport moisture away from the area in which they were formed.*

Dunagan continues: *All this makes you wonder, "How did Solomon discover such truths long before anyone else did?" And if the Bible has proven itself right time and time again in all those areas in which we can verify its truthfulness, then the only logical conclusion is that it is right concerning everything of which it speaks. As man discovered that the Bible had been right all along about the water-vapor-cycle, likewise when Jesus comes man will realize that the Bible was right about God, Jesus, heaven, hell, etc.*³²⁵

Trapp on Aristotle's view: *Aristotle...assigns another cause of the perennity of rivers, of their beginning and origin - viz., that the air thickened in the earth by reason of cold, doth resolve and turn into water.*³²⁶

Job 36:26–30 **Behold, God is great, and we know him not; the number of His years is unsearchable. For He draws up the drops of water; they distill His mist in rain, which the skies pour down and drop on mankind abundantly. Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thunderings of his pavilion? Behold, He scatters His lightning about Him and covers the roots of the sea. See also Job 38:8–11.**

God drawing up the drops of water is evaporation; the drops of water being distilled to rain and the skies pouring down is obviously rain from the water being drawn up. The verb *drawn up* is the Piel imperfect of a verb which means *to diminish, restrain, withdraw, abate, keep back, do away, take from*. In the Piel, it means, *to withdraw, draw up*. The imperfect means that this is a process which continually takes place.

In the KJV, it says *they pour down*, but the verb is *zâraq* (רָצַק) [pronounced *zaw-KAHK*], which means, *to tie fast, to bind; to squeeze through [a strainer], to strain; to refine, to purify; to pour [out]*. Strong's #2212 BDB #279. In fact, v. 27 specifically associates *rain* with *vapor*, using this verb.

Benson: *after flowing into the sea...its waters are exhaled by the heat of the sun, become vapours and clouds, descend in showers on the hills and mountains, and feed the springs from which they flow again, in streams and rivers, into the lakes, seas, and oceans. He seems to speak of the visible and constant motion of the waters, both to the sea and from it, and then to it again in a perpetual reciprocation.*³²⁷

Aristophanes (Clouds, 1248): *The sea, though all the rivers flow to it, does not increase in volume.*³²⁸

Lucretius, representing the physical science of the school of Epicurus, thought it worth his while to give a scientific explanation of the fact: *And first men wonder Nature leaves the sea; Not greater than before, though to it flows; So great a rush of waters.*³²⁹

³²⁵ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:7.

³²⁶ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 1:7.

³²⁷ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:7 (slightly edited).

³²⁸ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:7 (slightly edited).

³²⁹ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:7 (slightly edited).

Are the Scriptures cognizant of evaporation? (Ecclesiastes 1:7) (commentators)

That is not so much of a scientific explanation as it is a simple observation.

We should not forget the first chapter of Genesis, where God makes the atmosphere on day 2 (Gen. 1:6–8). God places something between the waters of the sea and the waters above (which was more like a canopy on the original earth). We know that our atmosphere and what is in it is absolutely necessary for life. Compared to the earth itself, the atmosphere is only a thin covering of air—almost as if someone took a sheet of air and hammered it out over the earth. The Bible recognizes the importance of the atmosphere, even though man did not recognize that for thousands of years.

It is this atmosphere which explains why we will likely never have a colony on the moon or on Mars. And if we ever send people to Mars, we are sending them there to die in unexpressible sadness.

There is a verse, which I cannot recall at this moment, but I think it is in the psalms, where God the Holy Spirit speaks of the atmosphere (or the heavens) being pounded out over the earth into a thin sheet. I really should have taken note of that verse when exegeting it, but I did not.

The Cambridge Bible: *We are apt to read into the words the theories of modern science as to the evaporation from the sea, the clouds formed by evaporation, the rain falling from the clouds and replenishing the streams. It may be questioned, however, whether that theory, which Lucretius states almost as if it were a discovery, were present to the mind of the Debater and whether he did not rather think of the waters of the ocean filtering through the crevices of the earth and so feeding its wells and fountains.*³³⁰

Whedon: *None of the ancients understood the system of evaporation, how the sun lifts daily from the sea millions of tons of water, which, carried by clouds, (and even by the blue air,) is returned as rain and snow to the sources of the rivers. They supposed that the rivers returned from the sea by secret, subterranean routes. All their views of nature were childlike, yet in their simplicity they were near to nature's God.*³³¹

This is a point which requires some discussion. There are several scientifically accurate statements in Scripture, including the shape and location of the earth (the earth is spherical and God hangs it upon nothing). It is not necessary that the writers of Scripture fully understand everything that they write. They may actually believe in things which are incorrect (like the idea that underground streams somehow take the water back from the ocean to the beginning of rivers and streams).

We have to bear in mind that the Scriptures are co-authored, by the human author and by God the Holy Spirit. God knows all about creation and exactly how He created things to work, and He knows all of His laws far more accurately than we do. Therefore, God the Holy Spirit will sometimes guide the human author to write some things which are scientifically accurate, even though the human author may not fully understand those things.

We have discussed this sort of thing in more detail under the doctrine of the **Dual Authorship of Scripture** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

Is this doctrine misplaced?

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

One of the observable mysteries of science at that time was the water cycle. The waters of rivers, streams and torrents continued to pour into the sea, yet the sea never fills up; and the water somehow returns to the origin of those rivers, streams and torrents.

³³⁰ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:7.

³³¹ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:7.

Ecclesiastes 1:7 All the rivers and streams flow into the sea, and yet the sea is not filled up. Somehow, the water returns back to where the rivers and streams begin, and from there, their flowing begins again.

This pretty much describes the water cycle. The lecturer does not really tell us how the water *flows* back to where the streams and rivers begin,³³² but other portions of the Bible fill in those blanks.

This chart/doctrine is also found in **Proverbs 3** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

Some do not appreciate what is found in Scripture because they have no sense of history.

Creation Science 4 Kids on the Water Cycle

Ancient man on the water cycle:

[A] long [webpage](#) from UNESCO...talks about what most people long ago thought of the Water Cycle:

"The Greeks therefore described the water cycle backwards, arguing that since the level of the seas remained constant despite all the rivers flowing into it, the water must penetrate the earth's depths and feed the underground springs. Evaporation and Precipitation were ignored."

Ancient Egyptians couldn't figure out how the Nile flooded annually even though it never rained during that time of year. The average Egyptian thought that the river was just a sort of backflow from the Mediterranean Sea. You'd think they would have wondered why the river water wasn't salty!

The Chinese knew that rain was the source of the water in their rivers and even had a flood warning system using horseback messengers that could travel faster than the rising waters! But there is no evidence that they understood where the rain came from in the first place. They even invented a Rain Dragon myth to explain what caused it.

The Bible on the water cycle:

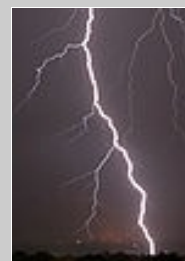
But is this the kind of confused tale that the Bible presents for us about the water cycle? Have a look at these verses:

All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, there they return again. Ecclesiastes 1:7

If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: Ecclesiastes 11:3a



He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightnings for the rain; He brings the wind out of his treasuries. Psalm 135:7



This verse from the Psalms is especially interesting because it shows the connection between lightning and rainfall. Even what is known as Dry Lightning has rain, it just never reaches the ground! I found out that there is something called a Rain Gush whenever lightning occurs. If there is even lightning very close to you, you might notice it starts to rain extra hard a few seconds later. This all has to do with the

³³² The ancient understanding of this was certain incorrect, where they believed that, somehow, underground rivers returned the water to its starting place.

Creation Science 4 Kids on the Water Cycle

electricity in water and is something we still don't completely understand, but the Creator does!

He that calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is His name.
Amos 9:6b

When He utters His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightnings with rain, and brings forth the wind out of His treasures.
Jeremiah 10:13

These last three verses show a clear understanding of evaporation, unlike what these other cultures were thinking!

Conclusions:

Beginning with Leonardo Da Vinci in the late 1400s, and Bernard Palissy 100 years later, modern scientists pieced together how the water cycle works. Finally in the 1600s, two Frenchmen, Pierre Perrault and Edmé Mariotte, showed that there was enough water from evaporation and rain to explain how water reached the land and then flowed back to the sea.

Nowadays, knowledge of the water cycle is so common that we all learn about it in our first school years.

Praise be to our great God who formed the earth so carefully and thoughtfully!

Taken from <http://creationscience4kids.com/science-in-the-bible-the-water-cycle/> accessed January 20, 2015 and slightly edited. Pronouns referring to God capitalized. Images come from the same web site.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Adam Clarke: *All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full - The reason is, nothing goes into it either by the; rivers or by rain, that does not come from it: and to the place whence the rivers come, whether from the sea originally by evaporation, or immediately by rain, there they return again; for the water exhaled from the sea by evaporation is collected in the clouds, and in rain, etc., falls upon the tops of the mountains; and, filtered through their fissures, produce streams, several of which uniting, make rivers, which flow into the sea. The water is again evaporated by the sun; the vapors collected are precipitated; and, being filtered through the earth, become streams, etc., as before.*³³³

Keil and Delitzsch: *[T]he water rising out of the sea in vapour, and collecting itself in rain-clouds, fills the course anew, and the rivers flow on anew, for the old repeats itself in the same direction to the same end.*³³⁴

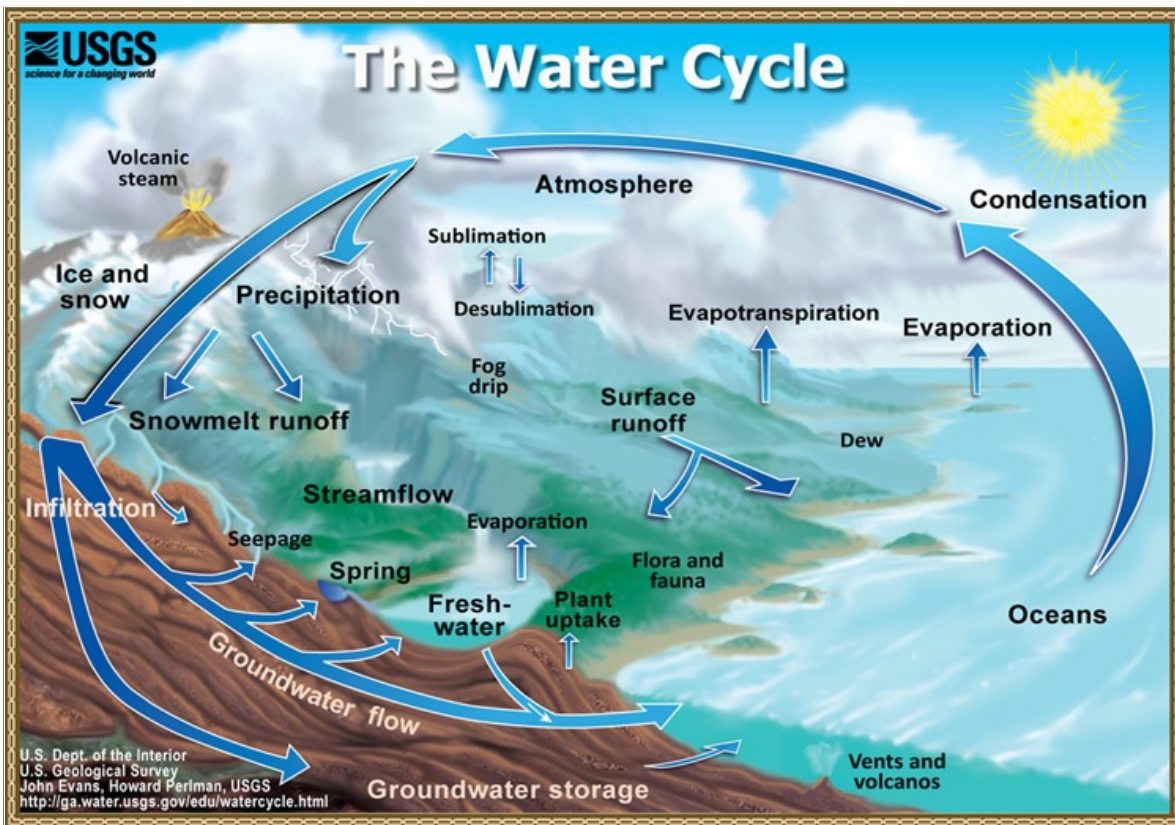
Trapp: *Surely as the rivers lead a man to the sea, so do all these creatures carry him to God by their circular motion. A circle, we say, is the most perfect figure, because it begins and ends; the points do meet together; the last point meets in the first from whence it came; so shall we never come to perfection or satisfaction till our souls come to God, till he make the circle meet. A wise philosopher could say, that man is the end of all things in a semicircle; that is, all things in the world are made for him, and he is made for God, to whom he must therefore hasten.*³³⁵

The Water Cycle (a graphic) from [Bible Evidences.com](http://BibleEvidences.com); accessed January 20, 2015.

³³³ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:7.

³³⁴ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 1:7.

³³⁵ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 1:7.



Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 1:4–7 A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth stands forever. The sun rises, and the sun goes down; to its place it hurries, and there it rises again. The wind goes to the south and goes around to the north; around and around it goes, and on its circuit the wind returns. All the streams flow to the sea, but the sea is never full; to the place where the streams flow, there they continue to flow. (ESV)

This is not too different than what God told Noah: “As long as the earth endures, seed and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will not cease.” (Gen 8:22; ESV) The chief difference is, Noah understands that this is the Divine perspective; and Solomon, in Ecclesiastes, has the human perspective (which is without God).

Dr. Dan Hill: *Armed only with secular wisdom man would see the cycles of nature and as pointless repetition. There is a real HO HUM in these words...the sun goes up and it goes down, again and again, and on and on with his observations of nature. And that is the secular view of nature, it just keeps going and going. But the believer, the one who lives by faith in God, sees this as the very handiwork of God.*³³⁶

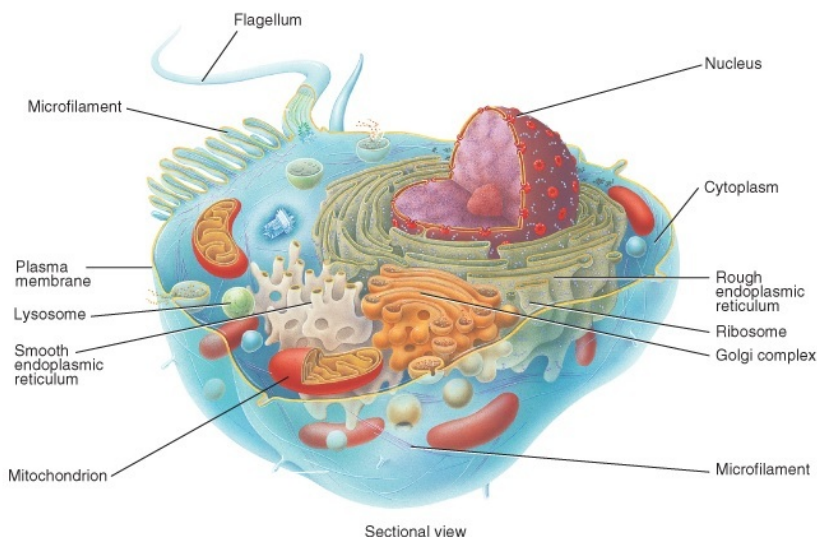
We often think of ourselves as really advanced and knowing new things every day. Some people even revere scientists as the bringers of truth to mankind—seeing them more than just men who observe and report and hypothesize.

One of the truths brought to us by scientists is that single living cells seem to have appeared, and then, they also decided to group together. The cell is the essentially building block of every living thing. But they are anything but simple.

³³⁶ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 11, 2018.

A Living Cell (a graphic); from [Study Read.com](#); accessed June 29, 2018.

This is a single living cell. We do not know most of what it does, even today. It is amazingly complex. A person could write an entire PhD thesis on a single cell and (1) not completely plumb the depths of it; nor (2) be able to explain its every function. And yet, many scientists would have you believe that, all of a sudden, there was a cell (maybe many?), and then it multiplied and combined with other cells to form living things. But, quite frankly, despite this implausible timeline, they cannot explain where the first incredibly complex cell came from.



All living cells are very well-organized and carefully designed. Most (many?) Christians understand them to be designed and made by our God. Atheist scientists, who believe God to be poppycock, believes that these cells just came out of nowhere.

That same link will take you to a graphic of the membrane or the outer covering of a cell, which keeps everything inside. That skin, if you will, is also tremendously complex. Our bodies are made up of millions of these cells, a variety of different types, which combine together to make us what we are—physically speaking.

One of the fascinating things to me is, a Man of War (jellyfish) is made up of, if memory serves, a colony of various celled entities, which depend upon one another, but which are separate units. A man, on the other hand, is made up of many more cells, in a much more complex configuration, and yet is an integral whole. We are not a system of independent cell groups acting in coordination with one another, but we are an integrated singular creature.

These gods of science cannot fully—or even half—explain a cell. And yet, so many people look to them expecting that, somehow, these scientists will provide them with *truth*.

Here is the thing about scientists: they are men, and men with sin natures. You can no more expect a scientist to be 100% honest than you can depend upon your 5 year old son to be completely honest no more than you can depend upon your closest friend to be completely honest. Now, some people will be more honest with you than others, but everyone has an old sin nature. If you do not think that the sin nature of a scientist affects his science, then you do not understand the sin nature. In fact, it is quite humorous to me that today, many people view the Catholic priesthood as a bunch of corrupt pedophiles (it is not a Christian priesthood, per se, but only a small percentage have homosexual desires and a smaller group of them are actually pedophiles), yet they do not recognize the same corruption in our scientists. Scientists are people with sin natures, who are subject to the whims and desires of their sin natures (and a scientist who is not a Christian is under the control of his sin nature 24/7³³⁷).

Back to this passage, water and the cyclical character of nature.

³³⁷ This does not mean that he is always sinning. The sin nature has an area of weakness and an area of strength.

Ecclesiastes 1:4–7 As one generation goes by the wayside, the next generation rises up to take its place; and the earth just keeps on turning. The sun rises and the sun sets; then it hurries back to its original place and rises up there once again. The wind goes toward the south, then turns around to the north; the wind is going around and circling about; and it eventually returns along its established route. All the rivers and streams flow into the sea, and yet the sea is not filled up. Somehow, the water returns back to where the rivers and streams begin, and from there, their flowing begins again.

Man and the cyclical character of nature (Ecclesiastes 1:4–7) (many commentators)

Whedon: *[I]n every department of inanimate nature there is renewal. The sun returns to the East, and rejoices as a strong man to run its race; the wind comes freshly to its course; the water is renewed in the river channels.*³³⁸

Dunagan: *People will say, "What is freer than nature!" But Solomon responds, even nature, the most powerful forces in nature aren't free. They are on the same treadmill as you and I. And the point is well made that mere activity in and of itself produces nothing of ultimate value. But how many people feel that accomplishing some physical task will bring them happiness. Or, if they are busy, then they are being useful and productive?*³³⁹

James Burton Coffman: *The argument here is somewhat humorous. The sun just goes round and around and never goes anywhere; the wind can't make up its mind; it blows one way today, and the opposite way tomorrow; and the rivers work at it all the time but never fill up the ocean. This, of course, is also exactly what is happening with the generations of men. In pitiful and endless succession, they rise and fade away.*³⁴⁰

College Press Bible Study: *Even though the sun, wind and streams continue on beyond the duration of any generation, they demonstrate the unwearied sameness of the procedure of the repetition of all things. Everything the sun shines upon is transitory by nature, even the sun itself. Man comes and goes, the sun comes and goes, the wind comes and goes, and the streams come and go.*

The College Press Bible Study continues: *Just as there is a sameness in the backdrop of nature, and a sameness in the "props" which appear upon the stage of life, so there is an identifying characteristic of sameness to be found in man. Since the fall, man and his world have at least one thing in common: "they have been made subject to vanity" (Rom. 8:20). Solomon is sharing with us the conclusion of his initial observation. He remarks that man, like his world, is in ceaseless, monotonous, regular motion. Both are on a treadmill, it is just sad that man exits first.*³⁴¹

Chuck Smith: *Looking at a man and all of the things he's doing, all of the pursuits, all of the labor, what profit is there? And now he turns into the cycles of life. It seems that life just moves in cycles, monotonous cycles. You can't escape it. You're in the cycle and someday you're just going to pass out of the cycle.*

Smith continues: *One generation passes away, another generation comes: but the earth abides for ever. The sun rises, the sun goes down, and it comes back around to the place where it rose from. The wind goes toward the south, turns about, comes to the north; it whirls about continually, the wind returns again in its circuits. All of the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, there they return again. All things are full of labor; man cannot [understand it or] utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear with hearing. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: there is no new thing under the sun (Eccles. 1:4–9).*

³³⁸ Whedon's *Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:8.

³³⁹ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:5.

³⁴⁰ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

³⁴¹ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; comment 1:4–8.

Man and the cyclical character of nature (Ecclesiastes 1:4–7) (many commentators)

Smith concludes: *Life just moves in cycles. History repeats itself and the cycles of life go on. The cycle of one generation following another. The sun or the earth actually in its orbit and spinning on its axis, and its relationship to the sun. The wind, the rivers, life just moves in monotonous cycles.*³⁴²

H. Macmillan: *Consider the representation the text gives us of the generations of men. For what is here spoken is not concerning one man, or one family of the human race, or one city, or a particular nation, or a certain age. It is true of all nations, of all generations, from the time of Adam and Noah to the present.*³⁴³

Matthew Henry: *[T]hough all things are still in motion, yet they are still where they were; The sun parts (as it is in the margin), but it is to the same place; the wind turns till it comes to the same place, and so the waters return to the place whence they came.*³⁴⁴

Matthew Henry: *All things change, and never rest. Man, after all his labour, is no nearer finding rest than the sun, the wind, or the current of the river. His soul will find no rest, if he has it not from God. The senses are soon tired, yet still craving what is untried.*³⁴⁵

Wesley: *The sun is in perpetual motion, rising, setting, and rising again, and so constantly repeating its course in all succeeding days, and years, and ages; and the like he observes concerning the winds and rivers, Eccles. 1:6–7, and the design of these similitudes seem to be; to shew the vanity of all worldly things, and that man's mind can never be satisfied with them, because there is nothing in the world but a constant repetition of the same things, which is so irksome, that the consideration thereof hath made some persons weary of their lives; and there is no new thing under the sun, as is added in the foot of the account, Eccles. 1:9, which seems to be given us as a key to understand the meaning of the foregoing passages.*

Wesley continues: *And this is certain from experience that the things of this world are so narrow, and the mind of man so vast, that there must be something new to satisfy the mind; and even delightful things by too frequent repetition, are so far from yielding satisfaction, that they grow tedious and troublesome.*³⁴⁶

John W. Ritenbaugh: *The sun comes up and the sun goes down. The winds constantly move the weather, but the jet streams are generally locked into the same old patterns. They blow past us and then come around once again. Rains and snows fall, and the water drains from the land into streams and streams into rivers and rivers into the oceans, but even the oceans are never filled. These cycles produce no real change in the quality of human life.*

Ritenbaugh continues: *There is plenty of motion on earth's surface but no promotion of a truly profitable life for humankind. Indeed, man is perceived to be living within a closed system similar to a hamster endlessly running within its wheel—like the cycles of nature, there is plenty of motion but no advancement. Thus, life appears to be a dismal picture of tedious meaninglessness. It is in a rut.*³⁴⁷

Garrett: *These verses profoundly impress certain sensations on the reader. First, there is a sense of the indifference of the universe to our presence. It was here before we came, and it will be here, unchanged, after we have gone. Second, however, the universe, like us, is trapped in a cycle of monotonous and meaningless motion. It is forever moving, but it accomplishes nothing. Finally, a sense of loneliness and abandonment pervades the text. No one has described this better than the apostle Paul. The creation is "subjected to frustration," in "bondage to decay," and awaiting "freedom" (Rom 8:19-21).*³⁴⁸

³⁴² Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–18.

³⁴³ *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:4–10.

³⁴⁴ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:4–8.

³⁴⁵ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:4–8.

³⁴⁶ John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Eccles. 1:5. At least a portion of this comes from Benson. Nearly all of Wesley's commentary seems to come from elsewhere.

³⁴⁷ From [Bible tools](#) accessed June 17, 2018.

³⁴⁸ From [Bible.org](#), accessed June 22, 2018.

Man and the cyclical character of nature (Ecclesiastes 1:4–7) (many commentators)

Simons looks at this from the standpoint of the great power of these three forces—the sun, the wind and water:

Keith Simons: *There are much more powerful forces in this world than the power of men and women. The sun produces much more light and heat than all our fuels can. The wind is a stronger force than any army is. Water has a greater effect in our world than any king or ruler. These things were operating on our world before any person lived. And they will continue to operate after our deaths.*

Simons continues: *But even these powerful things cannot change our world. They simply follow the rules that God gave them in the beginning. They repeat the same actions, day after day and year after year. They go round in circles. The sun returns to the same place in the sky. The wind blows back and forward. Clouds rise over the sea to give water to the rivers that flow back to the sea.*

Even these three great forces seem to exist in natural—even monotonous cycles!

Simons concludes: *Only God can really change the world. He created it, and he can change it (Romans 8:19-21). In the future, he will make a new heaven and a new earth. And only there will this world's troubles end permanently (Revelation 21:1-4).*³⁴⁹

Brian Bell Commentary: *IF you leave God out of the equation. If your only perspective is under the sun, then yes, Life is not a bowl of cherry's...it's the pits!*

Bell continues: *This viewpoint sees our world as a closed uniform system, predictable & unchangeable. But this leaves no room for prayer, supernatural occurrences, nor providence. If there is a God, He is imprisoned under the Laws of Nature.*

Then Bell tells us what happens when God enters into this seemingly closed system: *I can think of many places where God has interrupted the routine of nature:*

1. *Earth – opened up & swallowed people in Num. 16. Earthquakes are mentioned throughout the Bible, often in relationship to God (Isa. 24:19 Acts 16:26 Rev. 6:12–14).*
2. *Sun – stood still for Joshua & king Hezekiah.*
3. *Wind – ceased for Jesus. The 2 winds brought by God in Jonah.*
4. *Water – parted (both Red Sea, Jordan). Bitter to sweet (Elisha/Jericho). Rian was turned on & off for Elijah. God promised rain/no rain, for blessing/cursing.*³⁵⁰

Solomon presents 4 cycles of nature—and the coming and going of each generation of mankind seems to be no different than the other cycles of nature which he notes herein. He simply puts a negative spin on it.

Jeremiah (not *the* Jeremiah) writes: *Some people track their year, not on the basis of the months or seasons but on sports: baseball in the summer, football in the fall, basketball and hockey in the winter, and NASCAR in the spring. Where do you go when you conclude that there is nothing truly meaningful in life? Back to the stadium, where at least there are games with consistent rules, rewards, and penalties.*³⁵¹

After the flood, God pronounced the following: **"While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."** (Gen 8:22; ESV). God intentionally set up these cycles of nature.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

³⁴⁹ From [Useful Bible](#), accessed June 24, 2018.

³⁵⁰ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/cbb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 25, 2018 (Edited and appended).

³⁵¹ From [Bible.org](#), accessed June 22, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:4–7 As one generation goes by the wayside, the next generation rises up to take its place; and the earth just keeps on turning. The sun rises and the sun sets; then it hurries back to its original place and rises up there once again. The wind goes toward the south, then turns around to the north; the wind is going around and circling about; and it eventually returns along its established route. All the rivers and streams flow into the sea, and yet the sea is not filled up. Somehow, the water returns back to where the rivers and streams begin, and from there, their flowing begins again.

On the cyclical nature of life as related to mankind (Matthew Poole)

The sun is in perpetual motion, sometimes arising, and sometimes setting, and then arising again, and so constantly repeating its courses in all succeeding days, and years, and ages; and the like he observes concerning the winds and rivers, Eccles. 1:6,7. And the design of these similitudes seems to be, either,

1. That by representing the constant changes and restless motions of these particular things he might intimate that it is so with all other earthly things; and therefore no man can expect satisfaction from them.
Or,
2. That by comparing the sun, and wind, and rivers, as, Eccles. 1:4, he compared the earth with man, he might show that man, considered as mortal, is in a more unhappy condition than these things, because when the earth abides, man goes; and when the sun sets, he riseth again; and so the wind and rivers return to their former place and state, but man, when once he dies, he never returns again to this life; of which comparison see Job. 14:7,12. Or,
3. To show the vanity of all worldly things, and that man's mind can never be satisfied with them, because there is nothing in the world but a constant repetition of the same things, which is so irksome a thing, that the consideration thereof hath made some persons weary of their lives; and there is no new thing under the sun, as is added in the foot of the account, Eccles. 1:9, which seems to me to be given as a key to understand the meaning of the foregoing passages. And this is manifest and certain from experience, that the things of this world are so narrow, and the mind of man so vast, that there must be something new to satisfy the mind; and even delightful things, by too frequent repetition or long continuance, are so far from yielding satisfaction, that they grow tedious and troublesome.

Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:5.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Dr. Arthur T. Pierson: *There is a danger in pressing the words in the Bible into a positive announcement of scientific fact, so marvelous are some of these correspondencies. But it is certainly a curious fact that Solomon should use language entirely consistent with discoveries such as evaporation and storm currents (vv. 6-7) , Some have boldly said that Redfield's theory of storms is here explicitly stated. Without taking such ground, we ask, who taught Solomon to use terms that readily accommodate facts that the movement of the winds which seem to be so lawless and uncertain, are ruled by laws as positive as those which rule the growth of the plant; and that by evaporation, the waters that fall on the earth are continually rising again, so that the sea never overflows? Ecclesiastes 12:6 is a poetic description of death. How the "silver cord" describes the spinal marrow, the "golden bowl" the basin which holds the brain, the "pitcher" the lungs, and the "wheel" the heart. Without claiming that Solomon was inspired to foretell the circulation of the blood, twenty-six centuries before Harvey announced it, is it not remarkable that the language he uses exactly suits the facts — a wheel pumping up through one pipe to discharge through another?*³⁵² I did not notice

³⁵² From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt accessed June 19, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:4–7 As one generation goes by the wayside, the next generation rises up to take its place; and the earth just keeps on turning. The sun rises and the sun sets; then it hurries back to its original place and rises up there once again. The wind goes toward the south, then turns around to the north; the wind is going around and circling about; and it eventually returns along its established route. All the rivers and streams flow into the sea, and yet the sea is not filled up. Somehow, the water returns back to where the rivers and streams begin, and from there, their flowing begins again.

Summarizing Ecclesiastes 1:4–7 (by Ray Stedman)

Humanity is transient, but nature is permanent. A generation goes and a generation comes... but the earth remains forever

He has three proofs of this, the first of which is the circle of the sun. The sun rises in the east, runs across the heavens, apparently, and sets in the west; then it scurries around the dark side of the earth while we are sleeping, and there it is in the east again in the morning. That has been going on as long as time has been counted, as far back as we can read in human history. It is endless; it repeats itself again and again.

Then he speaks of the circuit of the winds, south to north. This is unusual, because we have no evidence that men understood scientifically the fact that the wind, the clouds and the great jet streams of earth run in circles. This is evident to us in our day because we can see from a satellite picture in any news broadcast the great circles of the winds. How they knew this back then I do not know. But Solomon knew it, though the scientific world of that day did not seem to understand it.

His third proof is the circuit of the evaporative cycle. Thirteen elders and pastors from this church have just returned from a backpack trip to the Sierras. There the mountain peaks were milking moisture from the clouds which passed over all you dry people down here. We had torrents of rain, hail, and even snow falling upon us while we were huddling in our little plastic tents, enjoying this backpack experience. Where does all the water which endlessly drops out of the sky come from? The answer, of course, is that it comes from the ocean. Out here to the west an invisible evaporative process is at work by which the water that runs into the sea never raises the level of the sea because there is an invisible raising of that water back up into the clouds. These clouds then move east by the circuit of the winds and drop their moisture again, and this goes on forever.

The writer is suggesting that there is something wrong in this. It is backwards, somehow. Man ought to be permanent and nature ought to be transient, he suggests. There is something within all of us that says this. We feel violated that we learn all these great lessons from life, but just as we have begun to learn how to handle life it is over, and the next generation has to start from scratch again.

The Scripture confirms that something is wrong. The Bible tells us that man was created to be the crown of creation. He is the one who is in dominion over all things. Man ought to last endlessly and nature ought to be changing, but it is the other way around. Man feels the protest of this in his spirit. We have all felt this. We all protest, inwardly, at least, the injustice of losing the wisdom of a Churchill, the beauty of a Princess Grace, or the charm of a John Kennedy. Something is wrong that all of this is suddenly taken away from us, while the meaningless cycle of nature goes on and on endlessly. Yes, the human spirit feels that strongly. That very pertinent question is going to be developed in the theme of this book.

Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 1:4–7.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Perhaps I should edit this down.

Ecclesiastes 1:4–7 As one generation goes by the wayside, the next generation rises up to take its place; and the earth just keeps on turning. The sun rises and the sun sets; then it hurries back to its original place and rises up there once again. The wind goes toward the south, then turns around to the north; the wind is going around and circling about; and it eventually returns along its established route. All the rivers and streams flow into the sea, and yet the sea is not filled up. Somehow, the water returns back to where the rivers and streams begin, and from there, their flowing begins again.

The Law of Circularity (by H. Macmillan, D.D.)

The law of circularity, or retrogression, an essential element of progress

The circle is the archetype of all forms, physically as well as mathematically. It is the most complete figure, the most stable under violence, the most economical of material; its proportions are the most perfect and harmonious; and therefore it admits of the utmost variety consistent with unity of effect. The universe has apparently been framed according to this type. Nature attains her ends, not in a series of straight lines, but in a series of circles; not in the most direct, but in the most roundabout way. All her objects, organic and inorganic, have a tendency to assume the circular form, and in the attainment of this form consists their highest perfection. The lowly lichen on the wall spreads itself out in a circle; the mushroom in the meadow, with its round cap and stem, grows in fairy rings; the moss-tuft on the tree—the clump of fern in the shady bank—the plot of wild-flowers in the wood—the trees in the forest, alike in their individual and social state, exhibit this form in endless and graceful diversity. The cell, which is the ultimate germ of all life, is round, and every increase which it makes by growth or reproduction, preserves the same shape. The leaf, with all its varied modifications in the different parts of the plant—the stem, the flower, the fruit, the seed—are all more or less circular. So also are the different parts and organs of animals, from the simple primary cell of the animalcule, barely visible under the microscope, up through increasingly complex structures, to the highly-organized and wonderfully-formed head of man—the apex of creation; and though dead, inert minerals may seem to offer an exception to the law, crystallizing, or, in other words, attaining the highest perfection of which they are capable, not in circles but in straight lines, yet, when exposed to the influence of natural agencies, they speedily assume the circular form. The various forces of nature, and the properties of the matter upon which they act, are so arranged and balanced, that they invariably bring out curved lines in the surface of the earth. The winds and the waters produce undulating surfaces wherever they operate. The sea and the lake flow in curving waves and ripples to the shore: the rivers and streams meander in silvery links through the landscape; the clouds float in ever-varying curves of magical loveliness along the sky; the very winds—emblems of fickleness and change—obey fixed laws, and blow over the earth in cyclones and rotatory currents.

The same law of circularity may be observed in the alternations of day and night, and in the vicissitudes of the seasons. Each bright blue day of sunshine, with all its work and enjoyment, is folded and shrouded up in its grave of darkness. Night comes, as it were, to undo the work of the day—to reverse the processes and functions of life—to restore the molecules of matter which the sunlight had kept in incessant motion and change to their previous condition, and by this recoil and rest to qualify for greater exertions and further advancement on the morrow; and thus, with alternations of darkness and light, the year progresses to its close. Spring clothes the earth with verdure; summer develops this verdure into its highest beauty and luxuriance, and autumn crowns it with ripeness and fruitfulness; but winter comes with its storms and frosts to mar and destroy the fair fabric which it had taken so many months to perfect. And yet this apparently wanton destruction, this retrograde movement, tends more to advance the progress of nature than if summer were perpetual. The exhausted soil is permitted to rest, in order that it may acquire new elements for increased production, and the forces of vitality are suspended that they may burst forth again with more exuberant energy. Flowers die down to their roots, yet it is no grave into which they have retired, but the hiding-place of power, from whence they shall start into greater beauty and luxuriance when stimulated by the showers and the sunbeams of spring. Life is a ceaseless vortex, a perpetual whirlpool, from the beginning to the ending, and from the ending to the beginning. Every death is a new birth, every grave a cradle. Ascending beyond our earth, to the regions of the astronomer, we find the same law in operation there also. We know nothing of the forms and attributes of extra-terrestrial existence; but we know at least that all the heavenly bodies are more or less circular, and move in more or less circular orbits. The sun, the moon, the planets have this shape: and we know that our earth revolves on its own axis, and moves round the sun; that the solar system advances in space, not in a straight line, but in a series

The Law of Circularity (by H. Macmillan, D.D.)

of mighty revolutions round a central sun. Passing from the physical world to the domain of man, we find there also innumerable traces of the law of circularity. "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh."

The circulation of blood in the veins, the circulation of matter in the body, the circulation of impressions in the nerves and impulses in the muscles, are all helps and means of physical growth; while the vicissitudes of circumstances, the opposite conditions of prosperity and adversity, health and sickness, joy and sorrow, tend to develop the mental and moral character. Action and reaction is the law of man's life. A season of misfortune is usually followed by a season of success; and when circumstances are most prosperous, a time of reverses is not far off. Nowhere, either in science or in morals, has a straight line ever been drawn. There is no distinct, definite line of demarcation between pain and pleasure, between joy and sorrow, between relative evil and good. "Thus far and no further," is said to all moral operative causes, as well as to the waters of the ocean; but the line along the coast is not uniformly straight and unbending; on the contrary, it winds in and out, in gulfs and promontories, in capes and bays, in the most charming and picturesque irregularity. It is a fact of the deepest significance in the philosophy of human progress, that no great step can be taken in the intellectual or moral advancement of our race except by the sacrifice of at least one generation. There is not a single great truth that has influenced mankind but has passed through a process of contempt and injustice before it was established upon a firm and lasting foundation of popular favour; the invention or discovery that one generation despised is turned to profitable account by the next; the scientific creed that is persecuted in one age forms an undoubted and essential part of the faith of the succeeding age. The general progress of the human race has been marked by strange fluctuations. Civilization after civilization advances from the dim horizon, reaches the zenith of its prosperity, blazes for a while with unexampled splendour, then sets in darkest midnight. Such facts as these show us how hopeless is the boasted gospel of natural progress; how vain it is to expect that humanity can develop itself by its own unaided powers; that any race or country is capable of carrying on the process of improvement uninterruptedly and continuously, by the simple motherhood of nature.

Man is, indeed, naturally progressive to the fullest extent of his capacities; and whatever he is capable of becoming, the aspirations of his soul are in themselves proofs and pledges, that he will ultimately become. In the progress and revolutions of time he has steadily advanced to a nobler dignity. Each civilization that appeared on the stage of history borrowed from its predecessors materials for a higher range of advancement. The Roman civilization was a propagation of the Greek, and the Greek of the Egyptian and the Hebrew. But this progressive elevation was not attained by a natural process of development, carried on in a uniform, undeviating, straight line. On the contrary, wherever humanity was left to its own unaided powers, unassisted by supernatural means and influences, it has everywhere in the end degenerated and declined, however long and glorious may have been its heroic age. And analogy would lead us to conclude, that as it has been in the past, so it may be in the future, that again and again may be exhibited the solemn-spectacle of civilizations "advancing in charmed circles," races passing from hardihood to courage, from courage to conquest, from conquest to power, from power to wealth, from wealth to luxury and effeminacy, and from thence to the last stages in the melancholy drama—corruption, decline, and extinction. History is given to repeating itself. The persistency with which forms of faith and aspects of society appear age after age is truly marvellous. Fashions of dress, schools of art and philosophy, theories and speculations of science and theology, seem to have the same kind of periodicity which marks the phenomena of nature. As regularly as the same primroses bloom on the woodland bank spring after spring, and the same roses blush by the wayside summer after summer, so regularly and uniformly do the same modes of thought, and the same types of manners, appear and reappear. Phases of human error and folly are found occurring again and again, after long intervals. In every department of human affairs such instances are easy to find, proving the truth of the trite aphorism, that "there is nothing new under the sun": that the moral world, as well as the physical, revolves in a circle, and thus necessarily often comes back to the point from which it started. These examples of retrogression appear melancholy and disheartening to those who believe in the uninterrupted development of mankind in straight lines; but, rightly considered, they are far from being perplexing and unintelligible. The law of circularity is also a law of conservation; and every instance of retrogression may be regarded as a brake upon the wheels of the oar of progress, absolutely necessary for its safe and steady motion.

The Law of Circularity (by H. Macmillan, D.D.)

The Bible affords so many illustrations of this doctrine, that it is somewhat difficult to make a selection. Almost the first event in the spiritual history of the human race was an act of degradation, a retrograde movement. "God created man upright, but he has sought out many inventions." And yet, by a wonderful interposition of Divine love, this retrograde step, which issued in so much disaster, has raised man to a higher position than he could have attained, even had he continued pure and sinless as at the first. He is not merely brought forward to the point from which he retrograded: he is advanced greatly beyond it. Schiller boldly says, "the Fall was a giant stride in the history of the human race." The Deluge affords another illustration of the law we are considering. It was a terrible remedy for a terrible disease. Another retrograde movement, of scarcely less importance, occurred very speedily after this event. The confusion of languages, and the consequent dispersion of mankind, and their separation into distinct nations and races, seems at first sight an unaccountable procedure—hostile to the best interests and wisest processes of civilization; and yet, on the contrary, it has proved eminently helpful in forwarding the progress of the human race by the formation of national feeling, or patriotism, and the full, harmonious development of the "many-sidedness" of human nature. Descending the stream of Scripture narrative, we find that Joseph was sold into slavery as the path to the highest honours of Egypt; and that the latter end of Job, after he had been stripped of everything, was more prosperous than the beginning. When the children of Israel had reached the borders of Canaan, after their long and toilsome wanderings in the wilderness, and the enterprise which had been attended with so much trouble and hardship, and from which they had hoped to reap the richest result, was on the eve of being accomplished, the Divine command was given them to return to the very point in the wilderness from which they started. The immediate cause of this ignominious failure and retreat was, no doubt, their own obstinacy and unbelief. A wise and benevolent purpose lay hid under the apparently harsh and severe judgment, which subsequent events unfolded and explained. The children of Israel, as their conduct too plainly proved, were not as yet in a fit state to occupy the land, and carry out God's intention of supplanting its wicked and idolatrous tribes by "a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

In the New Testament we also find several striking examples of this law. The salvation of the world is accomplished through treachery, false witness, and a cross. We are told by the evangelists that the disciples, after the resurrection, went back by the express command of Christ to Galilee, to the scenes and pursuits in which they were engaged when first called to follow Him. The same circumstances were repeated, the same miracles performed, as on the first occasion. This retrogression seems to have been wisely ordered as a preparatory discipline for reinstating them in that office from which, by their shameful desertion and denial of Christ, they had fallen at His death. By bringing them back to the old life, to the beginning of their course, He not only gave them a significant symbol of His willingness to overlook and forget all that had occurred during the interval, but also placed them in more favourable circumstances for the fulfilment of their noble mission as Christ's witnesses and apostles to the world. The careful reader will observe a close similarity between the closing chapters of Revelation and the commencement of Genesis. The first and most prominent doctrine which Christianity teaches is the doctrine of retrogression as an essential element of progress. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," was its watchword when it first raised its voice amid the deserts and mountains of Judea. Repentance is the germinal bud of living Christianity. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." And the beautiful profound truth hidden under this paradox is that not only are the spirit of childhood and the spirit of manhood not inconsistent with each other, but their union is essential to the highest spiritual culture. The afflictions and trials that bring the Christian low contribute in the end to raise him to a higher condition of heavenly-mindedness. They may be regarded as a complication of inverse aids and assistances, by a right use of which the force of spiritual character may be more successfully displayed. And just as the earthquake that fills a wide tract of country with ruins, and the storm that strews our coast with wrecks, or tears down our forests, or destroys life, are links in the chain of the weather which purifies our atmosphere, and supplies the materials of health and vigour to all animated nature, so are suffering and trials the iron links in that golden chain which connects earth with heaven. It is not suffering then glory, but suffering therefore glory. Our light affliction worketh out an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory.

Death seems to the eye of sense the saddest and most mysterious of all retrogressions. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," is the beginning and end, the source and destiny of the material part of our being.

The Law of Circularity (by H. Macmillan, D.D.)

Death despoils us of all with which we were invested, terminates all the functions and feelings of life, resolves the body into its original particles, and scatters them over the face of the earth. But though to the eye of sense appearing a great loss, an unaccountable retrogression, it appears to the eye of faith, gifted with a keener and farther-reaching vision, a great, an immeasurable gain. The day of death is better than the day of birth, because death is a higher and nobler birth. Nay, the continuity of the path will not be broken, It is no strange and unknown scene upon which the just are ushered at death. The sacred employments of life will continue without pause or interruption amid circumstances the most favourable and congenial. The river that hides itself for a time in the earth, and breaks forth at a distance with a greater volume and a wider channel, does not sever its connection with the former part of its course. One more vision of retrogression, the sublimest and the most awful, reveals itself in dim outlines to our gaze from the pages of Revelation. When the earth shall have served the purpose for which it was created, as a scene of circumstances and temptations for the education of the immortal spirit, it will be reduced, we are told, to the state of chaos from which it sprung. "The elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and all the works therein, shall be burnt up." And yet this sublime retrogression will be necessary to bring in a better world, where sin and sorrow shall be unknown. The scene of probation passing through this terrible ordeal will become the scene of enjoyment; and earth, purified by the baptism of fire, shall be transformed into heaven.

The Biblical Illustrator; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:4–10.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

*Dr. Dan Hill: Some today find significance in trying to save the world. They are out hugging trees and communing with nature, worried about global warming and holes in the ozone. Both which have been going on for millennia. And what is it all for. The cycles of nature continue and while we conserve what God has given us, life on this earth will not end even one second prior to God's perfect time. So for the believer, there is no significance or security in nature. But there is an appreciation of God through nature.*³⁵³

Application: Let me suggest that we, as human beings, get to decide the kind of world that we live in, which includes the kind of air that we breathe and the sort of water found in our lakes, rivers and streams. It is *very Biblical* to consider what we are doing, and to make the world in the way that we want (just as Adam tended the garden). On the other hand, our desire for clean water and air should not be placed on the same level as the dire concerns of global warming, which predict that children in Washington D.C. will never enjoy snow again; and that, 50–100 years in the future, much of our land will be under water. We have to distinguish between real environmental concerns and distinguish them from large-scale political movements, posing as an environmental concern. However, we must also balance out the acquisition of such knowledge with the knowledge of Bible doctrine, which is far more important.

Application: My immediate environment includes a lot of plants and trees, because I like these things; not because I am panicked about CO₂ increase. I like birds, butterflies and bees; and my immediate environment seems to attract them. God has given to us some control over our environment, immediate and otherwise; and has even encouraged us to fashion in according to our own tastes (within reason, of course). We always need to keep things in balance.

Application: Let me make myself clear here. It is Biblical to want to have clean air and water. That is the environment within which we live; God actually encourages us to mold, develop and enjoy our environment. Sometimes there is a trade-off between clean air and water and the prosperity of a local area (businesses, by their very nature, pollute). So a balance needs to be established. On the other hand, it is pure insanity to spend billions of dollars to reduce the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere by 1 or 2%. There is a much more prevalent

³⁵³ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 11, 2018.

greenhouse gas which dwarfs the CO₂ in the atmosphere, but you will *never* hear people talk about getting rid of that greenhouse gas.³⁵⁴ All you ever hear about is CO₂ gas—which is just not harmless, but a beneficial gas. Too often, CO₂ gas in the air is misrepresented as polluting the atmosphere with carbon (although CO₂ contains a molecule of carbon, it is not the same as filling the air with carbon).

Application: You may not be convinced, so let me pose a simple question: if the catalytic converters on car primarily turn exhaust fumes into CO₂, why is there no call from the environmental community to ban catalytic converters? Remember, we have catalytic converters on every car as a result of the environmental movement.

Ron Snider's translation of Ecclesiastes 1:4–7 A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. Also, the sun rises and the sun sets; And hastening to its place it rises there again. Blowing toward the south, Then turning toward the north, The wind continues swirling along; And on its circular courses the wind returns. All the rivers flow into the sea, Yet the sea is not full. To the place where the rivers flow, There they flow again.

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:4–7 (Ron Snider)

1. Solomon opens this section of thought with a statement about the continual procession of humanity that appears throughout time; people who live and die against the backdrop of an apparently, eternal creation.
2. The obvious fact here is that Solomon deals with life in the opposite order that it occurs; he emphasizes death by placing it first in the progression, which actually gives a hint as to why nothing is profitable for man.
3. Solomon observes that nothing much changes from generation, to generation (except the calendar); in spite of all the apparent activity during any given generation, time simply marches forward.
4. The point here is that every generation of mankind is transient; one generation is replaced by the next as the previous generation inexorably dies.
5. People live and people die; as Solomon will later note, the generations do not seem to have a great deal of regard for those that came before them.
6. Neither will those that come later have any apparent regard for the current generation. Eccles. 1:11, 2:16, 9:5
7. However, as Solomon makes clear here, each self-absorbed generation will have its day in the sun and will be replaced by another self-absorbed generation.
8. The backdrop for this continual cycle of human beings is the earth itself, which is viewed as being the constant in the equation of human existence. Ps. 104:5, 119:90
9. As several interpreters have noted, Solomon is not stating a belief that the earth itself is eternal, but that it is the one apparently permanent item on which the progression of generations is played out.
10. While interpreters have debated the exact manner in which we are to understand the term קלעל (le'olam—forever), it is used for both the past (Deut. 32:7; Job 22:15) and the future. Ps. 9:7
11. It is also used to refer to the fact that the future is indefinite and may simply have the sense of for the rest of your life. Deut. 23:6
12. Longman probably best explains its usage here as he states, "that here, forever refers to the future as far as the mind can conceive."
13. Therefore, one should not believe that Solomon is arguing here for some theological position that the material universe will last forever in an absolute sense; this term is not always used in the modern sense of endless time.
14. What he is saying is that from the perspective of every generation that has been on the earth, the world has and will outlive those that have been given authority over the earth.
15. In support of his contention that the earth is the only permanent feature in the generations of humanity, Solomon now appeals to the relentless cycles of nature that are observable by any generation.
16. He references the continual and observable cycles of the sun, the wind, and the water.
17. Solomon indicates that the very cycles of nature demonstrate the seemingly endless repetitious nature of life under the sun, which sees a lot of activity that ultimately accomplishes nothing.

³⁵⁴ The greatest greenhouse gas of all, which dwarfs all other greenhouse gases by a lot is water vapor.

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:4–7 (Ron Snider)

18. One should not assume that Solomon did not recognize that what his father had written was true; however, he is expressing another seemingly valid point of view. Ps. 19
19. Human beings, like the ceaseless cycles of nature come and go without materially changing the earth.
20. This is emphasized by his repetition of the participle בֹּאֵן (bo'—goes), which creates a comparison between the relative futility of all human endeavor and the relative futility of the action of the sun.
21. Solomon does not attempt to use scientific language as he describes the cycles of nature; he speaks as any man would when he describes the rising and setting of the sun.
22. From a purely earthly perspective, the sun moves upward in the sky from the east, traverses the heavens, and sets below the skyline in the west.
23. This cycle has been repeated endlessly throughout the generations of human history; there is not a generation that has not made note of this sequence of events.
24. He closes verse 5 with the idea that the sun must seemingly scurry around the planet in order to arrive at the same point in the east so it can simply repeat its route through the heavens.
25. The Hebrew verb שָׁאֵף (sha'aph—hastening) personifies the sun, panting with fatigue as it rushes to its
26. Like the sun, the human race seemingly never changes anything; all people get for their toil is to wear themselves out.
27. Solomon now moves to the cycles of the wind, which seem to provide the appearance of change, but which are ultimately just repetitions within an ongoing pattern.
28. Solomon does not immediately identify the subject in verse 6, as he uses five participles to describe the idea of a lot of action before he introduces the subject of the wind.
29. These five participles indicate that the wind is in perpetual motion, toward the north, toward the south, and turning around again and again; however all this action provides little consequence.
30. While the sun has a regular repetitious circuit it makes throughout the heavens, the wind appears to blow in any and every direction with no regular or predictable pattern.
31. In verse 7 we are now introduced to the third illustration of apparent activity that actually produces nothing in the way of lasting change.
32. As Solomon notes in the typical language of man, the fresh water sources on earth flow eventually into the sea and yet the sea does not rise.
33. He does not use the normal Hebrew term for river; Solomon is speaking of the wadis, which are generally dry for the greater part of the year.
34. Solomon does not have the hydrologic cycle in view; he says nothing about how the water gets back into the streambed.
35. He is using the wadis as another illustration of the ceaseless cycles of nature that appear to accomplish nothing.
36. Solomon uses the Hebrew term for walking (which may be another example of personification), to describe the fact that for all the effort of the wadis, the constant motion does not materially change the level of the oceans.
37. Solomon has now mentioned three processes (beginning with the highest and moving to the lowest), that are never completed, but continue in constant, repetitious cycles
38. These three verses document the fact that the earth remains the same; while it is characterized by the illusion of change, the cycles of nature are endlessly repetitive.
39. This leads to one view of life that sees all activity under the sun is simply pointless; nothing ever really changes.
40. However, Solomon does not criticize or impute evil to the creation, which he knows came from God; he just wants people to see the seemingly endless repetition inherent in these cycles of nature.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (this will open as a Word document on your computer); accessed June 16, 2018.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

This is an interesting comparison. Another commentator noticed the reverse order of Solomon's observations as compared to what we find in Genesis.

Genesis Versus Ecclesiastes

1. There are quite a number of fascinating parallels between the first couple chapters of Genesis and the book of Ecclesiastes.
2. God breathes life into mankind in Gen. 2, which is a very big deal. We know that without this life, we are just a rotting corpse. Solomon, in Ecclesiastes, speaks of a *breath of breaths, everything is just breath!* The writer of Genesis 1–2 understands the importance of God’s breath to us; and Solomon sees everything as just meaningless hot air.
3. The restoration of the earth follows a certain order; and these 3 illustrations just covered follow the exact opposite order.
4. The restoration of the earth:
 - 1) God the Holy Spirit first warms the ice-covered earth by brooding over it. Gen. 1:2
 - 2) Then God creates the atmosphere. Gen. 1:6–8a
 - 3) Then God creates the sun. Gen. 1:14–18
5. The observations of Solomon:
 - 1) Solomon first observes the sun rising and setting.
 - 2) Solomon then comments on the wind (which is a part of our atmosphere).
 - 3) Finally, Solomon speaks about the waters of the earth, All in the exact opposite order of creation.

I am not exactly certain what this tells us, apart from suggesting that Solomon seems to have everything backwards in this book of Ecclesiastes.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Keil and Delitzsch: *[T]hese four examples are meant to show...that a restless activity reaching no visible conclusion and end, always beginning again anew, pervades the whole world—all things, he says, summarizing, are in labour, i.e., are restless, hastening on, giving the impression of fatigue.*³⁵⁵

All the words are wearisome; is not able a man to speak. Is not satisfied an eye to see; and is not filled an ear to hear.

Ecclesiastes
1:8

All words are wearisome; [so that] a man is unable to speak. The eye is not satisfied [just] to see and the ear is not satisfied [just] to hear.

All these words just wear a man down so that he is unable to speak. The eye is not satisfied with all that it sees; and, no matter what it hears, the ear is never really content.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	All the words are wearisome; is not able a man to speak. Is not satisfied an eye to see; and is not filled an ear to hear.
Aramaic Targum	<u>The ancient prophets have exerted themselves in all the things which will take place in the world, and they could not find out their end; therefore, a man has no power to declare what will be after him, neither can the eye see all that is to be in the world, nor can the ear be filled with hearing all the words of the inhabitants of the earth.</u>
Revised Douay-Rheims	All things are hard: man cannot explain them by word. The eye is not filled with seeing, neither is the ear filled with hearing.
Peshitta (Syriac)	All things are wearisome: a man is not satisfied with utterance, his eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor his ear satisfied with hearing.

³⁵⁵ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 1:8.

Updated Brenton (Greek) All things are full of labour; a man will not be able to speak of them: neither shall the eye be satisfied with seeing, neither shall the ear be filled with hearing.

Significant differences: As usual, the targum has a lot of additional text which distorts the meaning of this passage. The Latin has *hard* rather than *wearisome*.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English All things are full of weariness; man may not give their story: the eye has never enough of its seeing, or the ear of its hearing.

Easy English Life makes us tired. It makes us so tired that we could not tell anyone about it.
Nothing that we see can ever make us happy.

Easy-to-Read Version–2006 Nothing that we hear will ever cause true pleasure for us.
Words cannot fully explain things [*Words cannot fully explain things* Literally, “All words are weak.”], but people continue speaking [*but people continue speaking* The Hebrew could also be translated, “People cannot speak.”]. Words come again and again to our ears, but our ears don’t become full. And our eyes don’t become full of what we see.

God’s Word™ All of these sayings are worn-out phrases. They are more than anyone can express, comprehend, or understand.

Good News Bible (TEV) Everything leads to weariness—a weariness too great for words. Our eyes can never see enough to be satisfied; our ears can never hear enough.

The Message Everything’s boring, utterly boring—
no one can find any meaning in it.

NIRV Boring to the eye,
boring to the ear.

All things are tiresome.
They are more tiresome than anyone can say.
But our eyes never see enough of anything.
Our ears never hear enough.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study Man, in his trek about the earth, is never able to see everything or hear everything. All things continue in wearisome toiling; man cannot tell how much.

Common English Bible All words [*Or things*] are tiring;
no one is able to speak.
The eye isn’t satisfied with seeing,
neither is the ear filled up by hearing.

Contemporary English V. All of life is far more boring than words could ever say. Our eyes and our ears are never satisfied with what we see and hear.

The Living Bible ...everything is unutterably weary and tiresome. No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied; no matter how much we hear, we are not content.

New Berkeley Version All things are unspeakably tiresome; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor does the ear get enough hearing.

New Century Version Everything is boring,
so boring that you don’t even want to talk about it.
Words come again and again to our ears,
but we never hear enough,
nor can we ever really see all we want to see.

New Life Version All things are tiring. Man is not able to tell about them. The eye never has enough to see, and the ear is never filled with what it hears.

New Living Translation Everything is wearisome beyond description. No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied. No matter how much we hear, we are not content.

Unlocked Dynamic Bible Everything is so unsatisfactory that we do not even want to talk about it. We see the same things, and we become bored with them. We hear the same things, but we want to hear something more.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible So, no man can speak all the words he might say,
Nor can his eyes be filled with all he can see,
And his ears can't handle all he can hear.

Beck's American Translation Everything is a bore, more than anyone can tell, more than any eye can see, more than any ear can hear.

International Standard V Everything is wearisome,
more than man is able to express.
The eye is never satisfied by seeing,
nor the ear by hearing.

New Advent (Knox) Bible Weariness, all weariness; who shall tell the tale? Eye looks on unsatisfied; ear listens, ill content.

Translation for Translators Everything is boring,
with the result that we do not even want to talk about it.
We [SYN] see things,
but we always want to see more.
We [SYN] hear things,
but we always want to hear more.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible Concerns are to be wearisome - sustains there a man able to be the speaker of it? - retains the eye to be satisfied to perceive, or remains the ear filled to hear.

Christian Standard Bible All things are wearisome,
more than anyone can say.
The eye is not satisfied by seeing
or the ear filled with hearing.

Conservapedia All things work in harmony; but we cannot adequately express this: our eyes do not find fulfillment in merely seeing; our ears are not fulfilled by hearing.
The first section of this line needs work, I don't understand what it means.

Ferrar-Fenton Bible All language is feeble ;~—a man cannot utter himself |——'I' he sight is not satiated by seeing; and the ear is not hllled by hearing !

God's Truth (Tyndale) All things are so hard, that no man can express them. The eye is not satisfied with sight, the ear is not filled with hearing.

HCSB All things are wearisome;
man is unable to speak.
The eye is not satisfied by seeing
or the ear filled with hearing.

Lexham English Bible All things toil continuously; no one can ever finish describing this. The eye is never satisfied with seeing, and the ear is never filled with hearing.

NIV, ©2011 All things are wearisome,
more than one can say.
The eye never has enough of seeing,
nor the ear its fill of hearing.

Tree of Life Version All things are wearisome.
No one can express them.
The eye is never satisfied with seeing,
nor the ear filled with hearing.

Unlocked Literal Bible	Everything becomes wearisome, and no one can explain it. The eye is not satisfied by what it sees, nor is the ear fulfilled by what it hears.
Wikipedia Bible Project	All things are tiresome, no man can speak to them, no eye will sate from seeing them, and no ear will fill from hearing them.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (2013)	All words become weary and speech comes to an end, but the eye has never seen enough nor the ear heard too much.
The Heritage Bible	All words <i>are</i> full of wearisome toil; man is not able to speak it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, and the ear is not filled with hearing.
New American Bible (2002)	All speech is labored; there is nothing man can say. The eye is not satisfied with seeing nor is the ear filled with hearing. All speech . . . man can say: or "All things are wearisome beyond man's power to tell."
New American Bible (2011)	All things are wearisome [or, "All speech is wearisome."], too wearisome for words. The eye is not satisfied by seeing nor has the ear enough of hearing. Eccl 4:8; 5:9–11.
New English Bible–1970	All things are wearisome [prob. rdg, Heb weary]; no man can speak of them all. Is not the eye surfeited with seeing, and the ear sated with hearing?
New Jerusalem Bible	All things are wearisome. No one can say that eyes have not had enough of seeing, ears their fill of hearing.
Revised English Bible–1989	All things are wearisome. No one can describe them all, no eye can see them all, no ear can hear them all.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	Everything is wearisome, more than one can express; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, the ear not filled up with hearing.
The Complete Tanach	All things are wearisome; no one can utter it; the eye shall not be sated from seeing, nor shall the ear be filled from hearing.

All things are wearisome... the eye shall not be sated from seeing, nor shall the ear be filled: This refers back to, "What profit [has man]" if he exchanges the study of Torah to speak wasteful words? They are only wearisome, and he will not be able to acquire them all, and if he comes to engage in the vision of the eye, it will not be satisfied, and if in the hearing of the ear, it will not be filled.

exeGesés companion Bible	All words belabor; man cannot word it: neither the eye satisfies with seeing nor the ear fills with hearing.
The Israel Bible	All such things are wearisome: No man can ever state them; The eye never has enough of seeing, Nor the ear enough of hearing.
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	All such things are wearisome: No man can ever state them; The eye never has enough of seeing, Nor the ear enough of hearing.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	All things are wearisome; no ish can express it; the ayin is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ozen full with hearing.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible	Everything is ·boring [wearisome], ·so boring that you don't even want to talk about it [·beyond words]. ·Words come again and again to our ears,
--------------------	---

but we never hear enough [^LThe ear is never satisfied with hearing],
nor can we ever really see all we want to see [^Lthe eye with seeing].

Kretzmann's Commentary

All things are full of labor, full of trouble, weariness, fatigue on account of the curse following sin, Gen. 3:19; **man cannot utter it**, the endlessness and burden of human troubles cannot be told by human tongue, it is beyond man's ability to express it; **the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing**, the senses become wearied in trying to master the endless succession of impressions and phenomena which press upon them from all sides in the course of this sinful existence.

NET Bible®

All this²⁹ **monotony**³⁰ **is tiresome; no one can bear**³¹ **to describe it:**³²

The eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear ever content³³ **with hearing.**

²⁹tn The word "this" is not in Hebrew, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

³⁰tn Heb "the things." The Hebrew term מִיְרְבָד (dĕyvarim, masculine plural noun from דָּבַר, davar) is often used to denote "words," but it can also refer to actions and events (HALOT 211 s.v. דָּבַר 3.a; BDB 183 s.v. דָּבַר IV.4). Here, it means "things," as is clear from the context: "What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done" (1:9). Here מִיְרְבָד can be nuanced "occurrences" or even "[natural] phenomena."

³¹tn Heb "is able."

³²tn The Hebrew text has no stated object. The translation supplies "it" for stylistic reasons and clarification.

The Pulpit Commentary

All things are full of labor. Taking the word *dabar* in the sense of "ward" (compare the Greek ῥῆμα), the LXX. translates, "All words are wearisome;" i.e. to go through the whole catalogue of such things as those mentioned in the preceding verses would be a laborious and unprofitable task. The Targum and many modern expositors approve this rendering. But besides that, the word *yaged* implies suffering, not causing, weariness (Deut. 25:18; Job. 3:17); the run of the sentence is unnecessarily interrupted by such an assertion, when one is expecting a conclusion from the instances given above. The Vulgate has, *cunetse res difficiles*. The idea, as Motais has seen, is this—Man's life is constrained by the same law as his surroundings; he goes on his course subject to influences which he cannot control; in spite of his efforts, he can never be independent. This conclusion is developed in succeeding verses. In the present verse the proposition with which it starts is explained by what follows. All things have been the object of much labor; men have elaborately examined everything; yet the result is most unsatisfactory, the end is not reached; words cannot express it, neither eye nor ear can apprehend it...Delitzsch, Nowack, Wright, and others render, "All things are in restless activity;" i.e. constant movement pervades the whole world, and yet no visible conclusion is attained. This, however true, does not seem to be the point insisted on by the author, whose intention is, as we have said, to show that man, like nature, is confined to a circle from which he cannot free himself; and though he uses all the powers with which he is endowed to penetrate the enigma of life and to rise superior to his environments, he is wholly unable to effect anything in these matters. **Man cannot utter it.** He cannot explain all things. Koheleth does not affirm that man can know nothing, that he can attain to no certitude, that reason will not teach him to apprehend any truth; his contention is that the inner cause and meaning elude his faculties, that his knowledge is concerned only with accidents and externals, and that there is still some depth which his powers cannot fathom. **The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.** Use his eyes as he may, listen to the sounds around him, attend to the instructions of professed teachers, man makes no real advance in knowledge of the mysteries in which he is involved; the paradox is inexplicable. We have, in Prov. 27:20, "Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied; and the eyes of man are never satisfied."..."Remember," says Thomas a Kempis ('De Imitat.,' 1.1.5), "the proverb, that the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing. Endeavour, therefore, to withdraw thy heart from the love

of visible things, and to transfer thyself to the invisible. For they that follow their sensuality do stain their conscience and lose the grace of God."

- Syndein/Thieme {Verses 8-11 - Cosmic Conclusions from the Human Viewpoint}
All things are wearisome . . . more than one can say . . . the eye never has enough of seeing . . . the ear never has enough of hearing.
- The Voice Words, words, words! So many words! They are wearisome things; and yet people cannot refrain from speaking.
No eye has ever surveyed *the world* and said, "I have seen enough"; no ear has ever listened *to creation* and said, "I have heard enough."

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

- Charles Thompson OT All these considerations are wearisome. Man cannot recount them: nor can the eye be satisfied with seeing; nor the ear filled with hearing.
- Concordant Literal Version All the words are weary; A man cannot utter it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, Nor is the ear filled with hearing."
- Emphasized Bible* All words, are weak, unable is any man to tell,—not satisfied is the eye by seeing, nor filled is the ear with hearing.
- English Standard Version All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.
- Keil and Delitzsch All things are in activity; no man can utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, and the ear is not full with hearing.
- Modern English Version All matters are wearisome; a man is not able to speak to them.
The eye is not satisfied with what it sees, and the ear is not content with what it hears.
- New American Standard B. All things are wearisome; Man is not able to tell *it*.
The eye is not satisfied with seeing, Nor is the ear filled with hearing.
- New European Version All things are full of weariness beyond uttering. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.
- New King James Version All things *are* full of labor; Man cannot express *it*.
The eye is not satisfied with seeing, Nor the ear filled with hearing.
- Webster's Bible Translation All things *are* full of labor; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.
- Young's Literal Translation* All these things are wearying; a man is not able to speak, the eye is not satisfied by seeing, nor filled is the ear from hearing.

The gist of this passage: All things make the writer weary; to a point where he cannot speak. What he sees and hears does not give him any permanent satisfaction.

Ecclesiastes 1:8a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]	<i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of</i>	masculine singular construct followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481

Ecclesiastes 1:8a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
d ^e bârîym (דְּבָרִים) [pronounced daw ^b -vawr-EEM]	words, sayings, doctrines, commands; things, matters, affairs; reports	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #1697 BDB #182
yâgêa' (יָגַע) [pronounced yaw-GAY-ahg']	[one who is] weary, tired, exhausted; wearisome	masculine plural adjective	Strong's #3023 BDB #388

This word sounds like a man who is exhausted or physically worn down.

Translation: *All words are wearisome*;... Solomon is in a funk; he is struck with ennui. He has heard and read so many words that it is just tiring to him. All of these words have worn him down.

The writer has made many observations of the natural sciences—albeit, not completely accurate—and they have led him nowhere. The sun rises and it sets; the winds blow all over the place, and the water cycle continues unabated; but none of this leads to any truth or satisfaction in life. All of my own observations tired me out, Solomon is saying; all of the studies that I have done on religion and philosophy have made me weary.

Ecclesiastes 1:8 *All these words just wear a man down so that he is unable to speak. The eye is not satisfied with all that it sees; and, no matter what it hears, the ear is never really content.*

All things (Ecclesiastes 1:8a) (various commentators)

Matthew Poole: *All things, not only the sun, and winds, and rivers, which I have mentioned, but all other creatures, are full of labour; both subjectively, as they are in continual restlessness and change, never abiding in the same state or place; and efficiently, as they cause great and sore labour to men, in getting, and keeping, and enjoying of them, yea, even in the study of them.*³⁵⁶

Benson: *All things* — *Not only the sun, and winds, and rivers, but all other creatures.*³⁵⁷

Whedon: *Things* — *Hebrew, words. In several ancient languages "word" has a secondary meaning — thing, affair. But here the primary meaning is better.*³⁵⁸

I don't know if Benson is copying Poole or vice versa.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:8 *All these words just wear a man down so that he is unable to speak. The eye is not satisfied with all that it sees; and, no matter what it hears, the ear is never really content.*

All things are wearisome (Ecclesiastes 1:8a) (various commentators)

Benson: *All things...are full of labour* — *They are in continual restlessness and change, never abiding in the same state.*³⁵⁹

³⁵⁶ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:8.

³⁵⁷ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:8–9.

³⁵⁸ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:8.

³⁵⁹ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:8–9.

All things are wearisome (Ecclesiastes 1:8a) (various commentators)

Dunagan: "*All things are wearisome*"-But what is true is nature is also true among mankind. "*All things are unspeakably tiresome*" (Ber). Without God factored in, nature, is routine, if not boring. "Wearisome"-the idea of labor which is exhausting.³⁶⁰

Keil and Delitzsch: All translators and interpreters who understand *devarim* here of words (*Ixx*, *Syr.*, and *Targ.*) go astray; for if the author meant to say that no words can describe this everlasting sameness with perpetual change, then he would have expressed himself otherwise than by "all words weary" (*Ew.*, *Elst.*, *Hengst.*, and others); he ought at least to have said גי קיִרל. But also "all things are wearisome" (*Knob.*, *Hitz.*), or "full of labour" (*Zöck.*), i.e., it is wearisome to relate them all, cannot be the meaning of the sentence; for גיִ does not denote that which causes weariness, but that which suffers weariness (*Deut.* 25:18; *2Sam.* 7:2); and to refer the affection, instead of to the narrator, to that which is to be narrated, would be even for a poet too affected a *quid pro quo*.³⁶¹

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: Maurer translates, "*All words are wearied out*," that is, are inadequate, as also, "man cannot express" all the things in the world which undergo this ceaseless, changeless cycle of vicissitudes.³⁶²

Dr. Bob Utley: "*All things are wearisome*" Physical creation is in a repetitive, mysterious routine (i.e., *Eccles.* 1:9):

1. human life, *Eccles.* 1:4
2. heavenly bodies, *Eccles.* 1:5
3. wind, *Eccles.* 1:6
4. rivers, *Eccles.* 1:7.³⁶³

College Press Bible Study: Two ideas are possible in translating verse eight. One suggests that all things are more wearisome than words can tell. The other suggests that it is wearisome to try and discover all things.³⁶⁴

The Cambridge Bible: *All things are full of labour*] The Hebrew *dabar* may mean either "word" or "thing," and so the sentence admits equally of this or the nearly equivalent rendering, *All things are weary with toil* and *All words are feeble*, and each gives, it is obvious, a fairly tenable meaning. The first generalizes as by an induction from the previous instances, that all things (especially, i. e. all human affairs) are alike "stale, flat and unprofitable." The latter stops in the induction to say that all speech is feeble, that time and strength would fail to go through the catalogue.³⁶⁵

John W. Ritenbaugh: He then states, "All things are wearisome" (*Ecclesiastes* 1:8, margin). Do we agree with his assessment to this point? Is he right in his litany of mankind's purposeless, hamster-like, monotonous life that leads nowhere? If so, Solomon has achieved his purpose of making us understand that he is making sense—that "vanity of vanities" is the only honest assessment of life on earth as long as people are doggedly, but without a large measure of truth, seeking purpose and profit only "under the sun."

Ritenbaugh continues: What Solomon has shown to this point is not the full story. In fact, he has just begun! Using generalities, he has exposed only the broad extent of the problem. Specifics will be added later.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁰ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, . Eccles. 1:8

³⁶¹ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 1:8.

³⁶² Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:8.

³⁶³ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:3–11.

³⁶⁴ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; comment 1:4–8.

³⁶⁵ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:8.

³⁶⁶ From [Bible tools](http://Bibletools.org) accessed June 18, 2018.

All things are wearisome (Ecclesiastes 1:8a) (various commentators)

Dr. John Gill: *All things are full of labour*,.... Or "are laborious"; gotten by labour, and attended with fatigue and weariness; riches are got by labour, and those who load themselves with thick clay, as gold and silver be, weary themselves with it; honour and glory, crowns and kingdoms, are weighty cares, and very fatiguing to those that have them; much study to acquire knowledge is a weariness to the flesh; and as men even weary themselves to commit iniquity, it is no wonder that religious exercises should be a weariness to a natural man, and a carnal professor.³⁶⁷

Trapp: *All things are full of labour*.]...Molestation and misery meet us at every turn. The whole world is a "sea of glass" (for its vanity), "mingled with fire" (for its vexation)...All things are sweeter in the ambition than in the fruition. There is a singular vanity in this splendid misery. One well compares it to a beautiful picture, drawn with white and red colours in sackcloth, which afar off is very lovely, but near by it is like the filthy matter of a sore or wound.³⁶⁸

Whedon: "*All words are ineffectual*" to tell the contrast between ever renewing nature and frail, transient man.³⁶⁹

There is ultimately no satisfaction in human systems of thought.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 1:8b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lô' (לֹא or לוֹא) [pronounced low]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
yâkôl (לָכִי) [also yâkôwl (לוֹכִי)] [pronounced yaw-COAL]	<i>to be able, can, to have the ability, to have the power to; to be able to bear; to be able to bring oneself [to do anything]; to be lawful, to be permitted; to be powerful, to prevail</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3201 BDB #407
With the negative, this means <i>cannot, to be unable to, to lack the ability to, to be powerless to, to lack permission to, to not be permitted to; to lack the power to.</i>			
ʾîysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced eesh]	<i>a man, a husband; anyone; a certain one; each, each one, each man, everyone</i>	masculine singular noun (sometimes found where we would use a plural)	Strong's #376 BDB #35
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510

³⁶⁷ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:8.

³⁶⁸ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 1:8.

³⁶⁹ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:8.

Ecclesiastes 1:8b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
dâbar (דָּבַר) [pronounced daw ^b -VAHR]	to speak, to talk [and back with action], to give an opinion, to expound, to make a formal speech, to speak out, to promise, to propose, to speak kindly of, to declare, to proclaim, to announce	Piel infinitive construct	Strong's #1696 BDB #180

The NET Bible: *The statement no one can bear to describe it probably means that Qoheleth could have multiplied examples (beyond the sun, the wind, and the streams) of the endless cycle of futile events in nature. However, no tongue could ever tell, no eye could ever see, no ear could ever hear all the examples of this continual and futile activity.*³⁷⁰

Translation: ...[so that] a man is unable to speak. Solomon is so tired of words that he has no interest even in speaking. Nothing that can be said would make any difference; his unhappiness would remain. Meaninglessness of the world seems to continue. Nothing he can say will change that.

Ecclesiastes 1:8 All these words just wear a man down so that he is unable to speak. The eye is not satisfied with all that it sees; and, no matter what it hears, the ear is never really content.

Man is unable to utter it (Ecclesiastes 1:8b) (various commentators)

Dunagan: *"man is not able to tell it"-Man isn't able to explain all things. Life is far more wearisome than man can tell. Solomon is saying, "My examples are just the tip of the iceberg, we could never exhaust this subject."*³⁷¹

The Cambridge Bible: *On the whole, looking to the fact that the verb "utter" is cognate in form with the word translated "things," the latter seems more closely in harmony with the context. We might fairly express the force of the Hebrew by saying All speech fails; man cannot speak it. The seeming tautology gives the sentence the emphasis of iteration.*³⁷²

Dr. John Gill: *man cannot utter it; or declare all the things that are laborious and fatiguing, nor all the labour they are full of; time would fail, and words be wanting to express the whole; all the vanity, unprofitableness, and unsatisfying nature of all things below the sun.*³⁷³

Matthew Poole: *Man cannot utter it; the labour is inexpressibly and unconceivably great.*³⁷⁴

Trapp: *Man cannot utter it.] If Solomon cannot, no man can.*³⁷⁵

Perhaps the idea here is, *what more can I say? What can I really add to all that has been said over the years?*

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

³⁷⁰ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 15, 2018.

³⁷¹ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:8.

³⁷² *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:8.

³⁷³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:8.

³⁷⁴ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:8.

³⁷⁵ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 1:8.

Ecclesiastes 1:8c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lô' (לוֹ' or לוֹל) [pronounced low]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
sâba' (עָבַט) [pronounced saw ^b -VAHG]	<i>to satisfy, to satisfy [with food or drink], to fill, to satiate; to saturate [land with rain]</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7646 BDB #959
'ayin (עַיִן) [pronounced ĠAH-yin]	<i>spring, fountain; eye, spiritual eyes</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #5869 (and #5871) BDB #744
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
râ'âh (רָאָה) [pronounced raw-AWH]	<i>to see, to look, to look at, to view, to behold; to observe; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #7200 BDB #906

Translation: *The eye is not satisfied [just] to see...* Solomon has seen a great deal in this life—feminine beauty, his great massive buildings, the beauty of nature—and yet, he just is not satisfied with these things. Bear in mind that Solomon has seen a lot; and if there is some thing of beauty that he wants to see and own—he can just buy it. But there is nothing which can cure his depression (this includes pills, for those reading this in the 21st century).

Ecclesiastes 1:8 All these words just wear a man down so that he is unable to speak. The eye is not satisfied with all that it sees; and, no matter what it hears, the ear is never really content.

The eye is not satisfied with seeing (Ecclesiastes 1:8c) (various commentators)

Kidner: *Like the ocean our senses are fed and fed, but never filled.*³⁷⁶

The Cambridge Bible: *the eye is not satisfied with seeing] The thought is limited by the context. It is not that the Debater speaks of the cravings of sight and hearing for ever-new objects, true as that might be; but that wherever the eye or the ear turn, the same sad tale meets them, the same paradox of an unvarying record of endless yet monotonous version.*³⁷⁷

Benson: *The eye is not satisfied — As there are many things in the world vexatious to men, so even those things which are comfortable are not satisfactory, but men are constantly desiring some longer continuance or fuller enjoyment of them, or variety in them.*³⁷⁸

Ken Cayce: *These are continuous things in our lives, until the day we shed this body of flesh. It seems the more we see, the more we want to see.*³⁷⁹

³⁷⁶ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:8.

³⁷⁷ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:8.

³⁷⁸ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:8–9.

³⁷⁹ From <http://www.bible-studys.org> accessed June 24, 2018.

The eye is not satisfied with seeing (Ecclesiastes 1:8c) (various commentators)

Ray Stedman offers an example: *[H]uman desire is never satisfied: "The eye is not satisfied with seeing." My wife's mother is 95 years old. She is just a shell of a person now, but her mind is still sharp and clear. The other day we had her in our home and somebody mentioned a far-off place. Immediately she said, "Oh, I wish I could see that." Despite her years, the eye is not tired of seeing; it longs yet to see other places, other realms, other customs. The eye is never satisfied.*³⁸⁰

Ecclesiastes 4:7–8 Again, I saw vanity under the sun: one person who has no other, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, "For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?" This also is vanity and an unhappy business.

Ecclesiastes 5:10–11 He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes?

Proverbs 27:20 Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, and never satisfied are the eyes of man. (ESV)

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

In our day and age, we can see marvelous things of beauty from anywhere, on the internet. Yet, do you think this generation is more satisfied or happy? Of course not!

I have had a friend and a cousin both live in areas where there was unspeakable beauty. My cousin could look out her large picture window in her living room and see the ocean. I slept on the couch on several occasions, and what could be more easing than to hear the pounding of the waves onto the shore? But there were practical considerations which had to be dealt with—she rented that property, she did not own it, and she would never be able to find anything to buy in her price range like this home (which was just a so-so home, but with a beautiful view). Seeing the ocean every morning was a marvelous thing—but there was a point where she needed to think realistically about her future.

Ecclesiastes 1:8d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lô' (לא or לוּא) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
mâlê' (מָלֵא) [pronounced <i>maw-LAY</i>]	<i>to be filled, to be full, to be fulfilled; be armed, be satisfied; to be accomplished, be ended</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, Niphal imperfect	Strong's #4390 BDB #569

The NET Bible: *The term מָלֵא (male', "to be filled, to be satisfied") is repeated in 1:7-8 to draw a comparison between the futility in the cycle of nature and human secular accomplishments: lots of action, but no lasting effects. In 1:7 אַנְנִי מָלֵא ('enenu male', "it is never filled") describes the futility of the water cycle: "All the rivers flow into the sea, yet the sea is never filled." In 1:8 לֹא תִמְלֵא (v'lo-timmale', "it is never satisfied") describes the futility of human labor: "the ear is never satisfied with hearing."*³⁸¹

³⁸⁰ Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 1:8–11.

³⁸¹ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 15, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:8d			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾôzen (אָזֵן) [pronounced OH-zen]	ear; metaphorically for <i>hearing</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #241 BDB #23
lâmed (ל) [pronounced lʰ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
shâmaʿ (שָׁמַע) [pronounced shaw-MAHÇ]	<i>to listen [intently], to hear, to listen and obey, [or, and act upon, give heed to, take note of], to hearken to, to be attentive to, to listen and be cognizant of</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #8085 BDB #1033

Translation: ...and the ear is not satisfied [just] to hear. Solomon has heard a great deal, which have included great dissertations, perhaps literature, and perhaps music—but he is not satisfied with them either. Further, bear in mind, if Solomon wanted to hire a full-time band for the palace, he could do this. If he wanted to have music going 24-7, he could do this. Whatever Solomon wanted to have in his periphery, he could have.

Again, in this life, if there is a particular song I want to hear, I either have it or can find it on YouTube (or somewhere else). But having that ability today does not make me any happier or well-adjusted. A song which I enjoy hearing of late is **Sea Change**; but there will be a point at which, in the future, where I no longer want to hear it.



Ecclesiastes 1:8 (a graphic); from **Reversing verses**; accessed June 17, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:8 All these words just wear a man down so that he is unable to speak. The eye is not satisfied with all that it sees; and, no matter what it hears, the ear is never really content.

Being satisfied with hearing (Ecclesiastes 1:8) (various commentators)

Ray Stedman: *Nor is the ear ever satisfied with hearing. We are always alert to some new idea or something new that has happened. That is why news programs are always popular. Television, radio and newspapers all cater to this hunger of the ear to hear something. Some juicy gossip about a Hollywood star will sell thousands of magazines and newspapers. That is why we tune in on soap operas. We just cannot tire of hearing something new. Some new way of making a profit, for instance, always makes its appeal. The Searcher's argument is that the ear never tires because human desire is never satisfied; it is a consequence of the restlessness that is built into life.*³⁸²

³⁸² Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 1:8–11.

Being satisfied with hearing (Ecclesiastes 1:8) (various commentators)

Dungan: *"Nor is the ear filled with hearing"-the mind is also constantly searching and never finding rest.*³⁸³

Dr. Dan Hill: *That is the problem with our senses, we never can really fill them up, we always come up short. There is always something lacking. A few years ago there was a Country Song in which the vocalist sang of the events of life. young love, pleasure, marriage, children, even life and death. At the end of each stanza she would lament her hopelessness...if that is all there is let's just get drunk and have a good time.*

Hill continues: *Principle: You will never be able to fill yourself up through the senses. Feed them all you want, see everything and hear everything, and you will still end up with a god shaped whole in your soul. God never intended man to live without him.*³⁸⁴

Most of us enjoy music and there are specific songs that we love. However, there is a point at which, we just do not want to hear some song again—no matter how much we liked it originally.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:8 All these words just wear a man down so that he is unable to speak. The eye is not satisfied with all that it sees; and, no matter what it hears, the ear is never really content.

Being satisfied with seeing and hearing (Ecclesiastes 1:8c-d) (many commentators)

Dr. John Gill: *the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing; both one and the other require new objects continually; the pleasure of these senses is blunted by the same objects constantly presented; men are always seeking new ones, and when they have got them they want others; whatever curious thing is to be seen the eye craves it; and, after it has dwelt on it a while, it grows tired of it, and wants something else to divert it; and so the ear is delighted with musical sounds, but in time loses the taste of them, and seeks for others; and in discourse and conversation never easy, unless, like the Athenians, it hears some new things, and which quickly grow stale, and then wants fresh ones still: and indeed the spiritual eye and ear will never be satisfied in this life, until the soul comes into the perfect state of blessedness, and beholds the face of God, and sees him as he is; and sees and hears what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard below.*³⁸⁵

Benson: *The eye and ear are here put for all the senses, because these are most spiritual and refined, most curious and inquisitive, most capable of receiving satisfaction, and exercised with more ease and pleasure than the other senses.*³⁸⁶

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *The eye and ear are two of the taskmasters for which man toils. But these are never "satisfied" (Eccles. 6:7; Prov. 27:20). Nor can they be so hereafter, for there will be nothing "new." Not so the chief good, Jesus Christ (John 4:13, John 4:14; Rev. 21:5).*³⁸⁷

J. Vernon McGee: *This may not have seemed true before, but since the advent of television it is obvious. Many people watch television for hours day after day. Why? Because the eye is never satisfied with seeing; the ear is never filled with hearing. Most of us love to go to new places and see new scenes. This is one of the enjoyments of life. It is one of the things we can enjoy in this big, wonderful country. I get kidded because I come from Texas, but I must say in all honesty that I have never been in a state that I didn't like. They are all wonderful.*

³⁸³ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:8.

³⁸⁴ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 11, 2018.

³⁸⁵ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:8.

³⁸⁶ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:8–9.

³⁸⁷ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:8.

Being satisfied with seeing and hearing (Ecclesiastes 1:8c-d) (many commentators)

McGee continues: *We live in a wonderful country and in a wonderful universe. Man cannot exhaust the exploration of the universe. The more he learns, the more he sees that he should learn. The more he learns, the more he sees how much more there is to learn. This is frustrating. The physical universe is too big for little man. Yet man alone of all God's creatures — as far as we know — is able to comprehend the universe. When a dog bays at the moon, I don't think he knows the distance to the moon, and I don't think he cares. I don't think he recognizes that he lives in a vast universe. I believe that the world of a dog is a very small world. It is no bigger than a bone most of the time. But the eyes and ears of man are never satisfied; he wants to explore.*³⁸⁸

Keith Krell: *The Rolling Stones made famous the song, "I Can't Get No Satisfaction." Sadly, this song could have been written by Solomon himself. Just like Mick Jagger and the rest of the Stones, Solomon had it all...and then some, yet everything was wearisome to him since one can never say, see, or hear enough. Man just can't get NO satisfaction! Have you seen a good movie? Read a good book? Listened to a great song? Enjoyed a restful vacation? Delighted in a special experience? It is never enough. It never satisfies, for ultimately you want MORE.*³⁸⁹

Brian Bell Commentary: *Our ears & eyes constantly look for the nicer house in our neighborhood, the greener lawn on our street, & for the faster lane on the freeway.*³⁹⁰

Matthew Poole: *The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing; as there are many things in the world troublesome and vexatious to men's senses and minds, so even those things which are comfortable and acceptable to them are not satisfactory, but men are constantly desiring some longer continuance or fuller enjoyment of them, or variety in them, and they never say, It is enough, I desire no more. The eye and ear are here synecdochically put for all the senses, because these are most spiritual and refined, most curious and inquisitive, most capable of receiving satisfaction, because they are exercised with more ease and pleasure than the other senses, whose satisfactions are oft attended with greater weariness and manifold dangers and inconveniences.*³⁹¹

Ken Cayce: *The eye never tires of looking. No one with sight decides they would rather be blind. The same is true with hearing. No one who can hear chooses to be deaf, because they are tired of hearing.*³⁹²

Pastor John Griffith: *What Solomon is saying here is that even when you see or hear something truly great - truly beautiful, it still doesn't produce lasting satisfaction.*³⁹³

Trapp: *Though these be the two 'learned senses,' as Aristotle calls them, whereby learning is let into the soul, yet no man knows so much but he would know more. Herillus, therefore, and those other philosophers that placed the happiness of a man in the knowledge of natural causes and events, were not in the right. There is a curse of dissatisfaction which lies upon the creature. The soul, that acts in and by the outward senses, flickers up and down, as Noah's dove did, but finds no firm footing; sharks and shifts from one thing to another for contentment, as the bee goes from flower to flower for honey, and yet still desires still more things in number, and new things for manner. Hence...the desires of man would...also tire itself, not knowing whether to have this or that or that or the other, so restless it is, after utmost endeavours of plenary satisfaction, which this life affords not.*³⁹⁴

³⁸⁸ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt accessed June 19, 2018.

³⁸⁹ From [Bible.org](https://www.bible.org), accessed June 22, 2018.

³⁹⁰ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/cbb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 25, 2018.

³⁹¹ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:8.

³⁹² From <http://www.bible-studys.org> accessed June 24, 2018.

³⁹³ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_04.html accessed June 15, 2018.

³⁹⁴ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 1:8.

Being satisfied with seeing and hearing (Ecclesiastes 1:8c-d) (many commentators)

Speaking of one who appeals to the senses, Solomon writes: *That which has been is far off, and deep, very deep; who can find it out? I turned my heart to know and to search out and to seek wisdom and the scheme of things, and to know the wickedness of folly and the foolishness that is madness. And I find something more bitter than death: the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her.* (Eccles. 7:24–26; ESV)

Brian Bell Commentary: *The Eye cannot be satisfied until it sees the hand of God, and The Ear cannot be satisfied until it hears the voice of God.*³⁹⁵

There are many things which stimulate the senses (hearing and seeing are representative of the 5 senses); but apart from God, there is no sustained happiness in life or enjoyment of the indulgence of the 5 senses. This is if you travel and see the world, taking in all the sights, smells and tastes of the various countries; or if you take your brain on a trip, short-circuiting the sensory process with drugs. None of these things satisfy, least of all the use of drugs.

As an aside, there has been, as of the past few decades, the creation of legal psychotropic drugs designed to be prescribed, taken and enjoyed. Now, what man, under the sun, could not believe there to be a benefit here? Here, he has been unhappy for much of his life, frustrated with the difficulties of life, where sustained joy is not a part of his existence. How could such a one not be easily led by a physician who offers just the right pill to counteract one's negative emotions? But even this, Solomon informs us, is empty and chasing after wind.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:8 *All these words just wear a man down so that he is unable to speak. The eye is not satisfied with all that it sees; and, no matter what it hears, the ear is never really content.*

Summarizing the weariness of life (Ecclesiastes 1:8) (various commentators)

Dunagan's excellent summary: *1. While man can see and learn many things, apart from God, his quest for knowledge will always be incomplete. Look at the years that people waste dedicating their lives to the defense and study of some false theory, like Evolution. 2. No matter how much you see or hear---you still won't be satisfied. There is no ultimate experience in this life that will fill you up, so you will be content and satisfied. 3. Here is a warning to all addicts, whether drug, sexual, etc...., you are only setting yourself up for extreme disappointment and frustration. Nothing in this life offers the ultimate "high". 4. The filling of your senses cannot be accomplished!*³⁹⁶

Brian Bell Commentary: *Man wants something New. Why? Because this world ultimately brings weariness. For some tragedy, for others boredom. People look for something to distract them or deliver them. The Athenians of Paul's day spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. Acts 17:21. The entertainment industry plays off this very human hunger for novelty.*³⁹⁷

Expositor's Bible Commentary: *This painful contrast between the ordered stability of nature and the changeful and profitless disorder of human life is emphasized by a detailed reference to the large natural forces which rule the world, and which abide unchanged, although to us they seem the very types of change.*

³⁹⁵ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/cbb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 25, 2018.

³⁹⁶ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:8.

³⁹⁷ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/cbb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 25, 2018.

Summarizing the weariness of life (Ecclesiastes 1:8) (various commentators)

The Expositor's Bible Commentary continues: *The ruling sentiment of these verses is that, while all the natural elements and forces, even the most variable and inconstant, renew their strength and return upon their course, for frail man there is no return; permanence and uniformity characterize them, while transitoriness and instability mark him for their own. They seem to vanish and disappear; the sun sinks, the winds lull, the streams run dry; but they all come back again: for him there is no coming back; once gone, he is gone forever.*³⁹⁸

The Bible Illustrator: *This earthly life cannot possibly satisfy a being like man if it be lived apart from God. Apart from God, wisdom leads to disappointment and lands us at death in the sublime despair of philosophy. Apart from God, wealth and all that it can command yields much less satisfaction than intellectual achievement, since it is further removed from the higher and imperishable nature of man. Apart from God, Nature, regarded as matter inter-penetrated by force, presents nothing on which man's inmost being can rest. Here we have only cycles of laws repeating themselves through the ages with a momentum which mocks our intellects.*

The Biblical Illustrator continues: *Vanity, emptiness, and disappointment are traced on Nature, on wealth and thought. As a matter of fact man does not find in either real satisfaction. He finds only a wasting fever of the heart, nothing which makes him strong for life, or in the hour of approaching death. The reason is plain. All that belongs to earth has failure in it, and man's life has come under this failure as well as Nature. All we may see is not as it should be. The best of men are conscious of this. The telling of circumstance against him, the tendency downwards of which he is conscious, the precautions which he takes against himself in the shape of rule and law—all these things tell, and tell truly, of some big catastrophe from which human life has suffered in its deepest recesses. Nature, too, with its weird mysteries speaks to the same effect.*³⁹⁹

Dr. Bob Utley: *This premise is the author's first and primary presupposition about earthly existence (i.e., "there is nothing new or significant in an endless cycle of physical creation"). The principle is begun in Eccles. 1:8 and followed by three explanatory phrases:*

1. man cannot tell it
2. eye is not satisfied in seeing it
3. ear is not filled with hearing it

These describe the generations that come and go (cf. Eccles. 1:4 a). They all experience

1. the cycles in nature
2. frustrations at the mysteries of fallen existence
3. seeking answers but not finding them (another cycle).

Utley continues: *The author's list of meaningless repetition in nature could be multiplied endlessly. The implication is not only fallen human's inability to state clearly the meaninglessness and hopelessness brought about by the cycles of nature, but also the sense of purposelessness it brings to human existence!*⁴⁰⁰

The College Press Bible Study interprets these final words as a weariness of discovery: *The final thought in the verse is saying that man is unable to discover everything that should be seen or heard and thus the latter idea would be the most tenable. He does not intend to say that man cannot discover some truth or draw reasonable conclusions. Ecclesiastes is filled with numerous discoveries made under the sun. He is stating that when one pursues earthly knowledge, the eye cannot see it all nor the ear hear it all. But, even if he did, he would not discover the meaning of it all. He knows enough to at least reach this conclusion.*⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁸ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–11.

³⁹⁹ *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:2.

⁴⁰⁰ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:3–11.

⁴⁰¹ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; comment 1:4–8.

Summarizing the weariness of life (Ecclesiastes 1:8) (various commentators)

Clarke: *It is impossible to calculate how much anxiety, pain, labor, and fatigue are necessary in order to carry on the common operations of life. But an endless desire of gain, and an endless curiosity to unfitness a variety of results, cause men to, labor on. The eye sees much, but wishes to, see more. The ear hears of many things; but is curious to have the actual knowledge of them. So desire and curiosity carry men, under the Divine providence, through all the labors and pains of life.*⁴⁰²

Keith Simons: *Most people have a genuine desire to achieve something good during their lives. They would like to make life better for the people who live after them.*

Simons continues: *That may be our desire, but usually our lives seem much too hard to do anything about it. Everything that we do feels like a hard task. Although we work hard, we cannot even satisfy our own immediate desires. Even if we do manage to do something to help people in the future, they will not be grateful. Soon, they will forget that we even existed.*⁴⁰³

Keil and Delitzsch: *[T]his unrest in the outer world reflects itself in man, when he contemplates that which is done around him; human language cannot exhaust this coming and going, this growth and decay in constant circle, and the quodlibet is so great, that the eye cannot be satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing; to the unrest of things without corresponds the unrest of the mind, which through this course, in these ever repeated variations, always bringing back the old again to view, is kept in ceaseless activity. The object to dâbar [to speak, to utter] is the totality of things. No words can comprehend this, no sensible perception exhaust it. That which is properly aimed at here is not the unsatisfiedness of the eyes (Prov. 27:20), and generally of the mind, thus not the ever-new attractive power which appertains to the eye and the ear of him who observes, but the force with which the restless activity which surrounds us lays hold of and communicates itself to us, so that we also find no rest and contentment.*⁴⁰⁴

Ecclesiastes 2:11 **Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.**

Ecclesiastes 2:26 **For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.**

Ecclesiastes 4:1–4 **Again I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold, the tears of the oppressed, and they had no one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power, and there was no one to comfort them. And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive. But better than both is he who has not yet been and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun. Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.**

Matthew 11:28–30 **“Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.”**

Romans 8:22–23 **For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. (ESV; capitalized)**

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

⁴⁰² Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:7.

⁴⁰³ From [Useful Bible](#), accessed June 24, 2018.

⁴⁰⁴ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 1:8 (slightly edited).

Ecclesiastes 1:1–8 These are the Words of a Lecturer, who is the Son of David, the King in Jerusalem: Just inhale and exhale, proclaims this lecturer—as all life is but a vapor, of no more substance than the exhale of one’s breath. What real gain is there to any man in all of his hard work which he must do each day under a hot sun? As one generation goes by the wayside, the next generation rises up to take its place; and the earth just keeps on turning. The sun rises and the sun sets; then it hurries back to its original place and rises up there once again. The wind goes toward the south, then turns around to the north; the wind is going around and circling about; and it eventually returns along its established route. All the rivers and streams flow into the sea, and yet the sea is not filled up. Somehow, the water returns back to where the rivers and streams begin, and from there, their flowing begins again. All these words just wear a man down so that he is unable to speak. The eye is not satisfied with all that it sees; and, no matter what it hears, the ear is never really content.

For the New Testament, doctrinal view of all this, we go to Rom. 8:18–23 **For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.** (ESV; capitalized)

Gary Everett: *In Eccles. 1:4–8 the Preacher refers to the elements of God’s creation that were recognized by men during the ancient times. Man believed that all matter and energy could be found in four states: in the heat from the sun, in the solid elements such as the earth, in the liquid elements represented by water, and in the vapor state of elements represented by clouds. He describes these four states of God’s inanimate creation as being in constant motion, or labor. These elements represent the cycles of nature. He concludes that all of creation has been subjected to vanity, which Paul also concludes in Rom. 8:19–22.*⁴⁰⁵

Eccles. 2:3–11 After much thought, I decided to cheer myself with wine. And while still seeking wisdom, I clutched at foolishness. In this way, I tried to experience the only happiness most people find during their brief life in this world.

I also tried to find meaning by building huge homes for myself and by planting beautiful vineyards. I made gardens and parks, filling them with all kinds of fruit trees. I built reservoirs to collect the water to irrigate my many flourishing groves. I bought slaves, both men and women, and others were born into my household. I also owned large herds and flocks, more than any of the kings who had lived in Jerusalem before me. I collected great sums of silver and gold, the treasure of many kings and provinces. I hired wonderful singers, both men and women, and had many beautiful concubines. I had everything a man could desire!

So I became greater than all who had lived in Jerusalem before me, and my wisdom never failed me. Anything I wanted, I would take. I denied myself no pleasure. I even found great pleasure in hard work, a reward for all my labors. But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless—like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere.

⁴⁰⁵ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett’s Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–11.

Ecclesiastes 1:8 Depression (a graphic); taken from [U.S. News](#); accessed May 15, 2018. I posted this verse and article on Facebook.

The Bible continues to be the most up-to-date book ever published. Solomon speaks of chasing happiness and stimulation at the beginning of the next chapter, which is what many young people do today. There is no happiness to be found with that.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

This is why Bible teaching is so important to the young people. This information needs to be in their souls *before* they are teens. They need to know about Solomon's search before they are offered drugs by their best friend.

Ecclesiastes 1:8 Everything is wearisome beyond description. No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied. No matter how much we hear, we are not content. (NLT)



Diagnosis of Major Depression on the Rise, Especially in Teens and Millennials

Depression rates increased in all but one state, and rose most dramatically among adolescents and millennials.

USNEWS.COM

I may need to edit this down. In any case, I believe that Smith sees this is the basic problem of the author of Ecclesiastes; and of anyone else who does not understand that man is a spiritual being.

Ignoring the Spiritual Needs of Man (Chuck Smith)

So we have today men who make excellent livelihoods trying to help people deal with their frustrations. Because people feel that life is worthless. Life is not worthwhile. Life is empty. Life is meaningless. And they just feel despairing and discouraged and despondent. They go to someone who just talks to them about life. And they pay money to try to understand why it is that I feel like life is just not worth living and all, you know. Well, that's because you haven't come into the third dimension of life--life on the spiritual plane. There is where life takes meaning. It all comes back to the three-fold nature of man.

Living in a body I have certain body needs. God created the body. Marvelous instrument. Fantastically designed. With my little hypothalamus and my pituitary, the various glands that are excreting the different chemicals into my system that give me my different feelings, numbing my pains or telling me that I'm thirsty as it is monitoring my blood system. Telling me that I need oxygen and all of these functions that are going on in the body. Keeping the balance, the homeostasis. For the body balance is important. Important that I have enough sugar. It's important that I have enough oxygen. It's important that I have all of these things within the body, so this body balance. My body drives. My air drive. My thirst drive. My hunger drive. My bowel and bladder drive. My sex drive. All of these have been created by God, a part of the body in which I live.

But I also have a consciousness. And in the area of my consciousness, there are also needs, drives. I have a need for security. I have a need for love. I have a need to be needed. These sociological drives. Now that's about as far as your psychologist and sociologist take you. But what they are denying in the denial of the spiritual nature of man, they're denying the fact that there is deep down inside of me, in my spirit, in this part of my nature, a drive that also exists and this drive in my spirit is for God. "My spirit thirsts after Thee, O God," David said. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God" (Psa_42:1).

Ignoring the Spiritual Needs of Man (Chuck Smith)

There is within man that desire to know God. That desire to have fellowship with God. There is within man a vacuum that only God can fill. And if you deny the spiritual nature of man, then man can never be satisfied because this deep-down spiritual thirst will always be haunting him, telling him there's something more. There's something more. There's something more. And I feel this dissatisfaction with life. I have a thirst that I can't define. I know it's there. I know that life hasn't yet brought me fulfillment. I know there's got to be more than to life than what I've yet experienced. And I have this frustration and this is what Solomon went through. That's what he is describing. "Emptiness, emptiness, all is empty and frustrating." He's talking and the phrase is used some nine times, "Life under the sun, it is a frustrating existence."

Now according to the psychologist, frustration leads to inferiority complex, which is the rationale by which I explain to myself why I still feel unfulfilled and empty. Why is it that I'm not satisfied? Why is it that I'm not been able to achieve and attain that which I feel? There must be. And I say, "Well, if I only had a better education, then. If I only had more money. If I only were better looking. If I only had hair." And I am explaining to myself why I haven't been able to achieve this some intangible something that I know must be there in life, that somehow it's passing me by and I can't quite grasp. And so I feel this emptiness because I can't quite get hold of it. And I am explaining to myself in the inferiority complex the shortcoming that causes me not to be able to grasp that which I know must be there.

Now, this in turn leads to escapes. I feel the emptiness. I feel this dissatisfaction. I feel that there must be more to life than what I've yet experienced. I can't seem to find it, and so I'm going to escape. And I can escape overtly or invertly. In the inverted escapes I escape within myself. I start building walls around myself. I get to where I don't want to open up to people. I start closing off myself from people. I don't want them to know the truth about me that I know about myself. So I make this facade and I project this image and they see this out here but they don't know the real me. I'm not going to let them get through to know the real me. And more and more I get within myself. More and more I begin to disassociate myself from people. In its final form, it's manifested as a hermit, a man who just goes out and lives in the desert by himself so he doesn't have to see people, talk to people. Nothing to do with people. That's the extreme form of escapism in the inverted way.

Or if I go to overt escape mechanisms, I may go to compulsive eating behavior patterns. Start eating all the time and escaping. Or I might become a compulsive gambler. Or I might turn to drinking. Or I might turn to drugs. Or I might look to a variety of sex experiences. All escaping. Or Nomadism, start moving from job to job or from place to place. "Oh, if I were just in San Francisco, that's where I'd be happy. Oh, if I just lived in Hawaii." It's interesting, more suicides in Hawaii than almost any place else, because you get over there and where can you go? You know, this is it. This is paradise. This is heaven on earth. But the problem is, you had to take yourself. And the same emptinesses that you feel here you'll feel there. And you find out that Hawaii didn't do it. It didn't satisfy. It didn't meet that deep cry that is within you. If it's not here, it's nowhere. Emptiness. Emptiness.

Now when a person gets into these escape patterns, it develops a guilt complex, because I know I shouldn't be eating like this. Why do I eat like this? I hate myself looking so fat. Why do I eat these chocolates? You know, I can't stop. But yet, I'm escaping and I get guilty. I start feeling guilty over the things that I'm doing. I know it's not right. I know it's not helping. I know it's destroying me. I know it's destroying my family or my relationships, but I can't seem to quit. It has a hold on me. And so I'm feeling guilty. And the guilt complex then leads to a subconscious desire for punishment. It goes inward then and underground. And I can't follow it at this point from the conscious level, but subconsciously I get a desire for punishment and I start a neurotic behavior pattern that will bring punishment to me.

And neurotic behavior patterns usually stem from a subconscious desire for punishment. I'm feeling guilty over what I've been doing. I want someone to punish me so that I can feel like I'm not guilty anymore. Now, when you were a child, your parents took care of your neurotic behavior patterns. And they took you in and spanked you, the healthiest thing in the world for you psychologically, because it made you feel free of your guilt. I've been punished. There's something about the guilt that I desire punishment in order that I might be freed from that feeling of guilt. Once I've been punished, then I feel, "Oh, I'm innocent now." I'm free from the guilt feelings

Ignoring the Spiritual Needs of Man (Chuck Smith)

because I've been punished. I'm free to go back to my frustration and start the cycle over again. To my inferiority complex. To my escape. To my guilt. To my punishment. To my frustration. And so life moves in a cycle, and Solomon will point out here in a little bit the cycles.

As we get in the first part of the chapter here, they're just... life seems to move in cycles, and this, according to psychologists, is the cycle of life. And you think, "My God, is this all there is? Stop this crazy merry-go-round. I want off. I'm tired of it." And that's what Solomon came to. "Vanity, vanity; all is vanity." And frustrating. And it all comes from the denial of the spiritual nature of man. It is living life on the human plane apart from God. For the gospel of Jesus Christ comes into this cycle. And the gospel of Jesus Christ comes to me. Now, when I'm in the neurotic behavior pattern it is so often that people say, "Hey, man, you better go see a shrink. You're crazy. You're doing nutty things. You better get some help."

And so I go to a head shrink and he sits me on the couch and he gives me a series of tests and he seeks to determine what I'm feeling guilty about. And then he starts to talk to me. "Now, when you were a little boy, did your mother tell you that you shouldn't tell lies? And did she teach you that it was wrong to cheat? Well, you see, these are a part of the old Puritan ethic. They're part of the old Victorian system and everything is really relative. You've got to face the fact that there are certain situations in which it is perfectly proper to tell a lie. You shouldn't feel guilty about this, you see." And he tries to remove your guilt by telling you that it's not wrong. It's not guilty. Everybody's doing it so you've just got to join the crowd and realize that the part of that old Puritan ethic by which you were trained is the thing that's your hang-up today.

But Jesus Christ comes to me and says, "Hey man, you are guilty. That's bad news. That's wrong. But I love you. And I took your guilt and bore your guilt when I died on the cross. I took all of your sins, all of your guilt, and I paid the penalty for it. Now, if you'll just believe in Me and trust in Me, I'll forgive you." Hey, that's something no psychologist can do, is totally erase that guilt feeling. Take away this haunting feeling of guilt. But Jesus Christ and the gospel does. It's the greatest thing in the world for removing the guilt complex. If that's all the gospel did, it would be fantastic. But it does much more than that.

It comes back to the very beginning. Frustration, where it all started. And we hear Jesus on the last day of the great day of the feast as He is standing there on the Temple Mount crying to the crowds, "If any man thirsts, let him come unto Me, and drink. For he who drinks of the water that I give, out of his innermost being there will flow rivers of living water. And John said, 'This spake He of the Spirit'" (Joh_7:37-39). That third dimension of man that man in his educational processes today is seeking to deny, and by his denial has created all of this confusion in our society today.

All of the frustration that people experience results from the denial of the Spirit. And Jesus is saying, "You have a thirst for God in your spirit. Come to Me, come to Me and drink." And so this frustration where the whole thing started, Jesus comes to me and not only does He fill my life, does He fill that spiritual void, but He keeps pouring in until it begins to pour out from me. And my life is no longer just a sponge, thirsty, seeking to grasp for the draw, but my life now begins to flow out with that love and that grace of God's goodness that He has bestowed upon me. And now as David said, "My cup runneth over" (Psa_23:5). My life is an overflowing cup. No longer going around with this cry and thirst and frustration within, but now the fulfillment and the fullness of God within my life as my life overflows God's goodness and grace.

So you look at life on just the human level as Solomon is looking at it, you look at man like an animal as Solomon does, you deny the spiritual dimension of man, that which places him apart from animals and above the animal kingdom, and you're opening Pandora's box to all kinds of psychological ills. You're opening to a life that can never be filled, a life of vanity and vexation of spirit. And so we are looking now through the eyes of Solomon at the world under the sun, apart from God. Man on the animal plane. And man at the highest on the animal plane is hopeless. It is not until you interject the spiritual plane and bring man into the divine plane that man can have any hope for a fulfilling, enriching, complete life.

Ignoring the Spiritual Needs of Man (Chuck Smith)

Now, it is very interesting to me today as we study the evolutionary processes of the philosophical systems of man, a history of philosophy is an interesting course to take, because as you follow the history of philosophy and see the development of the philosophical thought, we come finally to this present state of the philosophical thought expressed in existentialism. That there is no universal base of good or evil. Every man must experience truth for himself, but there is no universal truth. The philosophers have concluded with all of their study that in reality is only despair. And reality will lead you to despair. Thus, the philosophers, being brought to despair by their philosophy, declare that it is necessary for each man to take his own leap of faith into unreality in order to escape the despair that only exists in reality.

So you have to take a leap of faith hoping to have some kind of an experience that there is no way of rationalizing or explaining. That's why TM is so popular today. It's the leap of faith into a non-reasoned religious experience. That's why your eastern religions are so popular today and gaining popularity, because they are a leap of faith into non-reason religious experience which philosophy has taught us is necessary because with much knowledge is much sorrow. They've come to the same conclusion that Solomon came to years ago. Years ago before the whole history of philosophy ever began, Solomon had gone through the whole system of thought that has brought philosophy through its whole history to this final conclusion that Solomon reached thousands, three thousand years ago: that in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increases knowledge increases sorrow.

Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–18.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Despite great advantages, people in the United States are still depressed: I believe that I live in the greatest country in human history: the United States. At this point in time, we have great prosperity, wealth and freedom. So many people are able to search out the kind of career that makes them feel reasonably fulfilled (my father's generation, on the other hand, was not nearly as lucky; on most mornings, my father hated going to work).

With very little effort, if I want to hear a specific song, or even have my own play list, I can do that. If I want to see a particular movie, or watch a series of movies by the same director (or with the same actor), I can do that. If I want to be entertained, there are abundant options before me.

If I want to communicate with Charley Brown from college or high school, or with any relative of mine—I can do this. If I can remember their name, I can probably find them. Calling them on the phone, contacting them via the internet—is not that difficult to do.

For many people in the United States, if you just *have* to get away from it all, and fly to this or that city, just to take a break—even that is available as an option to many Americans. Many husbands and wives can get a quick weekend getaway to this or that place.

And yet, with all that we have in this life, so many people in the United States are turning towards a variety of intoxicants, whether legal or not (marijuana, various opiates); and many receive these intoxicants by means of a doctor's prescription (psychotropic drugs, many of which are designed to make people feel better). Given all these options which we have in life, suicide in the United States is on the rise. The reason is, we are moving further and further away from God in our increasingly secular society; and despite all there is for us to see and hear and enjoy, many people believe that their lives are coming up short. They just are not satisfied. There is stimulation in the lives of many, but there is no sustained happiness (often called *joy* in the Bible).

And so writes Solomon: [The Teacher says this](#). "Like a vapor of mist, like a breeze in the wind, everything vanishes, leaving many questions. What profit does mankind gain from all the work that they labor at under the

sun? One generation goes, and another generation comes, but the earth remains forever. Everything becomes wearisome, and no one can explain it. The eye is not satisfied by what it sees, nor is the ear fulfilled by what it hears. (Ecclesiastes 1:2–4, 8; ULLB) 3000 years ago, Solomon knew the hearts of Americans today. 3000 years may have passed, but human nature has not changed.

Keith Simons: *We are in a desperate state. All the old solutions have failed. Our own efforts cannot save us. Our money cannot save us. We struggle like slaves, because the world operates like that (Galatians 4:3). We desire to find some new solution, but there are no new solutions. It seems that nothing can rescue us.*

*With God, all things are possible (Mark 9:23). God can do something that is completely new (2Corinthians 5:17). He can make people who once were slaves into his children (Galatians 4:3-7). He can make people free (Romans 8:1-2). He can change their desires completely. And he can fill them with his Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).*⁴⁰⁶

Introducing Ecclesiastes 1:9–11 (from the College Press Bible Study)

These [final] three verses [in the first half of Ecclesiastes 1] constitute Solomon's final arguments in this section. He has declared that everything has fallen beneath the curse of impermanent futility. Rhetorically he has questioned if man has any profit at all in all his work. He has illustrated that not only man, but man's world are caught in a routine sameness that is characteristic of every generation's experience. Man cannot tell everything, he cannot bear everything, and he cannot see everything. What he does perceive he concludes isn't new, but if man thinks it is, it is only because he does not remember what has gone before. History repeats itself. His further observation is that since human nature and nature itself never change, not only are his peers guilty of forgetting what has gone before, but those who are to come will not remember the things of today.

Solomon is really saying, "He that has seen the present, has seen all things." Things are considered novel or new only because they have been forgotten. So intent is the Preacher on this point that he repeats himself in verses nine and ten.

Much of what Solomon writes throughout the book is based on this premise. For example, he speaks of how easily men are forgotten (Eccles. 9:6–7; Eccles. 9:15). He instructs us to enjoy today and not to fret over a tomorrow which none is able to see (Eccles. 7:14; Eccles. 9:7). He suggests that he sought to know wisdom, madness, and folly, and that each of these will be sought by the one who succeeds the king (Eccles. 2:12). There is no lasting memory of either a wise man or a fool (Eccles. 2:16). God knows that human nature is always the same and seeks to deal with man on that basis (Eccles. 3:15; Eccles. 6:10).

There is dispute as to whether the term "things" in verse eleven refers to "former generations" and "later generations" or "former things" and "later things." The original terms could have either meaning. If one looks at the Preacher's writings in Eccles. 9:6–7 and Eccles. 9:15, he will discover that "generations" do fail to remember that which happened long ago. However, the context seems to be weakened by this interpretation. His "all" of verse two and his "earlier things" and "later things" of this verse encompass all the activities of each generation. This appears to be more in harmony with the question he seeks to answer: "What advantage does man have in all his work which he does under the sun?" (Eccles. 1:3).

His message is simple. If one keeps his eyes upon this world alone, then his labor is worth very little. He discovers that all his labor becomes entangled in the gray maze of monotonous, endless activities of not only his own life and generation, but of every generation that "goes" and "comes." It all fades into a similar backdrop of routine acts of nature which he so vividly describes through the activities of the sun, wind and rivers.

⁴⁰⁶ From [Useful Bible](#), accessed June 24, 2018.

Introducing Ecclesiastes 1:9–11 (from the College Press Bible Study)

His toil and effort on earth profit little. He discovers that he is caught in a purposeless web, a staircase to nowhere, the proverbial treadmill. His observations grow out of a life of one who has lived through the optimum of the excitement of youth as well as the experience of fulfilled dreams which he entertained in young manhood. Now, on the edge of departure from this world, with his eyes focused on earthly values alone, he wants to know what advantage, or profit, he can claim as his own in all his labor.

When man elects to face life and interpret its mystery apart from God's help, he inevitably will come to the same conclusion. Solomon has established an inescapable principle that a wise man works in harmony with the will of God, and God alone. The first half of his book illustrates the premise set forth in chapter one verses one through eleven. Many have asked, "What does the writer know of life?" Almost as if Solomon anticipated the question, he takes up the challenge and turns to the task before him. He is now determined to demonstrate the wisdom of his conclusion.

The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:9–11 (slightly edited).

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

What [is] that [which] has been, he [is] that [which] will be. And what [is] that [which] has been done, he [is] that [which] will be done. And [there is] nothing new under the sun.

Ecclesiastes
1:9

What has been, will be [in the future]; and what has been done, it will be done [again, in the future]. [There is] no new [thing] under the sun.

What has happened in the past, will happen again in the future; what has been done in the past will be done again in the future. There is no new thing under the sun.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	What [is] that [which] has been, he [is] that [which] will be. And what [is] that [which] has been done, he [is] that [which] will be done. And [there is] nothing new under the sun.
Aramaic Targum	What was aforesaid, the same will be afterwards again, and what was done aforesaid the same will be done again <u>to the end of all generations</u> , and there is no new thing <u>in the world</u> under the sun.
Revised Douay-Rheims	What is it that has been? the same thing that shall be. What is it that has been done? the same that shall be done.
Peshitta (Syriac)	The thing that has been is that which shall be; and that which has been done is that which shall be done; and there is nothing new under the sun.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	What is that which has been? the very thing which shall be: and what is that which has been done? the very thing which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

Significant differences: Additional phrases added in the targum.

The Hebrew text is rather sparse; so that the ancient translations inserted several additional verbs. The Latin places the final phrase of this verse with the next verse.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Easy English Future events will be the same as past events were.

What people have done, they will do again.
There is nothing that is new anywhere on the earth.

Easy-to-Read Version–2006	Nothing Is New All things continue the way they have been since the beginning. The same things will be done that have always been done. There is nothing new in this life.
Good News Bible (TEV)	What has happened before will happen again. What has been done before will be done again. There is nothing new in the whole world.
<i>The Message</i>	Boring to the eye, boring to the ear. What was will be again, what happened will happen again.
NIRV	There's nothing new on this earth. Everything that has ever been will come back again. Everything that has ever been done will be done again. Nothing is new on earth.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	The sun shines on all the earth and exposes the routine sameness of all the events which continue on since creation. They shall continue on the same. There is nothing new under the sun!
Contemporary English V.	Everything that happens has happened before; nothing is new, nothing under the sun.
The Living Bible	History merely repeats itself. Nothing is truly new; it has all been done or said before. What can you point to that is new?
New Century Version	All things continue the way they have been since the beginning. What has happened will happen again; there is nothing new here on earth.
New Living Translation	History merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	Everything continues to be the same as it has always been. Things that happen have happened previously, and they will happen again. What has been done before will be done again. There is nothing really new in this world.

History merely repeats itself. It
has all been done before.
Nothing under the sun is truly
new.

Ecclesiastes 1:9 NLT

Ecclesiastes 1:9 (NLT) (a graphic); from **Bible bits**; accessed June 17, 2018.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	What is this thing that [just] happened? The same thing will happen again! What is this thing being done?
------------------------	---

	The same will be done in the future... For there's nothing that's new under the sun!
New Advent (Knox) Bible	⁹ Ever that shall be that ever has been, that which has happened once shall happen again; ¹⁰ there can be nothing new, here under the sun. A portion of Knox's v. 10 is included for context.
Translation for Translators	<i>Everything continues to be the same as it has always been;</i> things that happen have happened previously, and they will happen again. What has been done before will be done again. There is nothing <i>really</i> new in this world.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible	That what has come to be prepared, maintains to be that what comes to be prepared - is there to be that new under the sun? -
Conservapedia	The way things were in the past will be the way things are in the future; what has been done before will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. I kept it "nothing new under the sun" rather than changing it to earthly, primarily because it is such an iconic quote.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	What has been,—that will be; and what has been done, will be done ; for there is nothing new under the Sun!
God's Truth (Tyndale)	The thing that has been comes to pass again: there is no new thing under the Sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said: Lo, this is new?
Jubilee Bible 2000	The thing that has been, it <i>is that</i> which shall be; and that which <i>is</i> done is that which shall be done; and <i>there is</i> no new <i>thing</i> under the sun.
Unlocked Literal Bible	Whatever has been is what will be, and whatever has been done is what will be done. There is nothing new under the sun.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

New Jerusalem Bible	What was, will be again, what has been done, will be done again, and there is nothing new under the sun!
New RSV	What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing new under the sun.
Revised English Bible—1989	What has happened will happen again, and what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

The Complete Tanach	What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.
---------------------	---

What has been is what will be, etc.: In whatever he learns, in a matter that is an exchange for the sun, there is nothing new. He will see only that which already was, which was created in the six days of Creation. But one who meditates on the Torah constantly finds new insights therein, as it is stated (Prov. 5:19): "her breasts will satisfy you at all times." Just as this breast, whenever the infant feels it, he finds a taste in it, so are the words of Torah (Er. 54b), and so we find in Tractate Hagigah, that Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus said things that the ear had never heard, concerning the account of the Celestial Chariot.

exeGesés companion Bible	What became, becomes; what was worked, is worked: and naught is new under the sun.
--------------------------	--

The Israel Bible	Only that shall happen Which has happened, Only that occur Which has occurred; There is nothing new Beneath the sun!
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	Only that shall happen Which has happened, Only that occur Which has occurred; There is nothing new Beneath the sun!
Orthodox Jewish Bible	The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is nothing chadash under the shemesh.
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	What has been is what shall be, what has been done is what shall be done, and there is no new <i>matter</i> under the sun.

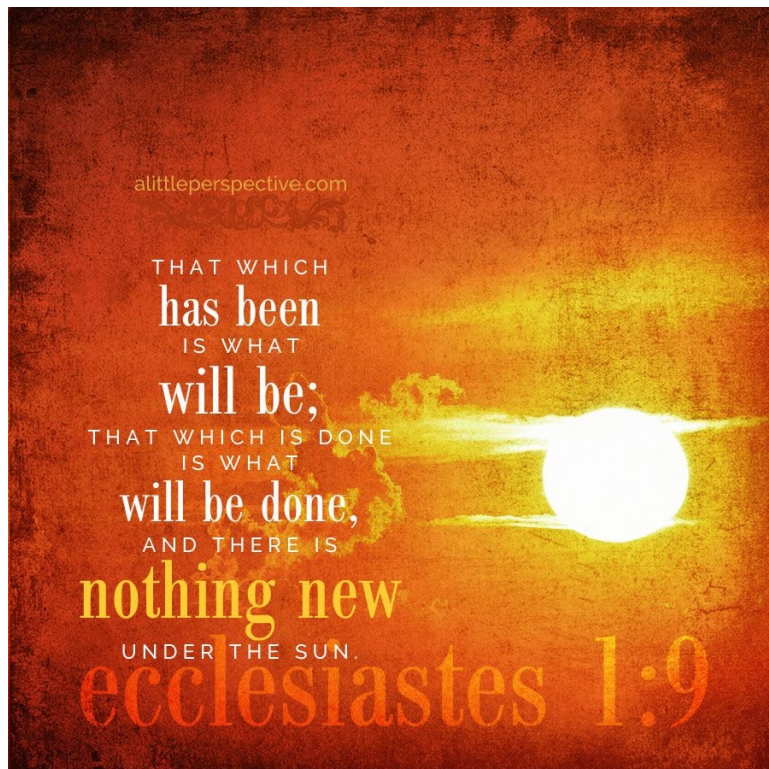
Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible	·All things continue the way they have been since the beginning [·Whatever is will be again]. What has happened will happen again; there is nothing new ·here on earth [·under the sun; v. 3].
Kretzmann's Commentary	The thing that hath been, that which has happened time and again in the past, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done, occurring over and over again in human experience; and there is no new thing under the sun, no matter how men may change their environment and place the newest achievements of science and invention into their service, the misery and the toil of life is ever the same, and the abuse of God's gifts and the transgression and the dissatisfaction of man's heart are ever the same.
NET Bible®	What exists now ³⁴ is what will be, ³⁵ and what has been done is what will be done; there is nothing truly new on earth. ³⁶ ³⁴ tn Heb "what is." The Hebrew verbal form is a perfect. Another option is to translate, "What has been." See the next line, which speaks of the past and the future. ³⁵ tn The Hebrew verbal form is an imperfect. ³⁶ tn Heb "under the sun."
The Pulpit Commentary	The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be. The LXX. and the Vulgate render the first clauses of the two parts of the verse in both cases interrogatively, thus: "What is that which hath been? The very thing which shall be. And what is that which hath been done? The very thing which shall be done." What has been affirmed of phenomena in the material world is now affirmed of the events of man's life. They move in an analogous circle, whether they are concerned with actions or morals...But Koheleth is speaking merely from experience, and is indulging in no philosophical speculations. There is no new thing under the sun. The Vulgate transfers this clause to the next verso, which, indeed, supports the assertion. From classical authors commentators have culled examples of the same thought. Thus...M. Aurelius, 'Medit.,' 6.37, "He that sees the present has seen all things, both that which has Been from everlasting and that which shall Be in the future. All things are of one birth and one form." Again, Eccles. 7:1, "There is nothing new; all things are common and quickly over;" 12:26, "Everything that comes to pass was always so coming to pass, and will take place again."
The Voice	What has been, that will be; what has been done, that will be done.

Nothing is new under the sun;
the future only repeats the past.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Ecclesiastes 1:9 (NKJV) (a graphic); from [Pinterest](#); accessed June 17, 2018.



C. Thompson (updated) OT **What is that which has been? The very same which will be. And what is that which has been done? The very same which will be done: for there is nothing entirely new under the sun.**

Concordant Literal Version **What occurred once, it shall occur again, And what was done, it shall be done again. There is nothing at all new under the sun."**

Emphasized Bible **That which hath been, is the same that shall be, and, that which hath been done, is the same that shall be done,—and there is, nothing new, under the sun.**

English Standard Version **What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.**

Green's Literal Translation **That which has been, it is that which shall be. And that which has been done, it is that which will be done. And there is no new thing under the sun.**

New American Standard B. **That which has been is that which will be, And that which has been done is that which will be done. So there is nothing new under the sun.**

Young's Updated LT **What is that which has been? it is that which is, and what is that which has been done? it is that which is done, and there is not an entirely new thing under the sun.**

The gist of this passage: Anything that can be done, has been done before; there is nothing new under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 1:9a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
māh (מָה) [pronounced maw]	what, how, why; what [thing]; anything, something, whatever	interrogative; exclamatory particle; indefinite pronoun; relative pronoun	Strong's #4100 BDB #552

Ecclesiastes 1:9a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced sheh]	who, which, that	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979

This is spelled shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced shehl], but apparently is shortened further and affixed to a word or set of words. This relative particle appears to be a form of or a synonym of the relative pronoun 'asher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced uhsh-ER], which means *that, which, when, who* or *how*. Strong's #834 BDB #81. Although BDB says that its usage appears to be confined to later Hebrew and passages with a northern Palestine coloring⁴⁰⁷, it occurs as early as Gen. 6:3.

Do these two words together mean *what*?

hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
hûw' (אוּ) [pronounced hoo]	<i>he, it; him, himself as a demonstrative pronoun: that, this (one); same</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> , is implied	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced sheh]	who, which, that	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979

This is spelled shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced shehl], but apparently is shortened further and affixed to a word or set of words. This relative particle appears to be a form of or a synonym of the relative pronoun 'asher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced uhsh-ER], which means *that, which, when, who* or *how*. Strong's #834 BDB #81. Although BDB says that its usage appears to be confined to later Hebrew and passages with a northern Palestine coloring⁴⁰⁸, it occurs as early as Gen. 6:3.

hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
------------------------------------	--	--	-------------------------

Translation: *What has been, will be [in the future];...* What has happened in the past, will occur in the future. As we have observed in our own time, the technology may change, but man is the same flawed man from 1000 years ago or 5000 years ago. The only difference might be language and culture.

Dr. Bob Utley: *"That which has been is that which will be" This refers to meaningless repetition with no apparent purpose or attainable goal (this is sarcasm of humanity without God. Compare Isa. 55:6–13!). This describes humanistic atheism and, for that matter, eastern religious philosophy (i.e., wheel of karma).*⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*; Hendrickson Publishers; ©1996; p. 979.

⁴⁰⁸ *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*; Hendrickson Publishers; ©1996; p. 979.

⁴⁰⁹ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:3–11.

Ecclesiastes 1:9b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
mâh (מַה) [pronounced <i>maw</i>]	<i>what, how, why; what [thing]; anything, something, whatever</i>	interrogative; exclamatory particle; indefinite pronoun; relative pronoun	Strong's #4100 BDB #552
she- (-שֶׁ) [pronounced <i>sheh</i>]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979

This is spelled shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced *sheh*], but apparently is shortened further and affixed to a word or set of words. This relative particle appears to be a form of or a synonym of the relative pronoun 'asher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced *uhsh-ER*], which means *that, which, when, who* or *how*. Strong's #834 BDB #81. Although BDB says that its usage appears to be confined to later Hebrew and passages with a northern Palestine coloring⁴¹⁰; it occurs as early as Gen. 6:3.

Do these two words together mean *what*?

'âsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>to be done [made, produced]; to be offered, to be observed, to be used; was made [constructed, fashioned], to be formed, to be prepared</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Niphal perfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
hûw' (הוּא) [pronounced <i>hoo</i>]	<i>he, it; him, himself as a demonstrative pronoun: that, this (one); same</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> , is implied	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
she- (-שֶׁ) [pronounced <i>sheh</i>]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979

Do these have a specialized meaning?

'âsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>to be done [made, produced]; to be offered, to be observed, to be used; was made [constructed, fashioned], to be formed, to be prepared</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Niphal imperfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
--	--	---	----------------------------

Translation: ...and what has been done, it will be done [again, in the future]. All that has been done before in the past, it will be done again in the future.

Quite obviously, technology has changed over the years; but to Solomon's time, whatever he has done or seen done in his kingdom, someone did that very thing before.

⁴¹⁰ *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*; Hendrickson Publishers; ©1996; p. 979.

Ecclesiastes 1:9 What has happened in the past, will happen again in the future; what has been done in the past will be done again in the future. There is no new thing under the sun.

What has been done in the past will be done in the future (Eccles. 1:9) (comments)

Trapp: *History, therefore, must needs be of noble and necessary use; because, by setting before us what hath been, it predicts what will be again, since the self same fable is acted over again in the world, the persons only are altered that act it.*⁴¹¹

Benson: *The thing that hath been, &c. — There is nothing in the world but a continued and tiresome repetition of the same things. The nature and course of the beings and affairs of the world, and the tempers of men, are the same that they ever were, and shall ever be; and therefore, because no man ever yet received satisfaction from worldly things, it is vain for any person hereafter to expect it. And there is no new thing — In the nature of things, which might give us hopes of attaining that satisfaction which hitherto things have not afforded.*⁴¹²

Ken Cayce: *Solomon says it is like treading water. We are getting nowhere fast. Solomon sees life as a never-ending circle of events. It seems in all of this, that Solomon would like to improve the situation around him.*

*He finds he is not able to do that, and it leaves him with a feeling of futility. He believes that each generation faces the very same problems of life that the generation before them did. It is as if all that he does is in vain.*⁴¹³

Ecclesiastes 3:15 That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already has been; and God seeks what has been driven away.

Ecclesiastes 7:10 Say not, "Why were the former days better than these?" For it is not from wisdom that you ask this. (ESV)

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:9c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
'êyin (אֵיַן) [pronounced <i>AYH-yin</i>]	<i>in the condition of being not = without, nothing, no, not; there is no [none, no one, not]</i>	substantive of negative in the construct form	Strong's #369 BDB #34
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	<i>every, each, all of, all; any of, any</i>	masculine singular construct not followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
Literally, these two words mean <i>nothing of all...</i> However, together, they mean <i>none, nothing, [there is] nothing [to]</i> . The words <i>nothing at all</i> express this combination very well.			
châdâsh (חַדָּשׁ) [pronounced <i>khaw-DAWSH</i>]	<i>new, new thing; fresh</i>	feminine singular adjective	Strong's #2319 BDB #294

⁴¹¹ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 1:9.

⁴¹² Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:8–9.

⁴¹³ From <http://www.bible-studys.org> accessed June 24, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:9c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
tachath (תַּחַת) [pronounced TAH-khahth]	<i>underneath, below, under, beneath; instead of, in lieu of; in the place [in which one stands]; in exchange for; on the basis of</i>	preposition of location or foundation	Strong's #8478 BDB #1065
shemesh (שֶׁמֶשׁ) [pronounced SHEH-mesh]	<i>sun; sunrise, sun-rising, east, sun-setting, west (of direction); openly, publically</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #8121 BDB #1039

Translation: [There is] no new [thing] under the sun. There is nothing new under the sun. In this world, in human existence, there is not some clever new thing done by man that has not been done before.

I was a teacher for 29 years. Now, when I began teaching, it was all new; but then, 20 years later, when a kid tried to pull the same things that 100 kids had done before him—well, it was not so new anymore. Once it was even sort of cute; 20 years later, not so much.

Ecclesiastes 1:9 (ESV) (a graphic); from [Primo Bible Verses](#); accessed June 17, 2018.

Chapter Outline

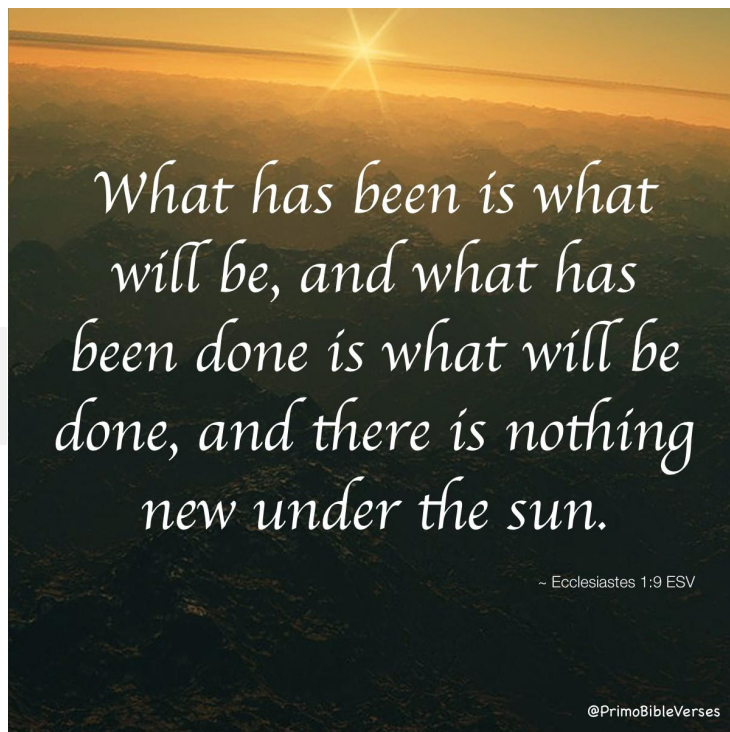
Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Dr. Dan Hill: *Solomon uses that phrase "under the sun" thirty times in Ecclesiastes to refer to things that are earthbound, the observable world that discounts the sovereignty of God.*⁴¹⁴

This seems to express quite a sad, depressed state of mind for Solomon.

Quite obviously, there are new products on the market and technological things created that did not exist before; but none of that changes man's inner nature. None of the wonderful things which have been created, which take up so much of our time, make up happier or more at peace. They may give us some pleasure; but no permanent happiness.

As has been noted earlier, no matter who pleased we seem to be with seeing this or that new thing; or hearing some wonderful sound, at some point, our eyes are tired of seeing and our ears are tired of hearing. I am sure that there must be some person I grew up with in the 60's who blasts out 1960's music everyday; but my guess is, most from that era have moved on. They may go back and listen now and again; but you can only hear to much before you grow tired of it.



⁴¹⁴ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 11, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:9 (Bible journaling) (a graphic); from [Pinterest](#); accessed June 17, 2018.

Eccles. 1:9 seems to be one of the verses from this chapter which receives the most graphics. This is a very important point of view expressed by Solomon, the human author. However, it is easy to read this book and become confused, despite the fact that the message jumps out at you.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

This statement of Solomon's—**There is no new thing under the sun**—I don't necessarily see that as a pronouncement of an absolute undeniable truth; but more a sad statement of despair, that, at some point, there remains nothing really new to stimulate Solomon's senses.

No doubt, you know people who are after the newest thing—they tell you about the newest music, or the latest movie to come out, or this great new television show, or they tell you about Alexa or about their new iphone (maybe they don't tell you about the new phone, but it is obviously the new phone has far more of their attention than you do).

Solomon, in his era, had seen all of that new stuff, and not only did it give him no true satisfaction, but he despairs that, *There is no new thing under the sun*. Solomon has just come to a point where, all of this new stuff just seems the same to him.

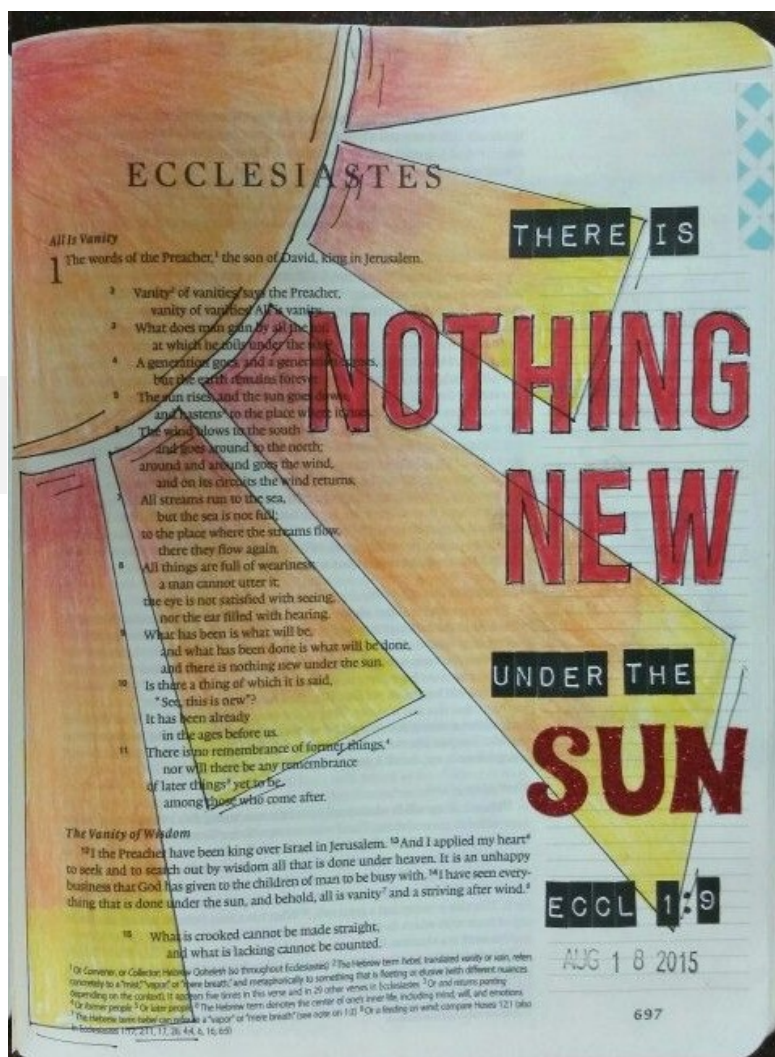
This phrase, *under the sun*, is found 29 times in the book of Ecclesiastes, and nowhere else in the Bible. It indicates that what the author is observing is man's lot in life apart from God.

Ecclesiastes 1:9 **What has happened in the past, will happen again in the future; what has been done in the past will be done again in the future. There is no new thing under the sun.**

There is no new thing under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9) (various commentators)

Dr. John Gill: *and there is no new thing under the sun; which is to be understood of things natural, as the works of creation, which were finished from the beginning of the world, and continue as they were ever since, Heb. 4:3; the various seasons of day and night, of summer and winter, of spring and autumn, of heat and cold, of seed time and harvest, come in course, as they always did; these ordinances never fail.*

Dr. Bob Utley: *"there is nothing new under the sun" This repeated theme is the key to interpreting the book. The author is showing the meaninglessness and hopelessness of life without God; without purpose; without eternity! The readers are forced to contemplate human existence, earthly life, if there is no God!*



There is no new thing under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9) (various commentators)

Utlely continues: *This is where the modern issue over origins takes on its sharpest focus. Is the universe, in all its size, power, and violence all there was, all there is, and all there will be? Is human life an accident, a passing purposeless evolution of constant change? Is change the only absolute? This is the ultimate question of human worth, dignity, and divine image!*⁴¹⁵

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *This is not meant in a general sense; but there is no new source of happiness (the subject in question) which can be devised.*⁴¹⁶

Bible Knowledge Commentary: *For example, man's journey to the moon and the discovery of America, though different, were both explorations of distant places, involving adventure and risk.*⁴¹⁷

Matthew Poole: *There is nothing in the world but a continued and tiresome repetition of the same things. The nature and course of the beings and affairs of the world, and the tempers of men's minds, are generally the same that they ever were and shall ever be; and therefore because no man ever yet received satisfaction from any worldly things, it is a vain and foolish thing for any person hereafter to expect it.*⁴¹⁸

Brian Bell Commentary: *Edison said that his inventions were only bringing out the secrets of nature & applying them for the happiness of mankind. Man cannot create...He simply puts together elements that have always existed, into different forms & contraptions.*⁴¹⁹

Bell also writes: *Make sure you don't mistake novelty for originality.*⁴²⁰

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Bear in mind that Solomon has personally seen various building techniques and building materials and ideas which certainly changed from the time that David built his palace to the time that Solomon built his. I believe that the proper way of understanding Solomon's statement here is, insofar as man and the earth go (and the cycles of the earth)—and even regarding the newest philosophies of the day—there is nothing truly new.

Ecclesiastes 1:9 [What has happened in the past, will happen again in the future; what has been done in the past will be done again in the future. There is no new thing under the sun.](#)

There is nothing new—Part II; what about technology? (Various commentators)

Dunagan: *Solomon isn't denying advances in technology or human creativity. But basically, nothing is new.*⁴²¹

Dunagan: *But Wait A Minute----There Is Something New On The Market! Someone might respond, "Well other generations couldn't find happiness in things, but they didn't have....." Each generation seems to think that they have really found the ultimate. The ultimate car, toy, house, gadget, thrill, adventure, etc....How many times do you hear people expressing the sentiment, "How could people in the past be happy without one of our modern conveniences?"*⁴²²

⁴¹⁵ Dr. Bob Utlely, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:3–11.

⁴¹⁶ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:9.

⁴¹⁷ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:9.

⁴¹⁸ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:9.

⁴¹⁹ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/cbb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 25, 2018.

⁴²⁰ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/cbb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 25, 2018.

⁴²¹ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:9.

⁴²² Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:8.

There is nothing new—Part II; what about technology? (Various commentators)

J. Vernon McGee: *My grandfather courted my grandmother on an old horsehair sofa in a very staid living room in Mississippi. He proposed to her there. She accepted, and they were married. My dad courted my mother on a train — he met her in a day coach. They traveled by horse and buggy to Tyler, Texas, where they were married. I proposed to my wife down in Texas, as we were sitting in a car. My little grandson may propose to his wife in an airplane or maybe even in a space capsule. You may ask, "Isn't that new?" No, not really. The feeling that my granddad had when his proposal was accepted is the same feeling that I had, and I don't think my little grandson will feel any differently. There is really nothing new under the sun. The environment may change, and there may be new gadgets around, but there really is nothing new under the sun. Man stays the same. Only the stage setting may vary a bit from age to age.*

McGee continues: *It is said that the atom bomb is new, but the atom has been around for a long time. Actually, the atom is older than man, although man did not know it existed during all that time. All man has accomplished is to make the little atom a very difficult neighbor. The nosy human should have let sleeping dogs lie, but we probe around. Perhaps you are asking, "Well, isn't the computer new?" Not really. God created us with computer brains and electric nervous systems. A mechanical computer brings to man no deep and abiding satisfaction. Man has learned that none of these gadgets contributes anything really new to him.*

McGee continues: *There is one exception. There is one thing that is new — the New Birth. This is something that comes when you receive Jesus Christ as your Savior. This, my friend, is about the only thing new that will come your way.*⁴²³

James Burton Coffman: *This is the equivalent of the modern truism that history repeats itself. The reference here is not to such things as discoveries and inventions. The prophet Daniel foretold that, "knowledge would be increased," in the time of the end (Daniel 12:4). Despite this, the verse here is profoundly true. Emotionally, man is exactly the same as he always has been. The sins of America today are exactly the sins of ancient Babylon. Man rationalizes his sinful behavior and yields to seductive temptations in exactly the same patterns as always. In this sector, there is indeed "nothing new under the sun." Man's basic spiritual need is the same as that of Adam and Eve after they were cast out of the Garden of Eden.*⁴²⁴

Keith Krell: *The French have a proverb that goes: "The more things change, the more they turn out to be the same." While there are new inventions, and God does do new things, Solomon is talking about how man can never be satisfied "under the sun."*⁴²⁵

John W. Ritenbaugh: *Solomon says, "There is no new thing under the sun." No matter what men invent, the basic motivation that brought the thing into being is not new. The "thing" in this context is not what we might normally think of. Remember, this is a treatise on life, not on technology. For example, a lot of new things have come along, such as lasers, hydrogen bombs, and automobiles. In this context, these things are not really new. They may be new technologically, but they are not Solomon's object. They will have no impact on understanding the meaning of life.*

Ritenbaugh continues: *A laser will have no more impact than an automobile does. Men see all kinds of possibilities in which they can use this new technology, but will it make life any less vanity-filled? Will it give meaning to life? No more than the automobile, no more than the buggy did before it and the wheel before it—because human nature never changes. Satan never changes. God never changes.*

Ritenbaugh continues: *So the more things change, the more they stay the same. This can be awfully frustrating to a thinking individual, who is looking at life and wondering where it is headed, which includes most of the people in the world. Thus, as Solomon sees matters, no new thing appears on the scene.*⁴²⁶

⁴²³ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt accessed June 21, 2018.

⁴²⁴ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

⁴²⁵ From [Bible.org](https://www.bible.org), accessed June 22, 2018.

⁴²⁶ From [Bible tools](https://www.bibletools.org) accessed June 18, 2018.

There is nothing new—Part II; what about technology? (Various commentators)

Although there is clearly technological changes in the life of man—man is virtually unchanged.

And yet, with all the new technology of the 21st century, man is still the miserable, sinful creature that he has always been. The only difference is, he now carries an iphone.

Bear in mind that we do not have to justify every statement that Solomon makes in the book of Ecclesiastes. Not everything that he says is true; it is just true for the man under the sun.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

There are new things in this world. God will do a new thing in this world. Isa. 43:19 Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

Jer. 31:22 How long will you waver, O faithless daughter? For the LORD has created a new thing on the earth: a woman encircles a man." (ESV)

And, at the end of time, God will create a new heavens and a new earth (Rev. 21:1, 5).

Ecclesiastes 1:9 What has happened in the past, will happen again in the future; what has been done in the past will be done again in the future. There is no new thing under the sun.

The repetition of cycles (Ecclesiastes 1:4–9) (various commentators)

Gary Everett: *The Preacher initially notices the repetition of cycles, or seasons of life when he says, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun." (Eccles. 1:9). He will later acknowledge God's hand in orchestrating these cycles and seasons in Eccles. 3:1–8.*⁴²⁷

Dr. Peter Pett: *Man too is caught up with this continual process. All things are simply continually boring and frustrating, not worth talking about, not satisfying the watching eye, nor the hearing ear, for it is nothing new. What has happened will happen again and again. What is done by man will be done again and again. There is nothing new anywhere, wherever we look under the sun. Man's knowledge of, and from, life gets him nowhere.*

Pett continues: *This is the view of life of the thinking man. Unless we simply go on without thinking this must be our conclusion. There is nothing on earth finally worth living and striving for, or discovering. It may be of advantage in the short term, but it passes. It is not permanent. It does not reach to the very basis of life.*⁴²⁸

The Cambridge Bible: *What has been affirmed of natural phenomena is now repeated of the events of human life. The writer reproduces or anticipates the Stoic doctrine of a recurring cycle of events.*⁴²⁹

Clarke: *Every thing in the whole economy of nature has its revolutions; summer and winter, heat and cold, rain and drought, seedtime and autumn, with the whole system of corruption and generation, alternately succeed each other, so that whatever has been shall be again. There is really, physically, and philosophically, nothing absolutely new under the sun, in the course of sublunary things. The same is the case in all the revolutions of the heavens.*⁴³⁰

⁴²⁷ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–11.

⁴²⁸ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:8–9.

⁴²⁹ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:9.

⁴³⁰ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:9.

The repetition of cycles (Ecclesiastes 1:4–9) (various commentators)

In one sense this is true; but if we were to look at the weather of any particular day at any particular place, there would be unique features to that day, not found in the same combination on previous days. When factoring in the temperature, the winds, the precipitation and humidity, each day has its own set of unique factors.

This repetition of cycles might be applied to the thinking and behavior of man as well.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

There [is] a word which is being said, “See, this [is] new!” He already has been to forever which has been from to our faces.

Ecclesiastes
1:10

There [is] a thing that [one] will claim, “Look, Here is something [lit., *this*] new!” [But] it already has been in front of us all this time [lit., *forever*].

Someone will claim, “Look, this is a new thing!” However, it is not a new thing; it has been here before.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	There [is] a word which is being said, “See, this [is] new!” He already has been to forever which has been from to our faces.
Aramaic Targum	There may be something of which <u>a man</u> says, Behold, this a new thing, but it has been long ago, in the generations which were before us.
Revised Douay-Rheims	<u>Nothing under the sun is new, neither</u> is any man able to say: Behold this is new: for it has <u>already gone</u> before in the ages that were before us.
Peshitta (Syriac)	<u>Whoever speaks and says</u> , Look, this is new, should know that it already has been in the ages which were before us.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	<u>Who is he that shall speak and say</u> , Behold, this is new? it has already been in the ages that have passed before us.

Significant differences: The Latin places a part of v. 9 with v. 10. They also introduce a negative where there is none. The first few words in the Syriac (and the Greek) are similar to, but not exactly those found in the Hebrew. The Latin has *already gone* instead of *had already been*. The targum only has a couple of extra words.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Easy English	We can say, ‘Look! Here is something new.’ But it is not true! It was here already, many years ago. It was here before we were born. We soon forget people who have died. Although EE lists this as part of v. 10, it should be placed with v. 11.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	Someone might say, “Look, this is new,” but that thing has always been here. It was here before we were.
God’s Word™	Can you say that anything is new? It has already been here long before us.
Good News Bible (TEV)	“Look,” they say, “here is something new!” But no, it has all happened before, long before we were born.
The Message	Does someone call out, “Hey, this is new”? Don’t get excited—it’s the same old story.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	Is something new because you in your generation have not discovered it? Is something new simply because it was forgotten by one generation? No! Sometime in the past it existed as we now discover it.
Common English Bible	People may say about something: "Look at this! It's new!" But it was already around for ages before us.
Contemporary English V.	Someone might say, "Here is something new!" But it happened before, long before we were born.
The Living Bible New Century Version	What can you point to that is new? How do you know it didn't exist long ages ago? Someone might say, "Look, this is new," but really it has always been here. It was here before we were.
New Life Version	Is there anything of which one might say, "See, this is new"? It has already been there since long before us.
New Living Translation	Sometimes people say, "Here is something new!" But actually it is old; nothing is ever truly new.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	Sometimes people say, "Look at this! This is something new!" But it has existed previously. It existed before we were born.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	Who can say, 'Look, here's something new!' For the same thing has happened for ages To those who have lived before us.
Beck's American Translation	Is there anything about which you can say, "Look, this is new"? It has been there already long before us.
International Standard V	Does anything exist about which someone might say, "Look at this! Is this new?" It happened ages ago; it existed before we did.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	⁹ Ever that shall be that ever has been, that which has happened once shall happen again; ¹⁰ there can be nothing new, here under the sun. Never man calls a thing new, but it is something already known to the ages that went before us; ¹¹ only we have no record of older days. Vv. 9 and 11a are included for context. I like the way that Knox connects these thoughts.
Knox Bible ('you' version)	Never man calls a thing new, but it is something already known to the ages that went before us; only we have no record of older days. A portion of v. 11 is included for context.
Translation for Translators	Sometimes people say, "Look at this! This is something new [RHQ]!" But it has existed previously; it existed before we were born.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Alpha & Omega Bible	WHO IS HE THAT SHALL SPEAK AND SAY, BEHOLD, THIS IS NEW? IT HAS ALREADY BEEN IN THE AGES THAT HAVE PASSED BEFORE US (before the human race)!
Awful Scroll Bible	...persist there a concern that retains to be ventured? -- "Be perceiving, this is to be new!" It is to already be of old being turned toward.
Conservapedia	Is there anything of which we can say, "Look, this is new"? All things are old, all was done before us.

Ferrar-Fenton Bible	If it is ever said, "See! This is new!" It has often been in former times that were before us.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	Is there any thing whereof it may be said: Lo, this is new? For it was long ago in the times that have been before us.
Unlocked Literal Bible	Is there anything about which it may be said, 'Look, this is new'? Whatever exists has already existed for a long time, during ages which came long before us.
Wikipedia Bible Project	For anything of which will be said, "Look, this here is new!" It has been there forever in the past.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (2013) The Heritage Bible	If they say to you, "See, it's new!" know that it has already been centuries earlier. Is there a word where it may be said, See, this <i>is</i> new? It has always been long ago, that which existed facing back.
New American Bible (2011)	Even the thing of which we say, "See, this is new!" has already existed in the ages that preceded us. Eccl 3:15.
New Jerusalem Bible	Take anything which people acclaim as being new: it existed in the centuries preceding us.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

The Complete Tanach	There is a thing of which [someone] will say, "See this, it is new." It has already been for ages which were before us.
	There is a thing: that comes to your hand under the sun about which the speaker will say, "See, this is a new thing!" But it is not new, for it has already been so for ages that have passed before us, but "there is no remembrance of former [generations]." Therefore, it seems to be new.
exeGesés companion Bible	Is there any word whereof is said, See, this is new? It already became - eternally at our face.
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	Sometimes there is a phenomenon of which they say, "Look, this one is new!"—it occurred long since, in ages that went by before us.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is chadash? L'olamim (ages ago), which were before us, it hath been already.
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	Is there a matter of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It was here already, long ago.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Is there anything of which it can be said, "See this, it is new"? It has already existed for [the vast] ages [of time recorded or unrecorded] Which were before us.
The Expanded Bible	·Someone might say [^L Here is a common expression], "Look, this is new," but ·really it has always been here [it was already here long ago]. It ·was here before we were [existed before our time].
Kretzmann's Commentary	Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? Has human nature and the misery of human life changed since the fall of man? It hath been already of old time, which was before us, always, within the memory of man.

Maurer⁴³¹

That which has been (done) before us (in our presence, 1Chron. 16:33), has been (done) already in the old times.

NET Bible®

Is there anything about which someone can say, "Look at this! It is new!"³⁷ It was already³⁸ done long ago,³⁹ before our time.⁴⁰

^{37tn} Alternately, "[Even when] there is something of which someone might claim..."

The terms **שִׁי רַבְּדָּ רַמְאֵי שִׁי** (yesh davar sheyyo'mar) may be an interrogative clause without an introductory interrogative particle (GKC 473 §150.a). In questions, **שִׁי** often implies doubt about the existence of something (BDB 441 s.v. **שִׁי** 2.b). The LXX rendered it as a question, as do most English versions: "Is there anything of which it can be said...?" (KJV, ASV, RSV, MLB, NEB, NASB, NIV, NRSV). On the other hand, **שִׁי** is used elsewhere in the Book of Ecclesiastes as a predication of existence ("There is...") to assert the existence of something (2:13, 21; 4:8, 9; 5:13[12]; 6:1, 11; 7:15; 8:6, 14; 9:4; 10:5). HALOT 443 s.v. **שִׁי** 2 renders **שִׁי רַבְּדָּ** as "There is something..." This view is taken by several translations: "Even the thing of which we say..." (NAB), "Men may say of something ..." (Moffatt), and "Sometimes there is a phenomena of which they say..." (NJPS).

^{38tn} The perfect tense verb **הָיָה** (hayah) refers to a past perfect situation: It describes an action that is viewed as a remote past event from the perspective of the past. This past perfect situation is brought out by the temporal adverb **רַבְּכָ** (kÿvar, "already"; HALOT 459 s.v. **רַבְּכָ**; BDB 460 s.v. **רַבְּכָ**; cf. 1:10; 2:12, 16; 3:15; 4:2; 6:10; 9:6-7). The expression **רַבְּכָ + הָיָה** connotes a past perfect nuance: "it has already been" (Eccl 1:10; see BDB 460 s.v.).

^{39sn} This does not deny man's creativity or inventiveness, only the ultimate newness of his accomplishments. For example, there is no essential difference between the first voyage to the moon and the discovery of America (different point of arrival, different vehicles of travel, but the same essential action and results).

^{40tn} Heb "in the ages long ago before us."

The Pulpit Commentary

Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? The writer conceives that objection may be taken to his statement at the end of the preceding verse, so he proceeds to reiterate it in stronger terms. "Thing" is *dabar* (see on Eccles. 1:8). Septuagint, "He who shall speak and say, Behold, this is new," *seil*. Where is he? Vulgate, "Nothing is new under the sun, nor is any one able to say, Lo! this is fresh." The apparent exceptions to the rule are mistaken inferences. It hath been already of old time, which was before us. In the vast aeons of the past, recorded or unrecorded, the seeming novelty has already been known. The discoveries of earlier time are forgotten, and seem quite new when revived; but closer investigation proves their previous existence.

Syndein/Thieme

Is there any thing of which one may say, 'Look, there is something new?' It was here already . . . long ago. It was here before our time.

The Voice

One person may say of some idea,
"Pay attention to this; it's original!"
But that same idea has already been expressed;
it's been with us through the ages.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

C. Thompson (updated) OT

Who can speak and say, Behold this is entirely new. It has been already in the ages past which were before us.

Concordant Literal Version

Is there anything of which one may say: See this, it is new? It has already occurred In eons that were before us?

English Standard Version

Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already in the ages before us.

⁴³¹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:10.

Modern English Version	Is there a matter where it is said, “See, this is truly new”? Long ago in the past every matter has already been in our midst.
New American Standard B.	Is there anything of which one might say, “See this, it is new”? Already it has existed for ages Which were before us.
New King James Version	Is there anything of which it may be said, “See, this is new”? It has already been in ancient times before us.
Third Millennium Bible	Is there any thing whereof it may be said, "See, this is new"? It hath been already in olden times which were before us.
World English Bible	Is there a thing of which it may be said, “Behold, this is new?” It has been long ago, in the ages which were before us.
Young’s Updated LT	There is a thing of which <i>one</i> says: “See this, it <i>is</i> new!” already it has been in the ages that were before us!

The gist of this passage: Even when someone claims that something is new; it is not; it was here before us.

Ecclesiastes 1:10a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yêsh (יֵשׁ) [pronounced yaysh]	<i>being, substance, existence;</i> used as a substitute for <i>to be</i> (without reference to number or tense); there [is, are]; <i>to be</i> <i>present, to be ready, to exist</i>	substantive with a 3 rd person masculine singular suffix; the verb <i>to be</i> may be implied	Strong's #3426 BDB #441
The substantive yêsh often acts as a substantive plus the absolute status quo verb <i>to be</i> ; e.g., [<i>if</i>] <i>there be</i> (1Sam. 20:8), <i>there is</i> (Esther 3:8), <i>there shall be</i> (Jer. 31:6). However, this acts not as a mere copula [pronounced <i>KOP-ye-la</i>], but existence is emphasized. In the KJV, the verbal portion of this is often italicized. The second word in the second line of Job 6:6 is the substantive of existence or being—or <i>is there, or does there exist</i> . We often render this <i>there is</i> , even though <i>there is</i> no verb.			
dâbâr (דָּבָר) [pronounced daw ^b -VAWR]	<i>word, saying, doctrine, thing,</i> <i>matter, command; business,</i> <i>occupation; case; something;</i> <i>manner</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1697 BDB #182
A more full set of BDB meanings: <i>word of man: speech, discourse, saying, word, as the sum of that which is spoken; word of command, royal edict; message, report, tidings; advice, counsel, promise, request; charge, complaint; decision, sentence; theme, story; saying, utterance, sentence; title of writings; phrase, clause. As the word of God: a divine communication in the form of commandments, prophecy, and words of help to His people. It can also mean matter, affair, thing about which one speaks; business, occupation; cause, case for judicial investigation; something, anything (indefinite); way, manner; reason.</i> ⁴³² E. W. Bullinger adds <i>account, schedule.</i> ⁴³³			

⁴³² From <http://biblehub.com/hebrew/1697.htm> accessed April 26, 2018.

⁴³³ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, 1Kings 9:15.

Ecclesiastes 1:10a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced sheh]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
This is spelled shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced shehl], but apparently is shortened further and affixed to a word or set of words. This relative particle appears to be a form of or a synonym of the relative pronoun 'asher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced uhsh-ER], which means <i>that, which, when, who</i> or <i>how</i> . Strong's #834 BDB #81. Although BDB says that its usage appears to be confined to later Hebrew and passages with a northern Palestine coloring ⁴³⁴ , it occurs as early as Gen. 6:3.			
'amar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
râ'âh (רָאָה) [pronounced raw-AWH]	<i>look, see, watch; behold, view, see here, listen up; observe</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative	Strong's #7200 BDB #906
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced zeh]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	masculine singular demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
châdâsh (חָדָשׁ) [pronounced khaw-DAWSH]	<i>new, new thing; fresh</i>	masculine singular adjective	Strong's #2319 BDB #294

Pastor John Griffith: *chadash - new, fresh, renewed in a spiritual or moral sense.*⁴³⁵

Translation: There [is] a thing that [one] will claim, “Look, Here is something [lit., this] new!” Someone will come up with an example. They will point to something which they believe to be brand new—not seen before.

I believe that it is reasonable to confine this to nature and the life and substance of man.

Dr. Daniel Hill: *But when we get out from under the sun and begin to find God we see that there is a great deal that is new.*⁴³⁶

In point of fact, in the Christian life, there are several things which are new:

2Corinthians 5:17, at salvation we are a new creation: **Therefore if any man is in Christ, {he is} a new creature.** Ephesians 4:24, by faith as believers we put on the new man: **Put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.**

In Hebrews 12:24 we are told that we have a new covenant with God: And it is Jesus who is the mediator of this new covenant.

And we look ahead we do so anticipating a new creation: 2Peter 3:13 **But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.** (NASB)

⁴³⁴ *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*; Hendrickson Publishers; ©1996; p. 979.

⁴³⁵ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_04.html accessed June 15, 2018.

⁴³⁶ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 11, 2018.

Dr. Daniel Hill (who chose the verses above): *What a contrast: The gloomy outlook of man as he sets his sights no higher than that which under the Sun and the infinite glory of God.⁴³⁷ I would have said, he sets his sights no higher than that which is under the sun, not recognizing or fully appreciating the infinite glory of God.*

Ecclesiastes 1:10b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
hûw' (אוה) [pronounced hoo]	he, it; him, himself as a demonstrative pronoun: <i>that, this (one); same</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> , is implied	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
kebâr (כֶּבֶד) [pronounced keh-b-AWR]	<i>an extent of time; formerly, already, long ago, a great while</i>	adverb	Strong's #3528 BDB #460
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^o]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿowlâm (עוֹלָם) [pronounced ʿo-LAWM]	<i>long duration, forever, everlasting, eternal, perpetuity, antiquity, futurity; what is hidden, hidden time</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5769 BDB #761
ʿowlâm together with the lâmed preposition mean <i>forever, always</i> .			
ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced uh-SHER]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where; in that, in which, in what</i>	relative pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> is implied	Strong's #834 BDB #81
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
min (מִן) [pronounced mihn]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^o]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
pânîym (פָּנִים) [pronounced paw-NEEM]	<i>face, faces, countenance; presence</i>	masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular); with the 1 st person plural suffix	Strong's #6440 BDB #815

⁴³⁷ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 11, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:10b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>Together, the two prepositions and pânîym mean <i>from before, from the presence of, from a position before a person or object, from before a place</i>. However, this also expresses source or cause, and is also rendered <i>because of, on account of</i>. Literally, this is <i>from to faces of...</i></p>			

Translation: [But] it already has been in front of us all this time [lit., forever]. Further investigation will prove that this thing (whatever it is) has been around for a long time.

Bear in mind, this continues to be Solomon's confused, human viewpoint philosophy. Sometimes he seems to be accurate; and other times, less so. The revelation of God's Word continued for a millennium after Solomon; and one could easily argue that this information (information of the Church Age) was new.

Dr. Daniel Hill: *[M]ore than one historian has observed that we learn from history that we learn nothing from history. Perhaps because of our secular arrogance, we think that we can change things and that what happened in the past need not happen now. But history proves that when we learn nothing from history, we are doomed to repeat it.*⁴³⁸

Ecclesiastes 1:10 Someone will claim, "Look, this is a new thing!" However, it is not a new thing; it has been here before.

The Newest Thing (Ecclesiastes 1:10) (John W. Ritenbaugh)

Solomon continues with a similar theme of profitlessness except that he draws his illustrations from human examples. None of this means that mankind is not moving about. Earth is witness to a great deal of activity, but it is essentially purposeless, a great deal of sound and fury but with no advancement in quality of life or purposeful direction. Solomon's word-pictures show mankind striving to see and hear new things, but the reality is more repetition of the same old things. He pictures mankind as little more than a milling mass.

A partial reason for this is that mankind seems to be cursed with a short memory while at the same time having an insatiable thirst for novelty. In Acts 17:19-21, Luke describes the apostle Paul's experience in Athens:

And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean." For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

Understanding this desire, entrepreneurs take advantage of it to make money. So, there must be new, better, bigger, redesigned, more serviceable, more attractive, faster, safer, and more economical models each year. The entertainment industry thrives on this desire by trying to fill people's need for emotional satisfaction by devising new angles to tell the same old stories.

However, what this need really exposes is that our present life, combined with what we are looking forward to in the future, is not fulfilling enough to satisfy us. A vital element is missing from life: the overall perspective regarding life itself combined with the lack of a relationship with God.

⁴³⁸ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 11, 2018.

The Newest Thing (Ecclesiastes 1:10) (John W. Ritenbaugh)

Solomon does not mean that there are no new technologies or inventions. By saying "there is nothing new under the sun," he is attempting to stimulate the reader to consider what might effectively improve the quality of his life. The bulk of mankind lives by the same basic patterns as Adam and Eve did after God kicked them out of the Garden. Solomon is searching for a hopeful way of life, one that will fill a person with joy and his mind with pure, godly inspiration and character.

From [Bible tools](#) accessed June 18, 2018.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:10 Someone will claim, "Look, this is a new thing!" However, it is not a new thing; it has been here before.

It has already existed (Ecclesiastes 1:10) (various commentators)

Dunagan: *Our memories are short-lived. What we think is new is only new to us. And it is very easy to see the above truth once you have lived for some time. Fashions, trends, hairstyles, kids names, music, etc....all end up coming back. Things go out of style and then they come back in style. And what one generation was tired of, another generation greedily exclaims, "this is the greatest!" The same thing is seen in the religious world. What some denomination discards, another group will pick up and think it has just found the ultimate key to church growth or instant spirituality. Unfortunately, many of our liberal brethren are caught up in the above web of thinking that some practice or belief that is new to them is what the church can't survive without.*⁴³⁹

Expositor's Bible Commentary: *If any man suppose that he has discovered new phenomena, any natural fact which has not been repeating itself from the beginning, it is only because he is ignorant of that which has been from of old.*⁴⁴⁰

Ray Stedman: *Life is a rehash of what has been before; it is the old played over and over again. That is his argument. This too is a result of the restlessness that is built into life. Although something looks new to us, actually, "there is nothing new under the sun." Somebody immediately objects and says, "Wait a minute! They didn't have radio, television, space travel or any such thing until just a few decades ago. Why even you, Ray Stedman, ought to be able to remember way back to the days before they had any of those things!"*

Stedman continues: *When Don Broesamle and I were in Hong Kong recently, spending a couple days of rest after a rather exhausting travel and speaking schedule, we stayed at the wonderful old British Peninsula Hotel on the Kowloon side of Hong Kong. Right across the street from us was a newly built planetarium, and Don and I went to see there The Search For Other Civilizations. It is always exciting to me to sit in those domed rooms. The lights go down, the stars begin to appear above like the brightest stars on a summer's night, and you suddenly feel the sense of eternity, you sense the greatness and the magnificence of the universe.*

Stedman continues: *The show began by showing the great statues on Easter Island, in the Pacific Ocean, raising the question, "Where did these great statues come from?" These statues are huge, 20 feet or more in height, made of great stones that weigh hundreds of tons. Who erected them? Where did they come from, and how did they get there? Nobody has ever been able to answer those questions. Then the show took us into areas of South America where huge geometric patterns have been worked out over acres of ground. These designs have obviously been made by man, or some intelligent creature, yet they cannot even be seen unless they are viewed from the sky.*

⁴³⁹ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:10.

⁴⁴⁰ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1-11.

It has already existed (Ecclesiastes 1:10) (various commentators)

Stedman continues: *This raises the question, "Why would any people draw figures on the ground so huge that they cannot be seen unless they are viewed from the air?" Many have surmised that past civilizations did have ways of rising above the earth. Perhaps visitors from space used these patterns. Other mysteries, such as Stonehenge in England, are propounded and compounded as one explores the earth. It struck me that that planetarium show was a confirmation of what the Searcher of Ecclesiastes declares, "What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done." Other ages will repeat it. "There is nothing new under the sun."*

Stedman continues: *Why then do things appear new? His answer is in Verse 11: Man's memory is faulty; we have forgotten things that once were. The planetarium show confirmed that. One excerpt showed the Mayans of Central America, the actual blood descendants of a race of intellectual giants who once lived in the area, who erected temples filled with mysteries that the present generation of Mayan Indians has long forgotten. They cannot explain them; they do not understand them. They have lost the knowledge of the past.*

Stedman concludes: *This is what this writer declares. Our memories are so short that we lose what we know -- and, he suggests, it may happen again. All these technological marvels that we are so proud of may one day disappear in a great nuclear holocaust. Viewing our television sets or some such things, future generations may well ask, "What in the world is this jungle of wires for? What did they do with this thing?" That is the problem. "There is nothing new under the sun."⁴⁴¹*

Dr. Peter Pett: *He [Solomon, the author] then challenges his hearers to tell him whether anyone can point to anything that is really new. He concludes that they cannot, although those with short memories may think that they can. But they are wrong. Nothing happens now which has not happened a hundred times before through past ages. It has all happened again and again in the ages that preceded us. Man by searching never really finds out anything new. Life is just endless repetition.⁴⁴²*

Gill: *[L]ook into the natural world, and the same natural causes will be seen producing the same effects; or into the moral world, and there are the same virtues, and their contrary; or into the political world, and the same schemes are forming and pursuing, and which issue in the same things, peace or war; or into the learned world, and the same languages, arts, and sciences, are taught and learned; and the same things said over again.⁴⁴³*

Seneca: *Omnia transeunt ut revertantur; Nil novi video, nil novi facio. (All things pass away that they may return again; I see nothing new, I do nothing new).⁴⁴⁴*

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Many have attempted to justify Solomon's words here, that, [there is no new thing under the sun](#); that [all things have already existed in the ages before us](#). We need to keep in mind that, what the author has to say is not always accurate. After all, he has stated right up front, [Vanity of vanities! All is vanity](#). Is this accurate? Is this true? Of course not! Not to the spiritual man. Therefore, there is no need for us to justify that [there is no new thing under the sun](#). Already, several examples of new things have been presented.

Trapp: *[G]et into Christ, that you may be a new creature. So will you have a new name upon you; {Isa. 62:2} a new spirit within you; {Ezek. 36:27} new alliance; {Eph. 2:14} new attendants; {Psalm 91:11} new wages, new work; {Isa. 62:11} a new commandment; {1Jn. 2:8} a new covenant;*

⁴⁴¹ Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 1:8–11.

⁴⁴² Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:10.

⁴⁴³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:10.

⁴⁴⁴ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:10.

{Jer. 31:33} a new way to heaven; {Heb. 10:20} and a new mansion in heaven. {John 14:2 2Cor. 5:8}.⁴⁴⁵

Ecclesiastes 1:9–10 What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already in the ages before us. (ESV)

Is there really nothing new under the sun? (Geisler & Howe)

ECCLESIASTES 1:9–10 —Isn't it false to claim there is nothing new under the sun?

PROBLEM: Solomon declared here that "there is nothing new under the sun." But not only is this contrary to science and human history, but it is opposed by other verses of Scripture (cf. Isa. 43:19 ; Jer. 31:22) where God says He will do "a new thing."

SOLUTION: Of course there are new inventions, and God does new things. Solomon is not speaking about these, but as to how a human being can be satisfied "under the sun" (v. 8). All the regular means of wine, wealth, wisdom, and works (see Ecc. 2) have already been tried and found wanting.

From [When Critics Ask](#); accessed July 2, 2018.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

When it comes to man, man's behavior, men's relationships others—these things have all existed for ages, and nothing changes regarding the nature of man. There may be a new technology which has been developed; there may be new thing to cause man to face a new addiction; but the experience of addiction of man has been around nearly forever.

Ray Stedman then makes the point: *So the question is raised, "Is this all life is about?" Is it merely an empty pursuit of that which never satisfies? Can no breakthrough be made whereby something can be found that will continually meet the hunger of man's heart, to give an unending sense of delight, satisfaction and joy? That is the search.*⁴⁴⁶

B. H. Carroll suggests that this passage is a reference to a new place to go for happiness: *The meaning of Eccles. 1:9–10 is that there is no new source of happiness (the subject in question) which can be devised, the same round of pleasures, cares, business, and study being repeated over and over again; that in the nature of things, there is no new thing which might give us hope of attaining that satisfaction that hitherto things have not afforded.*⁴⁴⁷

What Solomon should have asked. This might be the more accurate question for Solomon to raise: *Is there any new thing under the sun which can satisfy man? Is there any new thing which can speak to the yearnings of his heart?*

It is clear that, in the United States, in the year 2018, nearly every person has his basic needs met and there are a plethora of things provided by which to entertain us and to take up our time in pleasurable/stimulating ways. Why isn't man satisfied? Why is there so much anger and dissatisfaction? Why do so many people require psychotropic drugs? Why are so many people taking illicit drugs? Why are so many people demanding that marijuana be made legal (it may be completely legal by the time that you read this). Why are so many people taking their own lives? Why is there so much anger, bitterness, and division among various peoples in this nation? The life I have led has been so much better than the life that my parents lived; and I have had far more options

⁴⁴⁵ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 1:10 (slightly edited).

⁴⁴⁶ Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 1:8–11.

⁴⁴⁷ B. H. Carroll, *An interpretation of the English Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2–5:9.

in life; and far more things to see, to hear and to do. Although I have worked hard, I did not have near the struggle that my parents did. Why isn't my generation in a virtual nirvana? Why don't we hear of men proclaiming, *Life in the United States in the year 2018 is heaven on earth; has the Millennium arrived?* In a very real way, the book of Ecclesiastes, written some 3000 years ago, provides these answers for us.

One of the most amazing things about the Bible is, there are verses, passages, chapters and complete books which speak to our heart and our needs, as if God had written these things just for us (which He did).

Ron Snider's translation of Ecclesiastes 1:8–10 *All things are wearisome; Man is not able to tell it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, Nor is the ear filled with hearing. That which has been is that which will be, And that which has been done is that which will be done. So, there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one might say, "See this, it is new"? Already it has existed for ages Which were before us.*

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:8–10 (Ron Snider)

1. Solomon now moves from his description of the ceaseless cycles of nature, which are characterized by repetitive activity that ultimately changes nothing, to a similar description of human activities.
2. The content of the previous verses dealt with the fact that the earth may be characterized by the illusion of change; however, in actuality things continue as they always have.
3. In reality, we know that the cycles of nature are actually eroding the mountains and river valleys, which parallels the apparently slow progress of the unseen plan of God.
4. The first question that arises in verse 8 is how we are to understand the term דַּבְּחָר (dabhar), which first means a word, and then comes to mean a thing or matter.
5. Some interpreters take it in the most basic sense of word based on what follows about the faculties of speech, seeing, and hearing.
6. However, others see the term as referring to the natural phenomena that Solomon just described in the previous verses.
7. One should understand it here as a good transitional term, which first references the cycles of nature about which he has just been speaking, then moves to the idea of words that are inherent in the faculty of speech.
8. The Hebrew adjective יָגַעַ (yage'a) is only used three times in the Old Testament, and each has the passive sense of tired, weary, or fatigued. Deut. 25:18; 2Sam. 17:2
9. With the adjective כֹּל (kol—all), Solomon is expanding the examples of nature that he just cited to include all natural cycles that repeat themselves but do not materially change the earth.
10. The next phrase man is not able to relate it in detail is designed to point out that the weariness of all things is fully beyond the ability of men to articulate.
11. It may also indicate that the subject matter is so tedious and depressing that no one could completely address it.
12. When viewed from the angle that Solomon has just set forth, the cycles of nature are so tiresome that one would not take the time to fully explain them; if he did, it would simply wear him out.
13. The ceaseless cycles of the natural order are now compared to the ceaseless cycles that one can observe in the human race.
14. The proverbial statements at the end of verse 8 are proof of the contention that there is a mind-numbing monotony to what man observes.
15. No matter how many things one has observed, there are more things to see; no matter how many things one has heard, there is more information available.
16. One does not achieve a point of satisfaction, which provides complete closure or ultimate contentment in the physical world.
17. No matter what one sees or hears, the process is endlessly repeated throughout life and nothing really changes.
18. Solomon next deals with the issue of human history to document his assertion that this transient life is filled with vanity and futility.
19. His contention is that the observable aspects of human history simply move from generation to generation, with the succeeding generations repeating what the previous generations have already done.

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:8–10 (Ron Snider)

20. In other words, like the cycles of nature, history under the sun appears to be going nowhere.
21. The Hebrew construction $\text{--}\psi \text{מִן}$ (mah-she) is composed of the interrogative pronoun and the relative particle; it is used six times in this book and signifies that which, or whatever.
22. The first phrase deals with the idea of any device, invention, or apparent change in this world; whatever has been is what will be.
23. In the second phrase, Solomon points out that the activity of mankind that has been done in the past is certain to be the activity that will be repeated in the future.
24. His general conclusion is one of some resignation as he explains that there is really nothing that has changed significantly in the course of human history.
25. Mankind has repeated the same cycles of life and death, pleasure and pain, business and leisure, war and peace, over and over and over again.
26. The melancholy truth is that man should recognize that there is nothing under the sun that is worth striving for; what may prove to be physically advantageous in the short term will ultimately pass.
27. Essentially, Solomon recognizes that the physical realm, in which most people spend their time and energy, does not address or satisfy the very important issues of life.
28. Certainly, all this repetition does nothing to provide any lasting satisfaction or contentment within the human experience.
29. In verse 10, Solomon appeals to his readers with respect to the truth of the statement that he had just made in the previous verse.
30. The force of this challenge is to strongly deny that there really is anything new under the sun.
31. It is a challenge to the reader to inquire as to the veracity of his statement, to thoroughly examine his statement, and a challenge to see if he can produce a material objection to it.
32. While there have been advances and refinements in technology, essentially mankind continues to function as it always has.
33. Although we may travel with greater technology in planes, trains, and automobiles, the fundamental concept of travel has not changed; it simply involves moving from one place to another.
34. Obviously, there have been new advances; however, Solomon likely is focusing on an advance that allows man to escape the relentless succession of life and transcend his niche.
35. One should recognize here that Solomon is dealing with the realities of life in this physical world; he is not attempting to provide any information about God, His part in all this, or the higher matters of spiritual life.
36. However, for the thinking believer the reality of God and his part in all this underlies all life.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (this will open as a Word document on your computer); accessed June 16, 2018.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

The Open Bible: *Our accomplishments will be forgotten by future generations.*⁴⁴⁸

[There is] no remembrance to the former things and also to the latter things which will be. Will not be to them a remembrance with that [which] will be to come after.

Ecclesiastes
1:11

[There is] no remembrance of the former things or [lit., and also] of the latter things which will come to pass. [There] will not be to them [any] remembrance of that [which] comes later.

We don't remember what has happened in the past, and future generations will not remember us or what we have done.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

⁴⁴⁸ *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 860 (footnote).

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	[There is] no remembrance to the former things and also to the latter things which will be. Will not be to them a remembrance with that [which] will be to come after.
Aramaic Targum	There is no remembrance of former generations, and also of the coming ones that will be, there will be no remembrance of them <u>among the generations that will be in the days of the King Messiah.</u>
Revised Douay-Rheims	There is no remembrance of former things: nor indeed of those things which hereafter are to come, shall there be any remembrance with them that shall be in the latter end.
Peshitta (Syriac)	There is no remembrance of former <u>generations</u> ; neither shall there be <u>any remembrance of</u> generations that are to come with those that will come after.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	There is no memorial to the first things; neither to the things that have been last shall their memorial be with them that shall at the last <i>time</i> .
Significant differences:	The Syriac has <i>generations</i> rather than <i>things</i> . There are some additional words in the Syriac; but they are reasonably placed there. There are additional words in the targum.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	There is no memory of those who have gone before, and of those who come after there will be no memory for those who are still to come after them.
Easy English	We do not remember what they did many years ago. It will be the same in future years. People will remember things that they have seen during their lives. But many events happened before they were born. They will not remember those events.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	People don't remember what happened long ago. In the future, they will not remember what is happening now. And later, other people will not remember what the people before them did.
God's Word™	Nothing from the past is remembered. Even in the future, nothing will be remembered by those who come after us.
Good News Bible (TEV)	No one remembers what has happened in the past, and no one in days to come will remember what happens between now and then.
Names of God Bible	Nobody remembers what happened yesterday. And the things that will happen tomorrow? Nobody'll remember them either. Don't count on being remembered.
NIRV	No one remembers the people of long ago. Even those who haven't been born yet won't be remembered by those who will be born after them.
New Simplified Bible	There is no memory of former things. Those who follow will not remember those who are yet to come.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	All generations are similar in that they fail to remember the former things and fail to acknowledge that the same events will happen in the future. However, the routine activities of all things continue on regardless of the attitudes men have toward them.
Common English Bible	There's no remembrance of things in the past, nor of things to come in the future. Neither will there be any remembrance among those who come along in the future.

Contemporary English V.	No one who lived in the past is remembered anymore, and everyone yet to be born will be forgotten too.
The Living Bible	We don't remember what happened in those former times, and in the future generations no one will remember what we have done back here.
New Berkeley Version	There is no remembrance of former times and furthermore, there will not be any remembrance of later things yet to take place on the part of those who are to come hereafter.
New Century Version	People don't remember what happened long ago, and in the future people will not remember what happens now. Even later, other people will not remember what was done before them.
New Life Version	No one remembers the things that happened before. And no one will remember the things that will happen in the future among those who will come later.
New Living Translation	We don't remember what happened in the past, and in future generations, no one will remember what we are doing now.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	People do not remember the things that happened long ago, and in the future, people will not remember what we are doing now.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	But the things that they did were forgotten, And those who are born in the future Won't remember the things that we're doing now.
Beck's American Translation	Nothing in the past is remembered, and also in the future nothing will be remembered by those who come later.
International Standard V	No one remembers those in the past, nor will they be remembered by those who come after them.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	So, believe me, the fame of to-morrow's doings will be forgotten by the men of a later time.
Translation for Translators	<i>People</i> do not remember the things <i>that happened</i> long ago, and in the future, people will not remember what we are doing now.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Alpha & Omega Bible	THERE IS NO REMEMBRANCE OF THE FIRST THINGS; AND INDEED, THERE SHALL BE NO REMEMBRANCE OF LATER THINGS. †(1st world of Gen. 1:1 & this world of Gen. 1:2.)
Awful Scroll Bible	Is there to be a remembrance of that former? - is there to be mentioned that which follows after a following after?
Conservapedia	We do not clearly remember the past; neither shall our future be remembered by those born after those times.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	For there is no record of past events, and there will be none of future ones, for them to be remembered by still more future.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	The thing that is past, is out of remembrance: Even so the things that are for to come, shall no more be thought upon among them that come after.
Lexham English Bible	There is neither remembrance of former generations, nor will there be remembrance of future generations.
Unlocked Literal Bible	No one seems to remember the things that happened in ancient times, and the things that happened much later and that will happen in the future will not likely be remembered either."
Wikipedia Bible Project	Of the first ones, there is no memory, and to the last ones, they will leave no memory, if they will be the last.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (2013)	There is no remembrance of ancient people, and those to come will not be remembered by those who follow them.
The Heritage Bible	There is no remembrance of what was first, and also there shall not be a remembrance of the last <i>things</i> that are with them who shall be the last.
New American Bible (2002)	There is no remembrance of the men of old; nor of those to come will there be any remembrance among those who come after them. Men remember nothing long, God never forgets.
New American Bible (2011)	There is no remembrance of past generations [Eccl 2:16]; nor will future generations be remembered by those who come after them. [1:11] Movement in nature and human activity appears to result in change and progress. The author argues that this change and progress are an illusion: "Nothing is new under the sun."
New English Bible—1970	The men of old are not remembered, and those who follow will not be remembered by those who follow them.
New Jerusalem Bible	No memory remains of the past, and so it will be for the centuries to come -- they will not be remembered by their successors.
Revised English Bible—1989	Those who lived in the past are not remembered, and those who follow will not be remembered by those who follow them.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

The Complete Tanach	[But] there is no remembrance of former [generations], neither will the later ones that will be have any remembrance among those that will be afterwards. neither will the later ones that will be: after us have any remembrance in the generations that will be after them. And the Midrash Aggadah interprets this as referring to the obliteration of the remembrance of Amalek, for his remembrance will ultimately be obliterated, as it is said (Obadiah 1:18): "and the house of Esau will have no survivors."
exeGesés companion Bible	There is neither memorial of firsts; nor memorial of lasts with those to become afterward.
Hebraic Roots Bible	There is no memory of former things; yea, nor is there any memory for them of things which will be afterward, with those who will be at the last.
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	The earlier ones are not remembered; so too those that will occur later will no more be remembered than those that will occur at the very end.
Orthodox Jewish Bible	There is no <i>zichron</i> (remembrance) of former things; neither shall there be with those who come after any <i>zikaron</i> (recollection) of things that are to come.
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	There is no remembrance of former ones, nor is there any remembrance of those that are to come by those who come later on.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible	·People don't remember what happened long ago [There is no remembrance of the past], ·and in the future people will not remember what happens now [nor will there be any remembrance of what will be in the future]. ·Even later, other people will not remember what was done before them [There is no remembrance of them among those who will exist in the future].
Kretzmann's Commentary	There is no remembrance of former things, men forget the lessons which the insufficient records of the past teach them; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after, for the impressive warnings of even the greatest cataclysms in the history of the world have gone unheeded. Cf Matt. 24:37-39.
NET Bible®	No one remembers the former events, ⁴¹

nor will anyone remember⁴² the events that are yet to happen;⁴³
they will not be remembered by the future generations.⁴⁴

^{41tn} Heb “There is no remembrance of former things.”...When used in a temporal sense, the singular denotes “former” in time...or “first” in time...The plural form is only used to denote “former” in time: “former persons,” i.e., ancestors, men of old (e.g., Lev 26:45; Deut 19:14; Job 18:20; Isa 61:4; Ps 79:8; Sirach 4:16) or “former things,” i.e., past events (e.g., Isa 41:22; 42:9; 43:9, 18; 46:9; 48:3)...This approach is adopted by several translations: “men of old” (NEB, NAB, NIV, Moffatt), “people of long ago” (NRSV), “earlier ones” (NJPS), and “former generations” (ASV)...This is adopted by some translations: “former things” (KJV, RSV) and “earlier things” (NASB). Although future generations are mentioned in 1:11, what they will not remember is the past events. The context of 1:3-11 focuses on human achievement, that is, former things.

^{42tn} The term “remember” is not in the Hebrew text, but has been supplied in the translation for clarity.

^{43tn} Heb “and also of the last things which will be.” The term אַחֲרֹנִים (‘akharonim, “the future things”) is the masculine plural form... When used in a temporal sense, it may mean (1) “later one; (2) “in the future”; (3) “last”; or (4) “at the last” or “in the end” ...The plural form may be used in reference to (1) future generations, e.g., Deut 29:21; Pss 48:14; 78:4, 6; 102:19; Job 18:20; Eccl 4:16, or (2) future events, e.g., Neh 8:18...BDB...suggests that this usage refers to “future generations,” while HALOT...suggests future events. As mentioned in the previous note, it probably refers to future events rather than future generations.

^{sn} The Hebrew terms translated former events and future events create a merism (two polar extremes encompass everything in between). This encompasses all secular achievements in human history past to future things yet to be done.

^{44tn} Heb “There will not be any remembrance of them among those who come after.”

^{sn} According to Qoheleth, nothing new really happens under the sun (1:9). Apparent observations of what appears to be revolutionary are due to a lack of remembrance by subsequent generations of what happened long before their time in past generations (1:10-11a). And what will happen in future generations will not be remembered by the subsequent generations to arise after them (1:11b).

The Pulpit Commentary

There is no remembrance of former things; rather, of former men—per-sons who lived in former times. As things are considered novel only because they had been forgotten, so we men ourselves shall pass away, and be no more remembered. Bailey, 'Festus'—

"Adversity, prosperity, the grave,
Play a round game with friends. On some the world
Hath shot its evil eye, and they are passel
From honor and remembrance; and stare
Is all the mention of their names receives;
And people know no more of them than they know
The shapes of clouds at midnight a year hence."

Neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after; rather, and even of later generations that shall be there will be no remembrance of them with those that shall be in the after-time. Wright quotes Marcus Aurelius, who has much to say on this subject. Thus: cap. 2.17, "Posthumous fame is oblivion;" cap. 3.10, "Every man's life lies all within the present; for the past is spent and done with, and the future is uncertain;" cap. 4.33, "Those words which were formerly current and proper are now become obsolete and barbarous. Alas I this is not all: fame tarnishes in time, too, and men grow out of fashion as well as language. Those celebrated names of ancient story am antiquated; those of later date have the same fortune; and those of present celebrity must follow. I speak this of those who have been the wonder of their age, and

shined with unusual luster; but as for the rest, they are no sooner dead than forgotten" (comp. Wis. 2:4). (On the keen desire to live in the memory of posterity, see Ecclesiasticus 37:26; 44:7, etc.)

Syndein/Thieme

{Cosmic Involvement has No Capacity for Life}

There is no remembrance of men of old. And, even those, who are yet to come, will not be remembered by those who follow.

The Voice

We do not remember those people *and events* of long ago, as future generations will not remember what is yet to come.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Charles Thompson OT

There is no remembrance of former things: and of those things which shall happen hereafter, there will be no remembrance among them who shall be born at a remote period.

Concordant Literal Version

There is no remembrance of former generations, And also for those who shall come after us, A remembrance of them shall not continue With those who shall come afterward."

Context Group Version

There is no remembrance of the former [generations]; neither shall there be any remembrance of the latter [generations] that are to come, among those that shall come after.

Green's Literal Translation

There is no memory of former things; yea, nor is there any memory for them of things which will be afterward, with those who will be at the last.

Modern English Version

There is not a memory for the former things, and moreover, there will not be a memory for the things coming after, even those things that are yet to come.

New American Standard B.

There is no remembrance of earlier things; And also of the later things which will occur, There will be for them no remembrance Among those who will come later *still*.

Updated Bible Version 2.11

There is no remembrance of the former [generations]; neither will there be any remembrance of the latter [generations] who are to come, among those who will come after.

World English Bible

There is no memory of the former; neither shall there be any memory of the latter that are to come, among those that shall come after.

Young's Literal Translation

There is not a remembrance of former *generations*; and also of the latter that are, there is no remembrance of them with those that are at the last.

The gist of this passage:

This generation has no appreciation for the people or events of the past; and they themselves (and their accomplishments) will be forgotten by future generations.

Ecclesiastes 1:11a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
'êyin (אֵיִן) [pronounced AYH-yin]	<i>in the condition of being not = without, nothing, no, not; there is no [none, no one, not]</i>	substantive of negative in the construct form	Strong's #369 BDB #34
zik ^e rôwn (זִכְרוֹן) [pronounced zihk-ROHN]	<i>a memorial, a reminder, a remembrance</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2146 BDB #272

Ecclesiastes 1:11a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
rî'shônîym (רִישׁוֹנִים) [pronounced ree-show-NEEM]	<i>first [in time, in degree, chief, former [in time], ancestors, former things; foremost; beginning</i>	masculine plural adjective with the definite article	Strong's #7223 BDB #911

I will translate these two words regarding the former things. I will see what others do with this phrase.

The NET Bible: *The term מִינֵי שְׂאֵר (ri'shonim, "former things") is the masculine plural form of the adjective שְׂאֵר (ri'shon, "former, first, chief"; BDB 911 s.v. שְׂאֵר וְ). When used in a temporal sense, the singular denotes "former" in time (BDB 911 s.v. 1.a) or "first" in time (BDB 911 s.v. 2.a). The plural form is only used to denote "former" in time: "former persons," i.e., ancestors, men of old (e.g., Lev 26:45; Deut 19:14; Job 18:20; Isa 61:4; Ps 79:8; Sirach 4:16) or "former things," i.e., past events (e.g., Isa 41:22; 42:9; 43:9, 18; 46:9; 48:3). See BDB 911 s.v. 1.a, which suggests that this usage refers to "former persons." This approach is adopted by several translations: "men of old" (NEB, NAB, NIV, Moffatt), "people of long ago" (NRSV), "earlier ones" (NJPS), and "former generations" (ASV). On the other hand, this Hebrew phrase may be nuanced "former things" or "earlier things" (HALOT 1168 s.v. שְׂאֵר וְ). This is adopted by some translations: "former things" (KJV, RSV) and "earlier things" (NASB). Although future generations are mentioned in 1:11, what they will not remember is the past events. The context of 1:3-11 focuses on human achievement, that is, former things.⁴⁴⁹*

w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, וְ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
gam (גַּם) [pronounced gahm]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168

Together, the wâw conjunction and the gam particle might mean *and also, together with, along with, joined with, and, furthermore, and furthermore.*

lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
'achârîym (אַחֲרָיִם) [pronounced ah-khuhr-EEM]	<i>things which come after; later things, end time events</i>	masculine plural adjective (or substantive); with the definite article	Strong's #314 BDB #30

Dr. Bob Utley: *This masculine plural adjective...refers to people, Lev. 26:45; Deuteronomy 19; Psalm 79:8, while the feminine plural refers to events, Isa. 41:22; Isa. 42:9; Isa. 43:9; Isa. 46:9; Isa. 48:3; and possibly Isa. 61:4.⁴⁵⁰*

⁴⁴⁹ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 17, 2018.

⁴⁵⁰ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:3–11.

Ecclesiastes 1:11a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>The NET Bible: <i>The term מִן־אַחֲרָיִם ('akharonim, "the future things") is the masculine plural form of the adjective אַחֲרָיִם ('akharon) which means "coming after" (BDB 30 s.v. אַחֲרָיִם) or "at the back" (HALOT 36 s.v. אַחֲרָיִם). When used in a temporal sense, it may mean (1) "later one; (2) "in the future"; (3) "last"; or (4) "at the last" or "in the end" (HALOT 36 s.v. 2). The plural form may be used in reference to (1) future generations, e.g., Deut 29:21; Pss 48:14; 78:4, 6; 102:19; Job 18:20; Eccl 4:16, or (2) future events, e.g., Neh 8:18 (BDB 30 s.v.). BDB 30 s.v. b suggests that this usage refers to "future generations," while HALOT 36 s.v. 2.c suggests future events. As mentioned in the previous note, it probably refers to future events rather than future generations.</i>⁴⁵¹</p>			
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced sheh]	who, which, that	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
<p>This is spelled shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced sheh], but apparently is shortened further and affixed to a word or set of words. This relative particle appears to be a form of or a synonym of the relative pronoun 'asher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced uhsh-ER], which means <i>that, which, when, who</i> or <i>how</i>. Strong's #834 BDB #81. Although BDB says that its usage appears to be confined to later Hebrew and passages with a northern Palestine coloring⁴⁵²; it occurs as early as Gen. 6:3.</p>			
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]	to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224

Translation: [There is] no remembrance of the former things or [lit., and also] of the latter things which will come to pass. People do not pay attention to history (things which have already occurred); nor do they pay any attention to things which will come to pass in the future.

I think the idea is, they do not properly look at events in life and correctly interpret them. A person with Bible doctrine in his soul is able to view current events and understand and interpret them as God would. What we want is for God's thinking to be in us (Philip. 2:5), and that allows us to see the world and its events for what they really are.

Again, this is something which is true of some people; but not of others. When I began to pay closer attention to American politics, I noticed right away that one side was continually citing the words of the founders and the intent of the founders; while the other side was attempting to remove all memory of them—even to the point of removing statues of them.

Dr. Bob Utley: *This masculine plural adjective...refers to people, Lev. 26:45; Deuteronomy 19; Psalm 79:8, while the feminine plural refers to events, Isa. 41:22; Isa. 42:9; Isa. 43:9; Isa. 46:9; Isa. 48:3; and possibly Isa. 61:4. Therefore, the NRSV ["people of long ago"] has the better translation.*⁴⁵³

⁴⁵¹ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 17, 2018.

⁴⁵² *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*; Hendrickson Publishers; ©1996; p. 979.

⁴⁵³ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:3–11.

Ecclesiastes 1:11b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lō' (לוֹ' or לוֹל) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i>]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
zik ^e rôwn (זִכְרוֹן) [pronounced <i>zihk-ROHN</i>]	<i>a memorial, a reminder, a remembrance</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2146 BDB #272
'îm (עִם) [pronounced <i>geem</i>]	<i>with, at, by, near; like; from</i>	preposition of nearness and vicinity	Strong's #5973 BDB #767
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced <i>sheh</i>]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
<p>This is spelled shel (שֶׁל) [pronounced <i>shehl</i>], but apparently is shortened further and affixed to a word or set of words. This relative particle appears to be a form of or a synonym of the relative pronoun 'ăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uhsh-ER</i>], which means <i>that, which, when, who</i> or <i>how</i>. Strong's #834 BDB #81. Although BDB says that its usage appears to be confined to later Hebrew and passages with a northern Palestine coloring⁴⁵⁴, it occurs as early as Gen. 6:3.</p>			
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i>]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
'achărôwn (אַחֲרָיוֹן) [pronounced <i>ah-kha-ROHN</i>]	<i>coming after, behind, later, following, last; end</i>	feminine singular adjective (or substantive) with the definite article	Strong's #314 BDB #30

Translation: [There] will not be to them [any] remembrance of that [which] comes later. And when things occur in the future, they will not think back to those things which contradict their thinking.

Again, not necessarily true; all depends upon the person.

Let me ask you, *who is the most well-known person today from around 2000 B.C.?* A shepherd called Abraham. During his time, there were kings, nations, palace intrigues, wars for control and power; but the person most well-known today from that era is Abraham, the father of the Jewish people (and of all the Arabic tribes as well). Now, Abraham was, certainly, a very successful and prosperous shepherd, but he was, point in fact, only a shepherd.

⁴⁵⁴ *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*; Hendrickson Publishers; ©1996; p. 979.

Why is he so well-known today? Because there are things which he did, said and wrote which are with us today in the Word of God. A considerable portion of the book of Genesis is about Abraham (and probably recounted by him as well). And to be more blunt about it, what Abraham did in his life was divine good, and divine good lasts forever. What the hundreds of kings did during his life may have been good, evil, or wrong; but compared to Abraham, what they did was insignificant.

Application: I, like many other people, find it easy to get caught up in politics in the United States—particularly now, as our President is so colorful (I write this in 2018). But during my life, who has had the most impact in the United States (and in the world?). Let me suggest that it is Billy Graham (the evangelist; not *Superstar Billy Graham*). Literally millions of people all over the world listened to his words and believed in Jesus Christ. It is his ministry which impacted the United States unlike anyone else in the latter half of the 1900's. And after him are the many great Bible teachers, such as J. Vernon McGee and R. B. Thieme, Jr.

Application: God did not bless the United States because of Ronald Reagan or Donald Trump. God blessed nation U.S.A. *with* leaders like Ronald Reagan and Donald Trump because God was able to pour out His blessing upon our great nation.

Application: Why doesn't God just simply pour our His blessing all over the earth? Well, first of all, God will do that in the future. At some point in time, there will be perfect environment on this earth. But, God pouring blessing out on this or that nation does not mean that people will turn to Him. I have already cited in this chapter the rise in the use of intoxicants in the United States and the rise of suicide. This is in the greatest nation in human history where God has just poured and poured out His blessing.

Application: So, what's the problem? How can God pour out His gracious blessing and yet, millions of people in this country are dissatisfied to the point of wanting to numb their brains every day? Capacity. People lack the capacities for life and love; people lack appreciation; people are literally unable to see when God has blessed them. Listen, you corner an unhappy liberal and tell his what a great and wonderful nation the U.S. is, and he will steer you towards a website that shows that, of the best countries in the world right now, the U.S. is not even in the top 5. He will explain to you that have the country is racist, and sexist, and homophobic; and how we are a nation built upon genocide; and he might even tell you how much he is ashamed of America. Economically, this person is probably in the top 5% when it comes to personal wealth, safety, freedom and options in life. Yet that same person will damn America, the current president, and tell you what a terrible country this is.

I realize that I have gone from tangent to tangent. Back to Ecclesiastes 1:11:

Ecclesiastes 1:11 *We don't remember what has happened in the past, and future generations will not remember us or what we have done.*

There is no remembrance of former things (Eccles. 1:11) (various commentators)

Pastor John Griffith: *This speaks eloquently of the fickleness of man's memory. We fail to learn from history and constantly repeat the mistakes of the past. Man in his arrogance today thinks that he is so sophisticated - so well educated that he is above the mistakes of the past and can accomplish whatever he decides to do under the sun. He is taking God completely out of the equation of life.*⁴⁵⁵

Robert Cordis: *This verse gives the reason for Eccles. 1:10. Things appear new only because the past is forgotten (Levy) – an additional element in the vanity of human existence; not only can nothing be accomplished, but the memory of the effort is wiped out (Hertz).*⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁵ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_04.html accessed June 15, 2018.

⁴⁵⁶ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:3–11.

There is no remembrance of former things (Eccles. 1:11) (various commentators)

John Dummelow: *He calls on any one who may doubt his word to point to something which is really new. The only reason that events strike us as new is because that which has been is swept into oblivion. Previous generations have no existence for us, and we in like manner shall have no existence for those who come after us.*⁴⁵⁷

Ken Cayce: *This really is saying that one generation seems not to learn from the mistakes of the generation before them. They come along and get involved in the very same sins their fathers did. One really good reason for this is we do not study our Bible enough, and learn what they did wrong.*⁴⁵⁸

Dr. Peter Pett takes this a step further, concluding that man, for the most part, never learns from what has come before: *Man never learns. Each generation ignores what previous generations have learned. They do not think it important enough to remember. And what they themselves do and learn will then in its turn also be forgotten by future generations. And thus they may sometimes think that they have come up with a new wisdom. But in the end, if they only knew it, if they searched, they would discover that it is but the same old wisdom that men have always known, possibly wrapped up in a different way.*⁴⁵⁹

Benson: *There is no remembrance, &c.* — *This seems to be added, to prevent the objection, that there are many inventions and enjoyments unknown to former ages. To this he answers, This objection is grounded only upon our ignorance of ancient times, which, if we exactly knew or remembered, we should easily find parallels to all present occurrences. There are many thousands of remarkable speeches and actions done in this, and which will be done in the following ages, which neither are, nor ever will be, put into the public records or histories, and consequently must unavoidably be forgotten in succeeding ages; and therefore it is just and reasonable to believe the same concerning former ages.*⁴⁶⁰

Tommy Nelson gives this illustration: *When you die, there will be a funeral. You may have twenty-five or 2,000 people attend. But do you know what they'll do after the funeral? They will catch lunch and have a great old time together. Then they will hurry back to work because somebody was covering for them. That night they'll go home to their families, watch a sitcom rerun, and forget all about your memorial by morning. Are you ready for that?*⁴⁶¹

Clarke: *Multitudes of ancient transactions have been lost, because they were not recorded; and of many that have been recorded, the records are lost. And this will be the case with many others which are yet to occur. How many persons, not much acquainted with books, have supposed that certain things were their own discoveries, which have been written or printed even long before they were born.*⁴⁶²

Gill: *[This] is the reason why some things that are really old are thought to be new; because either the memories of men fail them, they do not remember the customs and usages which were in the former part of their own lives, now grown old; or they are ignorant of what were in ages past, through want of history, or defect in it; either they have no history at all, or what they have is false; or if true, as there is very little that is so, it is very deficient; and, among the many things that have been, very few are transmitted to posterity, so that the memory of things is lost; therefore who can say with certainty of anything, this is new, and was never known in the world before? and the same for the future will be the case of present things.*⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁷ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 22, 2018.

⁴⁵⁸ From <http://www.bible-studys.org> accessed June 24, 2018.

⁴⁵⁹ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:11.

⁴⁶⁰ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:11.

⁴⁶¹ From Bible.org, accessed June 22, 2018.

⁴⁶² Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:11.

⁴⁶³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:11.

There is no remembrance of former things (Eccles. 1:11) (various commentators)

Matthew Poole: *There are many thousands of remarkable speeches and actions done in this and the following ages, which neither are, nor ever will be, put into the public records or histories, and consequently they must unavoidably be forgotten and lost unto succeeding ages; and therefore it is just and reasonable to believe the same concerning former ages, seeing the same causes are most likely to produce the same effects.*⁴⁶⁴

Trapp: *How many memorable matters were never recorded! How many ancient records long since perished! How many fragments of very good authors are come bleeding to our hands, that live, as many of our castles do, but only by their ruins! God hath by a miracle preserved the Holy Bible from the injury of times and tyrants, who have sought to abolish it. There we have a true remembrance of former things done in the Church by Abraham and his offspring, when the grandees of the earth, Ninus, Belus, &c., lie wrapt up in the sheet of shame, or buried in the grave of utter.*⁴⁶⁵

Records of things past: Eccles. 2:16 Psalm 9:6 Isa. 41:22–26 42:9.⁴⁶⁶

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ron Snider's translation of Ecclesiastes 1:11 [There is no remembrance of earlier things; And also of the later things which will occur, There will be for them no remembrance Among those who will come later still.](#)

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:11 (Ron Snider)

1. Solomon bolsters his claim from the previous verse about things not really being new by appealing to the fact that mankind has repeatedly demonstrated that it has a short memory.
2. As one generation departs and a new one takes its place, much of the information that was learned by experience is lost when the first generation departs.
3. Therefore things that might appear to be novel are often existing concepts that have existed during previous generations in new packaging.
4. Although it might seem as if some new concept has been introduced, the reality is that things seem new either because we are ignorant of the concept or we have forgotten previous history.
5. Each generation of human beings has demonstrated that they are far more concerned about the events of the present than they are about the past or future.
6. Although the adjectives have masculine endings, this is not definitive proof that Solomon is referring only to people and not to things as well.
7. Whether we are discussing the past as it relates to events that occurred, innovations, or people that lived makes little difference.
8. The reality is that significant events are usually relegated to history books, which are often ignored by the generations that follow.
9. Further, the reality is that significant people and their achievements are soon forgotten; this is a powerful witness to the transitory nature of fame.
10. Just as the preceding generations have forgotten or ignored what has come before, so succeeding generations will not remember what is being done in the current generation.
11. Solomon answers part of his original question about what advantage a man has in all his work; he asserts that future generations will not remember the man or his accomplishments anyway.
12. He has focused on the monotony of the cycles of the planet and the monotony of human existence to give his readers the sense of fatigue that he appears to have with life.
13. Again, while this is not the only viewpoint one might espouse, one has to admit that this viewpoint certainly has validity within the human experience.

⁴⁶⁴ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:11.

⁴⁶⁵ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 1:11.

⁴⁶⁶ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 1:11.

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:11 (Ron Snider)

14. His view of things should not be considered as being pessimistic; his view, as he considers the endless treadmill of existence under the sun, is simply a realistic acknowledgment of the ceaseless cycles of life.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (this will open as a Word document on your computer); accessed June 16, 2018.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Guzik points out how a relationship with God makes everything new: *There may be nothing new under the sun; but thankfully the followers of Jesus — those born again by God's Spirit — don't live under the sun in that sense. Their life is filled with new things.*

- • A new name (Isa. 62:2, Rev. 2:17)
- • A new community (Eph. 2:14)
- • A new help from angels (Psalm 91:11)
- • A new commandment (John 13:34)
- • A new covenant (Jer. 31:33, Matt. 26:28)
- • A new and living way to heaven (Heb. 10:20)
- • A new purity (1Cor. 5:7)
- • A new nature (Eph. 4:24)
- • A new creation in Jesus Christ (2Cor. 5:17)
- • All things become new! (2Cor. 5:17, Rev. 21:5).⁴⁶⁷

Let's put these 3 verses together. Ecclesiastes 1:9–11 **What has happened in the past, will happen again in the future; what has been done in the past will be done again in the future.** There is no new thing under the sun. Someone will claim, "Look, this is a new thing!" However, it is not a new thing; it has been here before. We don't remember what has happened in the past, and future generations will not remember us or what we have done. I see v. 11 as complimentary to v. 10. Sometimes, we are doing things that we think are new, and if we would only give it some thought, we would see that these *new* things are not so new. Solomon also acknowledges that some things are lost to the past, for whatever reason.

Summarizing Ecclesiastes 1:9–11 (various commentators)

Ronald Allen: *Solomon is saying that there is no advantage for one to work from earth's perspective because one's work will never result in anything new, but only that which has been. If it appears that something new happens from time to time, it is only because our memories are short.*⁴⁶⁸

David Fairchild: *[M]ost of us don't know history, so we keep thinking we're coming up with new ideas.*⁴⁶⁹

Keith Krell: *We often mistake movement with progress. We think we are making progress but in reality we are driving around a cul-de-sac and wondering why the neighborhoods all look the same.*⁴⁷⁰

Krell then writes: *We need not look any further than the sports page to have this [verse] verified. One injury is all it takes to become forgotten. Household names can be discarded quickly. Yet the simple truth is: No one will remember anyone in the future. One hundred years from now everything and everyone will have been forgotten, regardless of what occurs today.*⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁷ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:8–11.

⁴⁶⁸ From [Bible.org](#), accessed June 22, 2018.

⁴⁶⁹ From [Bible.org](#), accessed June 22, 2018.

⁴⁷⁰ From [Bible.org](#), accessed June 22, 2018.

⁴⁷¹ From [Bible.org](#), accessed June 22, 2018.

Summarizing Ecclesiastes 1:9–11 (various commentators)

Expositor's Bible Commentary: *Yet, while in nature all things return on their course and abide forever, man's day is soon spent, his force soon exhausted. He does not return; nay, he is not so much as remembered by those who come after him. Just as we have forgotten those who were before us, so those who live after us will forget us (Eccles. 1:11). The burden of all this unintelligible world lies heavily on the Preacher's soul.*⁴⁷²

The Cambridge Bible: *The thought of the oblivion of the past, suggested in the previous verse, as explaining the fact that some things seem new to us which are not so, is reproduced in another aspect as yet a new element in the pessimism into which the writer has fallen. Men dream of a fame that shall outlive them. How few of those that went before them do they remember even by name? How little do they know even of those whose names have survived amid the wreck that has engulfed others? What does it profit to be famous now, just known by name to the generation that follows, and then forgotten altogether?*⁴⁷³

Abbreviating these thoughts: **There is no new thing under the sun.** (Eccles. 1:9b)

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ken Cayce: *Solomon looks at the effect of repetitious, enduring activity in God's creation over many generations as compared to the brief, comparatively profitless activity of one man which fails to produce an enduring satisfaction, and he concluded that it is wearisome. Another harsh reality comes with the realization that nothing is new and nothing will be remembered.*⁴⁷⁴

Eccles. 1:4–8 **A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises. The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north; around and around goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns. All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again. All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.**

Eccles. 1:9–11 **What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already in the ages before us. There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after. (ESV)**

Summarizing Ecclesiastes 1:4–11 (Pastor John Griffith)

1. In vs:4-7 he says what is true in the realm of nature - the constant repetition is also true (vs:8-11) of the activity of people.
2. This is included in the observation that "all things" under the sun produce only indescribable weariness and lack of satisfaction.
3. All pursuits either lead to despair or to God.
- nothing is inherently satisfying without God
4. With God as the center of ones perspective (above the sun thinking) the believer will be characterized by hope not despair or apathy.
- Ps 130:5-7; 146:5; Rom 12:12 (rejoicing in hope)

Psalm 130:5–7 **I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning. O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with Him is plentiful redemption.**

⁴⁷² *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–11 (slightly edited).

⁴⁷³ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:11.

⁴⁷⁴ From <http://www.bible-studys.org> accessed June 24, 2018.

Summarizing Ecclesiastes 1:4–11 (Pastor John Griffith)

Psalm 146:5–6 Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, Who keeps faith forever.

Rom. 12:12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. (ESV; capitalized)

From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_04.html accessed June 16, 2018.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Some divide this chapter into two portions: vv. 1–11 and vv. 12–18.

Conclusions to Ecclesiastes 1:1–11 (various commentators)

J. Vernon McGee: *Solomon had tried to find satisfaction in the study of science, but he had to come to this conclusion. Man tries to be important. He tries everything in the world to keep himself before the public, but it isn't long until he passes off the stage. "There is no remembrance of former things."*

McGee continues: *Do you remember who were the popular entertainers of fifty years ago? Do you remember the popular athletes of fifty years ago? Could you name the president of the United States of fifty years ago? Our memories aren't very long. The Scripture says that we spend our time down here as a tale that is told and we can't go back over it again.*⁴⁷⁵

Dunagan: *[S]ome people pin their hopes on posterity. They say, "But we will live on through our children and grandchildren". Or, "I will erect a lasting monument to my existence, I will do something that will guarantee that I will not be forgotten!" "our history is always turning back on itself, failing of its promise. The journey goes on; we never arrive. Under the sun there is nowhere to make for, nothing finally satisfying or really new. As for pinning our hopes on posterity, in the end posterity will have lost the faintest memory of us" (Kidner p. 26). Some say, "But we live in the information age". Actually, a more honest assessment might be--- the loss of information age.*⁴⁷⁶

David Guzik: *All things are full of labor; man cannot express it: Solomon then observed that the meaningless of life wasn't only reflected in nature. It was also evident in human effort and endeavor. Despite all man's working (labor), seeing, and hearing, he is still not satisfied.*⁴⁷⁷

Expositor's Bible Commentary continues: *We have learned to look upon it [these axioms of nature] with other, perhaps with wider, eyes. We say, How grand, how soothing, how hopeful is the spectacle of nature's uniformity! How it lifts us above the fluctuations of inward thought, and gladdens us with a sense of stability and repose! As we see the ancient inviolable laws working out into the same gracious and beautiful results day after day and year by year, and reflect that "what has been will be," we are redeemed from our bondage to vanity and corruption; we look up with composed and reverent trust to Him who is our God and Father, and onward to the stable and glorious immortality we are to spend with Him; we argue with Habakkuk (Hab. 1:12), "Are You not from everlasting, O Lord our God, our Holy One? We will not die," but live.*⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁵ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt accessed June 21, 2018.

⁴⁷⁶ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:11.

⁴⁷⁷ David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:8–11.

⁴⁷⁸ Expositor's Bible Commentary; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–11 (slightly edited).

Conclusions to Ecclesiastes 1:1–11 (various commentators)

Dr. John Gill: *The things before mentioned, the constant succession of men on earth, who are born into the world and die out of it, just as they always did; the sun rises and sets at its appointed time, as it did almost six thousand years ago; the winds whirl about all the points of the compass now as formerly; the rivers have the same course and recourse, and the sea its ebbing and flowing, they ever had; the same arts and sciences, trades and manufactures, obtained formerly as now, though in some circumstances there may be an improvement, and in others they grow worse; see Gen. 4:2, Ex. 31:3; and even such things as are thought of new invention, it may be only owing to the ignorance of former times, history failing to give us an account of them; thus the art of printing, the making of gunpowder, and the use of guns and bombs, and of the lodestone and mariner's compass, were thought to be of no long standing; and yet, according to the Chinese histories, that people were in possession of these things hundreds of years before; the circulation of the blood, supposed to be first found out by a countryman of ours in the last century, was known by Solomon, and is thought to be designed by him in Eccles. 12:6; and the like may be observed of other things. The emperor Mark Antonine...has the very phrase..."nothing new": so Seneca.*⁴⁷⁹

Morgan G. Campbell sums up Solomon's writing to this point: *The generations come and go while the earth abides. The sun rises and sets. The wind moves in a ceaseless circuit. Rivers run into the sea, only to be returned to the places from which they come. Man comes to the scene with desires which are never satisfied, and passes away into a land of forgetfulness...the intention of this whole passage is to impress on the mind the fact of the constant grind of the mechanism of the universe in the midst of which man lives his brief day and passes out to forget and be forgotten. This is still the view of men of science who lose their vision of the spiritual realities which constitute the upper half of human life.*⁴⁸⁰

Whedon: *Earth has lost their pattern forever. So, future men will be forgotten by those who in their turn will follow them. This preliminary gives us the view which prompted Koheleth to inquire whether, in this short and unreturning life, there is any good for man, who is but a shadow, and if there be any good for him, what can it be? He commences his researches, assuming the resources of the greatest of kings. So often and profoundly seems Koheleth to have reflected on the character and career of Solomon that the personation sits easily upon him. It was said of a great actor that he, for the time, was Othello. So Koheleth assumes with perfect naturalness the part of the great monarch. It will be seen that he gradually discards it, and at last appears in his own character.*⁴⁸¹

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

John W. Ritenbaugh: *Verse 11 is the end of the prologue stating where he is headed. It will be the foundation for everything that follows. From here he begins to state why he came to his conclusion.*⁴⁸²

Ecclesiastes 1:1–11 introduce the entire book. The first verse is the author (**The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem**), the second states the theme of the book (**Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.**). In v. 3, Solomon asks, *Is there anything truly to be gained from man's work in life, seeing that he dies anyway?* Then Solomon adds in the futility and circuitry of nature (vv. 4–7). Everything has become so wearisome to Solomon; there is nothing that he can see or hear which provides him with any true satisfaction and peace in life (v. 8). Man may search after novelty and newness, but there nothing new under the sun (vv. 9–11).

⁴⁷⁹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:9.

⁴⁸⁰ Morgan G Campbell, *Exposition on Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–18.

⁴⁸¹ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:11.

⁴⁸² From **Bible tools** accessed June 18, 2018.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

The Acquisition of Human Wisdom is Vanity and Chasing the Wind

Solomon is unhappy and frustrated with life; it seems to be just this endless cycle. So he experiments with life, looking for meaning and true satisfaction in life.

Introducing Ecclesiastes 1:12–18 (various commentators)

Benson: *Having asserted the vanity of all things in the general, he now comes to prove his assertion in those particulars wherein men commonly seek, and with the greatest probability expect to find, true happiness. He begins with secular wisdom.*⁴⁸³

Ray Stedman: *Before the Searcher takes us into the details of this search -- which begins in Chapter 2 -- he gives us a word as to his qualifications, in Verses 12-18. These fall into two divisions, his position, and his diligence.*⁴⁸⁴

John Dummelow: *The writer, availing himself of his status, recounts how he had tested the various aspects of life in their aims and results, but all to no profit. Everything is perverse or defective. Great as were his acquirements, the result is nil, nay, worse than nothing.*⁴⁸⁵

Dr. Thomas Constable extends his introduction to the next chapter as well: *There are four parts to this section that fall into two pairs. Solomon first related his investigations (in Eccles. 1:12–15 and Eccles. 2:1–11), and then gave his evaluations of each of these experiments (in Eccles. 1:16–18 and Eccles. 2:12–17).*⁴⁸⁶

Based upon Constable's approach above, Ecclesiastes 1 should have been vv. 1–11. Ecclesiastes 2 should have been Eccles. 1:12–2:17.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 1:12–18 (a graphic); from **Haiku Deck**; accessed June 17, 2018.

This is a list of bullet points, worth considering as we study this next section.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Dr. Peter Pett regarding Solomon's two experiments: *The Preacher Has Made His Enquiries and Comes Up With Nothing* (Eccles. 1:12 – Eccles. 2:26). This is the heading for the next chapter and a half.

Ecclesiastes 1:12-18

- Mood of Solomon?
- Pursuit of knowledge = "chasing after wind"
- Trying to catch the wind means you always come up empty.
- If everything is meaningless apart from God, how can life have meaning?

⁴⁸³ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:12.

⁴⁸⁴ Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 1:12–15.

⁴⁸⁵ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/dcb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 22, 2018.

⁴⁸⁶ Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:12–2:17.

Pett continues: *The Preacher now brings out that he has made further enquiries and has come up with nothing. He first considers the search for intellectual knowledge (Eccles. 1:12–18), and then he considers the search for pleasure (Eccles. 2:1–26), but he concludes that both lead nowhere.*⁴⁸⁷

Like many chapters of the Bible, Ecclesiastes was not divided up as well as it should have been. Ecclesiastes 1:1–11 provide an excellent introduction to the entire book; and Eccles. 1:12–2:26 give examples of Solomon's own personal pursuit for meaning and happiness as a man under the sun (that is, apart from God). Eccles. 1:12–2:26 are the report of Solomon's own experiments, and therefore, should have been kept together. When I first began doing these studies, I had considered dividing up the Bible according to my own sensibilities. In retrospect, I am very glad that I did not, as I no doubt would have more failures in this realm than successes. Furthermore, despite the chapter divisions coming up short from time to time (they are not inspired), keeping the divisions chapter by chapter allows others to more easily access the passages that they are interested in.

Not sure if I want to keep this.

Lessons from experience (Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:26) (Bridgeway Bible Commentary)

Writing as Solomon, the author now looks back and describes the experiences of a truly wise and wealthy man who searched for a meaning to life. First he tried the study of wisdom, but it led only to misery and frustration. Some things could not be made to fit any sort of consistent pattern; others, which in theory may have solved some problems, in practice did not exist (12-15). His learning and experience enabled him to tell the difference between wisdom and folly, but they were unable to help him find a meaning to life. His greater wisdom only increased his frustration and bitterness (16-18).

Continuing his search, the great king turned to pleasures of various kinds, but they did not provide the answer (2:1-3). He used his knowledge and resources in extravagant building programs and agricultural projects, and his household had everything he needed for a life of luxury and pleasure (4-8). All his achievements brought him a certain amount of satisfaction. But as he looks back he confesses that they brought him no nearer to solving the mystery of life's purpose (9-11).

Kings can build for themselves huge fortunes and accomplish impressive works, but even the wealthiest and most ambitious of kings found that all this did not bring satisfaction. What chance, then, does anyone else have? The frustrated searcher turned therefore to consider the subject of wisdom again (12). He reminded himself of the obvious truth that wisdom is better than folly (13), but he recalled also that the wise person dies the same as the fool, and both alike are soon forgotten (14-17).

Not only has wisdom no advantage over folly; diligence has no advantage over idleness. A person uses all his knowledge and skill in his work, spending long days labouring and sleepless nights worrying, but when he dies all that he has built up is left to someone else. Not only that, but the person who inherits all this did not work for it and may even foolishly waste it (18-23).

The writer now reaches one positive conclusion concerning the purpose of life. God intends people to enjoy the good things of life and to find enjoyment in their work. This is God's gift. Those who accept this gift please God. To them God gives the wisdom and ability to enjoy his gift. Those who do not accept this gracious gift from God, but who spend their energies trying to achieve happiness by their own wisdom and efforts, find that all they build up for themselves will be lost. In despair they cry out again that life is useless (24-26).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:12 I, the lecturer and author of this book, was also king over Israel in Jerusalem.

⁴⁸⁷ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:12–2:26.

Solomon was able to do a full search for happiness (various commentators)

Kidner: *Armed with such advantages, our search will be no circumscribed or tentative affair, but royal, exploring whatever the world can offer to a man of unlimited genius and wealth.*⁴⁸⁸

A. W. Momerie: *Koheleth now mentions the unusual advantages which he had possessed for enjoying life and making the best of it. His opportunities could not have been greater.*⁴⁸⁹

College Press Bible Study: *A close study of 1 Kings 1–11 is sufficient to establish the credibility of Solomon's claim to wealth and capabilities. He was in a position to propose and follow through on the ambitious goals of Eccles. 1:13 [And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with.] and Eccles. 2:1a [I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself."—ESV].*⁴⁹⁰

Dunagan: *[S]omeone could ask, "What does the writer know about life? What are his qualifications?" In the next verse we are given the credentials of the seeker.*⁴⁹¹

Dunagan: *Solomon, better than any other man, even modern billionaires, was in a position to test the theory as to whether any lasting satisfaction can be found in this life.*

Dunagan continues: *Besides tremendous wealth (1 Kings 3:13; 10:14), incredible wisdom and mental power (1 Kings 3:12; 3:16-28; 4:29-34; 10:1-10), he also had 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3). "So King Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom" (1 Kings 11:23). This is why we are justified in saying that compared to Solomon, our modern billionaires are small time players.*⁴⁹²

Steven Zeisler: *Solomon was the perfect subject to make this experiment. He had a godly heritage, and reigned as king over Israel in an era of peace and prosperity. He was extremely wise and fabulously rich. He lacked nothing, intellectually or materially, in his quest to find the meaning of life "under the sun." Who better to "go for the gusto" of life? Solomon thus set out to "seek and explore"-to seek in depth, to explore in breadth-all that life had to offer. Exploration was intended to bring information that would make life a joy to experience.*

Zeisler continues: *This man succeeded in everything he attempted. He decided to become more knowledgeable than anyone who had ever lived, and he did. He enquired, studied and read, and became supremely wise. No one has ever surpassed him in knowledge. The chastening thing about the experiment to which he gave himself was that although he succeeded in his quest, he was forced, upon reflection, to conclude that it only resulted in grief and pain.*⁴⁹³

Benson goes into much greater detail: *And to show how competent a judge he was of this matter, he lays down this character, that he was the Preacher, which implies eminent knowledge; and a king, who therefore had all imaginable opportunities and advantages for the attainment of happiness, and particularly for the getting of wisdom, by consulting all sorts of books and men, by trying all manner of experiments; and no ordinary king, but king over Israel — God's own people, a wise and a happy people, whose king he was by God's special appointment, and furnished by God with singular wisdom for that great trust; and whose abode was in Jerusalem — Where were the house of God, and the most wise and learned of the priests attending upon it, and the seats of justice, and colleges, or assemblies of the wisest men of their nation. All these concurring in him, which rarely do in any other man, make the argument, drawn from his experience, more convincing.*⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁸⁸ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:12.

⁴⁸⁹ *The Sermon Bible Commentary*; ©1888-1893; in the Public Domain; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll, M.A., LL.D., from e-sword, Eccles. 1:12–3:22.

⁴⁹⁰ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:12 (text for verses added).

⁴⁹¹ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:11.

⁴⁹² Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:12.

⁴⁹³ From <https://www.pbc.org/files/584509089ad2b149c6f68703/4084.html> accessed June 22, 2018.

⁴⁹⁴ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:12.

Solomon was able to do a full search for happiness (various commentators)

Dr. Thomas Constable gives even greater detail: *Solomon had unique resources for investigating life. He was the king of Israel (Eccles. 1:12), and he possessed superlative wisdom (Eccles. 1:13; cf. Eccles. 1:16; 1Kings 4:26-34). He says he made a comprehensive study of all kinds of human activities (Eccles. 1:14). He observed that they were all a "grievous task" (Eccles. 1:13; cf. Eccles. 4:8; Eccles. 5:14), namely, difficult and disappointing. "Striving [chasing] after wind" (Eccles. 1:14) graphically pictures the futility Solomon sought to communicate (cf. Eccles. 2:11; Eccles. 2:17; Eccles. 2:26; Eccles. 4:4; Eccles. 4:6; Eccles. 6:9). This phrase occurs frequently in Eccles. 1:12 to Eccles. 6:9 and is a structural marker that indicates the end of a subsection of Solomon's thought (cf. Eccles. 1:17; Eccles. 2:11; Eccles. 2:17; Eccles. 2:26; Eccles. 4:4; Eccles. 4:6; Eccles. 4:16; Eccles. 6:9).*⁴⁹⁵

Dr. John Gill: *As he had all advantages and opportunities, so he did not want for industry and application to obtain knowledge; he gave his mind to it; he took up a resolution not to be discouraged by any difficulties, but to break through them...and he pursued it with all diligence.*⁴⁹⁶

The Geneva Bible: *[Solomon] proves that if any could have attained happiness in this world by labour and study, he should have obtained it, because he had gifts and aids from God to it above all others.*⁴⁹⁷

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

There were few, if any, meaningful differences in the various translations of this verse. What was often different was the subheading. The subheadings, of course, apply to the next series of verses and not to this verse alone.

I, a lecturer, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. Ecclesiastes 1:12 **I, the lecturer, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.**

I, the lecturer and author of this book, was also king over Israel in Jerusalem.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)
Aramaic Targum

I, a lecturer, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

When King Solomon was sitting upon the throne of his kingdom, his heart became very proud of his riches, and he transgressed the word of God, and he gathered many horses, and chariots, and riders, and he amassed much gold and silver, and he married from foreign nations, whereupon the anger of the Lord was kindled against him, and he sent to him Ashmoda the king of the demons, who drove him from the throne of his kingdom, and took away the ring from his hand, in order that he should roam and wander about in the world to reprove it; and he went about in the provincial towns and the cities of the land of Israel, weeping and lamenting, and saying, I am Coheleth, whose name was formerly called Solomon, who was king over Israel in Jerusalem;...

Revised Douay-Rheims
Peshitta (Syriac)
Updated Brenton (Greek)

I Ecclesiastes was king over Israel in Jerusalem,...

I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

Significant differences:

The Aramaic targum is filled with additional text.

⁴⁹⁵ Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:12–15.

⁴⁹⁶ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:13.

⁴⁹⁷ Geneva Bible Translation Notes; 1599, courtesy of e-sword, Eccles. 1:12.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Easy English	I said these things when I was the king of my country, Israel. I lived in the city called Jerusalem. There I ruled my country.
God's Word™	The Spokesman Begins to Study Everything under Heaven I, the spokesman, have been king of Israel in Jerusalem.
Good News Bible (TEV)	The Philosopher's Experience I, the Philosopher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.
The Message	I've Seen It All Call me "the Quester." I've been king over Israel in Jerusalem.
NIRV	Wisdom Is Meaningless I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	I, the one who gathers together God's people in order to preach to them, became king over God's people, Israel.
Common English Bible	The Teacher's quest I am the Teacher. I was king over Israel in Jerusalem.
Contemporary English V.	I said these things when I lived in Jerusalem as king of Israel.
The Living Bible	I, the Preacher, was king of Israel, living in Jerusalem.
New Life Version	Looking for Wisdom Is like Trying to Catch the Wind I, the Preacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.
New Living Translation	The Teacher Speaks: The Futility of Wisdom I, the Teacher, was king of Israel, and I lived in Jerusalem.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	I, the Teacher, have been the king of Israel for many years, ruling in Jerusalem.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	The great congregator is the king Over all of IsraEl from JeruSalem.
Beck's American Translation	<i>The Search for Meaning</i> I, the preacher, have been king of Israel in Jerusalem.
International Standard V	A Testimony to an Unwise Search I, the Teacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.
New Advent (Knox) Bible Peter Pett	I was a king in my day, I, the Spokesman; Israel my realm, Jerusalem my capital. I the preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem, and I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom about all that is done under heaven. It is a painful effort (a sore travail, an unhappy business) that God has given to the sons of men to be exercised with. V. 13 is included for context.
Translation for Translators	What the religious teacher found out about wisdom I, the Religious Teacher, have been the king of Israel <i>for many years, ruling in</i> Jerusalem.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible	I the speaker am to be the king over Isra-el, at Jerusalem:...
Christian Standard Bible	The Limitations of Wisdom I, the Teacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.
Conservapedia	I am the Preacher, I was the King of Israel in Jerusalem.
Lexham English Bible	Qohelet Introduces His Quest I, the Teacher, [was] king over Israel in Jerusalem.

NIV, ©2011

Wisdom Is Meaningless

I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

Tree of Life Version

Search for Meaning in Life

I, Kohelet, am king over Israel in Jerusalem.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

New English Bible—1970

The philosopher's experience.

I, the Speaker, ruled as king over Israel in Jerusalem; and in wisdom I applied my mind to study and explore all that is done under heaven. A portion of v. 13 is included for context.

New Jerusalem Bible

I, Qoheleth, have reigned over Israel in Jerusalem.

Revised English Bible—1989

I, the Speaker, ruled as king over Israel in Jerusalem; and I applied my mind to study and explore by means of wisdom all that is done under heaven. A portion of v. 13 is included for context.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

The Complete Tanach

I am Koheleth; I was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

I am Koheleth; I was king: over the whole world, and later, over Israel, and then, over Jerusalem alone, and finally, [only] over my staff, for it says: "I was king in Jerusalem," but now, I am no longer king.

exeGesés companion Bible

I the Congregationer

became sovereign over Yisra El in Yeru Shalem:...

JPS (Tanakh—1985)

I, Koheleth, was king in Jerusalem over Israel.

Orthodox Jewish Bible

I, Kohelet, was Melech over Yisroel in Yerushalayim.

The Scriptures 1998

I, Qoheleth, was sovereign over Yisra'el in Yerushalayim.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible

Does Wisdom Bring Happiness?I, the Teacher [or Preacher; ^LAssembler; 1:1], was [or have been] king over Israel in Jerusalem [1:1].

Kretzmann's Commentary

Verses 12-18

The Unreliability of Earthly Wisdom

I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem, over the entire nation, as Solomon states in looking back over his long reign.

NET Bible®

Futility of Secular Accomplishment

I, the Teacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

The Pulpit Commentary

I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem. Koheleth relates his own experience as king, in accordance with his assumption of the person of Solomon. The use of the past tense in this verse is regarded by many as strong evidence against the Solomonic authorship of the book. "I have been king" (not "I have become king," as Gratz would translate) is a statement introducing the supposed speaker, not as a reigning monarch, but as one who, in time past, exercised sovereignty. Solomon is represented as speaking from the grave, and recalling the past for the instruction of his auditors. In a similar manner, the author of the Book of Wisdom (Est. 8:1–13) speaks in his impersonation of Solomon. That king himself, who reigned without interruption to his death, could not have spoken of himself in the terms used here. He lost neither his throne nor his power; and, therefore, the expression cannot be paralleled (as Mr. Bullock suggests) by the complaint of Louis XIV; unsuccessful in war and weary of rule, "When I was king." Solomon redivivus is introduced to give weight to the succeeding experiences. Here

is one who had every and the most favorable opportunity of seeing the best side of things; and yet his testimony is that all is vanity. In the acquisition of wisdom, the contrast between the advantage of learned leisure and the interruptions of a laborious life is set forth in Ecclesiasticus 38:24, etc. King over Israel. The expression indicates a time before the division of the kingdom. We have it in 1Sam. 15:26, and occasionally elsewhere. The usual phrase is "King of Israel." (For in Jerusalem, see on 1Sam. 15:1.)

The Voice

I, the teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Concordant Literal Version	I myself, the Assembler, came to be king over Israel in Jerusalem."
Context Group Version	I the proclaimer was king over Israel in Jerusalem.
English Standard Version	The Vanity of Wisdom I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.
Modern English Version	The Burden of Wisdom I, the Preacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.
New American Standard B.	The Futility of Wisdom I, the Preacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.
New European Version	The Preacher Decides to Search for Wisdom I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.
New King James Version	The Grief of Wisdom I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.
Young's Literal Translation	I, a preacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

The gist of this passage: Solomon identifies himself as the participant in the experiments to follow.

Ecclesiastes 1:12			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
'ānîy (אֲנִי) [pronounced aw-NEE]	<i>I, me; in answer to a question, it means I am, it is I</i>	1 st person singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #589 BDB #58
qôheleth (קֹהֵלֶת) [pronounced ko-HEH-leth]	<i>collector (of sentences), preacher, public speaker, lecturer, speaker in an assembly, transliterated, Qoheleth</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #6953 BDB #875
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
melek ^e (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced MEH-lek]	<i>king, ruler, prince; royal, royalty</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
'al (עַל) [pronounced ġah!]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of relative proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752

Ecclesiastes 1:12

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Yis ^e râ'êl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced <i>yis-raw-ALE</i>]	<i>God prevails; contender; soldier of God; transliterated Israel</i>	masculine proper noun; God-given name to Jacob; and national name for the Jewish people	Strong's #3478 & #3479 BDB #975
The NET Bible: <i>The name Israel means "God fights" (although some interpret the meaning as "he fights [with] God"). See Gen 32:28.</i> ⁴⁹⁸ The NIV Study Bible understands his name to mean, <i>he struggles with God.</i> ⁴⁹⁹ See Gen. 32:22–30.			
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
Y ^e rûwshâlayim (יְרוּשָׁלַיִם) [pronounced <i>y'roo-shaw-LAH-yim</i>]	<i>possibly means founded upon peace or city of the Jebusites (or both); it is transliterated Jerusalem</i>	proper singular noun, location; pausal form	Strong's #3389 BDB #436

Translation: I, the lecturer, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. Solomon again identifies himself as the lecturer, perhaps identifying himself as the author of this book as well. He is the king of Israel who rules out of Jerusalem.

Solomon originally identifies himself at the beginning of this chapter as the writer of the entire book. Solomon here identifies himself in relation to his series of experiments which he records, the first one being vv. 13–18. I believe the idea is, he personally takes part in these experiments. He is not making the observations of other people. Solomon himself is the guinea pig.

He first describes himself as the *lecturer*. I believe that, Solomon began with wonderful, accurate messages during the 3 feasts as we studied in **1Kings 9** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). However, at some point, perhaps due to the influence of his wives, whom he began to collect, he began to teach human viewpoint thinking. If he did not teach during these feast days, then let me posit that he began to teach human viewpoint somewhere, in some kind of forum (although the Temple complex which he built was perfect venue for such a forum).

Dr. Peter Pett: *The Preacher reminds us that he was king in Jerusalem, and gave himself to use his wisdom to discover knowledge, but declares that the search for such wisdom and understanding turned out to be a useless and painful effort because of the difficulty of finding anything out.*⁵⁰⁰

I don't think that this is so much of a reminder as it is the preface for his two experiments, carried out here and in Ecclesiastes 2. I believe that Ecclesiastes is made up of several lectures given by Solomon (perhaps in front of the Temple), and that this is how he introduced one of those lectures (which I believe began in Eccles. 1:12 and ended at the end of Eccles. 2).

Ecclesiastes 1:12 I, the lecturer, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

⁴⁹⁸ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen35.htm> (footnote) accessed January 2, 2015.

⁴⁹⁹ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 46 (footnote).

⁵⁰⁰ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:12–18.

Solomon “is” or “was” king — a discussion

At least two commentators (Clarke and College Press Bible Study) develop some weird theories or mention that this verb is in the past tense.⁵⁰¹ There is no past and present tense in the Hebrew. There is perfect and imperfect. One use of the perfect tense is to mark a point in time during which some event happened; but it can also take in an event and view it from its completed state or from singular view of the action of the verb. That is, we do not see the verb as describing a series of events or continuous action, but we see it as either a completed or as a singular action. Here we view Solomon’s kingship as a singular event; we do not follow it throughout Solomon’s life. There is no need to understand Solomon as looking back over his life, and saying, “Once upon a time, I was king over Israel.” Perhaps the sense could better be apprehended by combining it with the next verse (which some do): *I, the lecturer, as king over Israel in Jerusalem, have applied my heart to seek...* I believe the idea is to state, but not over-emphasize Solomon’s kingship.

The College Press Bible Study: *Those who would argue for a non-Solomonic authorship interpret the past tense in this verse as implying that the author personified Solomon, as Solomon would not have used the past tense at a time when he was still the king.*⁵⁰²

Dunagan: *The word "have been", is also rendered by some, "I have been king thus far, and am one still"*⁵⁰³

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *was king* — instead of “am,” because he is about to give the results of his past experience during his long reign.⁵⁰⁴ I would think that, to come to this conclusion, the imperfect tense would have been used.

Keil and Delitzsch see there as being two possible translations: *[O]f the two possible interpretations of יָתִיב, “I have become” and “I have been.”*⁵⁰⁵

*The Berleburger Bible conveys the meaning of the verb as a description of the past that stretches into the future, “I the preacher have been king thus far, and am one still.”*⁵⁰⁶

The Hebrew does not have a past and present tense as we do; but typically, their perfect tense is translated as a past tense; and their imperfect tense is translated as a present or future tense.

The perfect tense views an event as a completed event or as a whole event, without a view to its process. This can be an event in the past, present or future (often the perfect tense of a future event indicates absolute certainty).

The present tense can be used for a current ongoing actions, to a future action; or to the process of an action; or to the continuing process of an action. In narrative, the imperfect tense is often used to portray a succession of events (*he did this, and then he did that, and then he did something else*).

College Press Bible Study seems to have a theory as to why the perfect tense is used here: *Even in Solomon’s day the kingdom shook beneath him with unrest and discontent. Sacrifice to foreign deities took place on the sacred ground of Israel. Jeroboam and Rehoboam stood waiting to claim their respective sections of the kingdom when it divided. Indeed, the “handwriting was on the wall.” It is reasonable, therefore, that Solomon could think of himself and the glory of the past as something that would never be reclaimed and thus in the last days of his reign to realize his control over Israel was indeed a thing of the past.*⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰¹ The College Press Bible Study does not appear to support a non-Solomon authorship.

⁵⁰² *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:12.

⁵⁰³ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:12.

⁵⁰⁴ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:12.

⁵⁰⁵ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles 1:12.

⁵⁰⁶ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:12.

⁵⁰⁷ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:12.

Solomon “is” or “was” king — a discussion

In considering Solomon’s entire reign, they may have a point here. For much of Solomon’s reign, Israel was actually quite strong and prosperous, and every man sat under his own vine. However, there was a point at which Solomon began chasing women; his great wisdom began to fail (he replaced divine viewpoint with human viewpoint); and let me suggest that Solomon and his kingdom both began a downward spiral. Obviously, when the kingdom splits in half as it will after Solomon’s reign, there had to be some underlying processes at work during his reign.

There is a sense in which we could understand the verb to be in the *past tense* here. Solomon is obviously writing near the end of his life (he talks about his body falling apart due to old age)—probably pulling together many human viewpoint teachings which he has previously taught for this book. He teaches from the perspective that he knows that his life is drawing to a close, and, therefore, his kingship is also drawing to a close. He has found out some very important stuff, regardless of the false information that he has been teaching. So, at the end of his life, looking back at his kingship as being, more or less in the rear view mirror, Solomon explains what he studied and pursued previously; and the real conclusions that he finally came to. His kingship is simply not an issue, apart from providing him the ability to explore further into whatever realm he wanted.

There was a lot more discussion on this point than I originally expected.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:12 I, the lecturer, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

Dr. Dan Hill: *Notice also he doesn't bring his father into the picture as he did in verse 1. David knew better and David taught Solomon better. That is the essence of Proverbs.*⁵⁰⁸

Proverbs appears to be Solomon’s notebook from Bible class with his father, King David. Prov. 3:5–7 **Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.**

Matthew Poole: *This verse is a preface to the following discourse, that by the consideration of the quality of the speaker they might be induced to give more attention and respect to his words. Having asserted the vanity of all things in the general, he now comes to prove his assertion in all those particulars wherein men commonly seek, and with greatest probability expect to find true happiness. He begins with secular wisdom.*⁵⁰⁹

I think that it is reasonable to understand that Solomon is making his observations not from reports that he has received from others, but these are experiments in which he personally was engaged. And, to clarify—Solomon did not necessarily decide, one day, to go out and try a bunch of different things, with the intention that he would prove what he believed all along (which is what many scientific studies do⁵¹⁰). Solomon, once a man of great divine wisdom, will make several approaches to find happiness, but not as an experiment, necessarily, but as a man who has fallen from the grace of God.

He names himself again in v. 12 simply to make it clear that he is the one who engages in this series of experiments (which are carried into Eccles. 2).

⁵⁰⁸ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 11, 2018.

⁵⁰⁹ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:12.

⁵¹⁰ I remember in college studying sociology and sociological studies; and it confused me that many studies begin with an hypothesis as to what the conclusion should be. To me, that was dangerously close to skewing the results.

Ecclesiastes 1:12 I, the lecturer, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

King over Israel (Ecclesiastes 1:12) (various commentators)

Keith Krell: *Why does he reiterate his position as king? To remind us that he is a man who had everything this world could offer. If anyone could have found satisfaction in life, it was Solomon. After citing his credentials, Solomon states that he purposely set out to find the ultimate principles behind everything in the universe (1:13). I assume he studied literature and art, psychology and sociology, astronomy and physics, and theology and philosophy.*⁵¹¹

Duane A. Garrett: *A universal theme in wisdom and philosophic writings is that the life of wisdom is the highest of all callings. In Plato the task of the philosopher is the purest of all. Here, however, it is a grievous task (we could translate the phrase as a "lousy job").*⁵¹²

Matthew Poole: *[Solomon is not just a king, but he is] king over Israel, God's own and only beloved people, a wise and a happy people, Deut. 4:6,7 33:29, whose king he was by God's special and gracious appointment, and furnished by God with singular wisdom for the discharge of that great trust; and whose royal palace and abode was in Jerusalem...all which...makes the argument drawn from his experience more convincing and undeniable.*⁵¹³

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *over Israel in Jerusalem* — specified, as opposed to David, who reigned both in Hebron and Jerusalem; whereas Solomon reigned only in Jerusalem. "*King of Israel in Jerusalem,*" implies that he reigned over Israel and Judah combined; whereas David, at Hebron, reigned only over Judah, and not, until he was settled in Jerusalem, over both Israel and Judah.⁵¹⁴

These statements, when both taken together, suggest that there was always a northern/southern set of tribes; and some of the people saw themselves in the same way. The first king was Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin (a northern tribe). When David became king in Hebron, there was still a claim to the throne being made from the family of Saul.

Keil and Delitzsch: *[Solomon] has been king, – king over a great, peaceful, united people; king in Jerusalem, the celebrated, populous, highly-cultivated city, – and thus placed on an elevation having the widest survey, and having at his disposal whatever can make a man happy; endowed, in particular, with all the means of gaining knowledge, which accorded with the disposition of his heart searching after wisdom (cf. 1Kings 3:9–11; 1Kings 5:9). But in his search after worldly knowledge he found no satisfaction.*⁵¹⁵

James Burton Coffman: *Some scholars think that the words, all that were before me in Jerusalem, denies that Solomon was the author, but there is no such denial in it. All that were before me, should not be read as if it said, "All the kings that were before me." Even if it meant `kings', the words all that were before me would apply to the two kings who preceded Solomon as well as it would apply to twenty-five or thirty...[this would reasonably include all] `kings' who preceded Solomon `in Jerusalem,'...pre-Davidic kings such as Melchizedek.*⁵¹⁶

Although there was a split in nation Israel which probably goes back to the days of Saul and David; for most of David and Solomon's reigns, nation Israel was one. However, near the end of Solomon's reign—and not uncoincidentally, due to his reversionism—the kingdom began to split in two.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

⁵¹¹ From [Bible.org](https://www.bible.org), accessed June 23, 2018.

⁵¹² From [Bible.org](https://www.bible.org), accessed June 23, 2018.

⁵¹³ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:12.

⁵¹⁴ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:12 (slightly edited).

⁵¹⁵ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 1:12.

⁵¹⁶ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:12 I, the lecturer, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

Putting Kingship Over Jerusalem into Perspective (Pastor John Griffith)

- Saul, David and Solomon all reigned 40 years each.
- After Solomon the Kingdom was divided:
- Rehoboam ruled the southern kingdom - Judah - series of 23 kings over a 350 year period - was destroyed by Babylonians in 586 B.C.
- Jeroboam I ruled the Northern kingdom - Israel or Ephraim - series of 19 kings over a 210 year period - was destroyed by the Chaldeans in 722 B.C.

Solomon, with a greater perspective, could have portrayed the nations as cycles of the earth. Nations also have cyclical patterns.

From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_04.html accessed June 16, 2018 (slightly edited).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Just as v. 1 introduced Solomon as the author of the book of Ecclesiastes, v. 12 identifies him as the very person who tried these various experiments.

Solomon's first experiment is with human wisdom. God is mentioned in this passage, but the key to this wisdom is, it is *under-the-sun* wisdom and all is vanity (which includes the wisdom).

The College Press Bible Study: *Solomon's purpose is clearly defined. He wants to explore all that is done under heaven. He will do it with his mind guided by wisdom. He sees it as a grievous task, vain and futile.*⁵¹⁷

The Expositor's Bible Commentary is confused about Solomon's experimenting: *Cohemoth sets out on the search for that true and supreme Good which it will be well for the sons of men to pursue through their brief day; the good which will sustain them under all their toils, and be "a portion" so large, and enduring as to satisfy even their vast desires.*⁵¹⁸

My problem with Expositor's above is, the reference to the *true and supreme Good*; Solomon is attempting to find the good path, the way which is separate from God's plan. The *good* he is searching out is the *good under the sun*. He is search for the good, for human meaning, in pursuit of fulfillment and happiness apart from revelation from the **Revealed God**.

The Expositor's Bible Commentary: *[A]s was natural in so wise a man, he turns first to Wisdom. He gives himself diligently to inquire into all the actions and toils of men. He will ascertain whether a larger acquaintance with their conditions, a deeper insight into the facts, a more just and complete estimate of their lot, will remove the depression which weighs upon his heart. He devotes himself earnestly to this Quest, and acquires a "greater wisdom than all who were before him."*⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁷ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:13–18 (comment).

⁵¹⁸ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:12–2:26.

⁵¹⁹ *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:12–2:26.

And I have given my heart to seek and to search out in wisdom upon all that has been done under the [two] heavens; this business of evil has given Elohim to sons of Adam to humble/afflict in him.

Ecclesiastes
1:13

So I have given my heart to seek and to search out wisdom regarding all that has been done under [these] heavens; [and to study] this business of evil [that] God has given to the sons of man in order to humble/afflict him.

Therefore, I have given my life to seeking and searching out wisdom regarding all that has been done under these heavens; and to study this life of evil that God has given to the sons of man in order to both humble and afflict him.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)

And I have given my heart to seek and to search out in wisdom upon all that has been done under the [two] heavens; this business of evil has given Elohim to sons of Adam to humble/afflict in him.

Aramaic Targum

...and I gave my heart to ask instruction from God at the time when he appeared unto me in Gibeon, to try me, and to ask me what I desire of him, and I asked nothing of him except wisdom, to know the difference between good and evil, and knowledge of whatsoever was done under the sun in this world, and I saw all the works of the wicked children of men - a bad business which God gave to the children of men to be afflicted by it;...

Revised Douay-Rheims

And I proposed in my mind to seek and search out wisely concerning all things that are done under the sun. This painful occupation has God given to the children of men, to be exercised therein.

Peshitta (Syriac)

And I gave my heart to seek to search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven; to be engaged in it is a difficult task that God has given to the sons of men.

Updated Brenton (Greek)

And I applied my heart to seek out and examine by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven, for God has given to the sons of men an evil trouble to be troubled therewith.

Significant differences:

A lot of additional text in the targum; with missing words as well. The Latin has *sun* rather than *heavens*. The Aramaic lacks the final phrase *to afflict him*.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English

And I gave my heart to searching out in wisdom all things which are done under heaven: it is a hard thing which God has put on the sons of men to do.

Easy English

I also studied a lot and I was very wise. I thought about the things that happen here on the earth. And I tried to understand them. But God has made this very difficult for us to do.

Easy-to-Read Version–2006

I decided to study and to use my wisdom to learn about everything that is done in this life. I learned that it is a very hard thing that God has given us to do.

Good News Bible (TEV)

I determined that I would examine and study all the things that are done in this world.

The Message

God has laid a miserable fate upon us.

I looked most carefully into everything, searched out all that is done on this earth. And let me tell you, there's not much to write home about. God hasn't made it easy for us.

Names of God Bible

With all my heart I used wisdom to study and explore everything done under heaven.

The Spokesman's General Conclusion

NIRV	Mortals are weighed down with a terrible burden that Elohim has placed on them. I decided to study things carefully. I used my wisdom to check everything out. I looked into everything that is done on earth. What a heavy load God has put on human beings!
New Simplified Bible	I devoted myself to study and explored wisdom concerning all that is done under the heavens. It is a grievous task God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with. ⁵²⁰

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	I was determined, assessing all my resources, employing all my energies, and guided by my mind, to ferret out and examine the roots, turning everything from side to side, until through wisdom I had explored all that has been done within the limits of the world. To examine and explore all things is a longing placed in man's heart by God Himself. However, it is a grievous, unrewarding task because what is discovered does not bring satisfaction or reward to man's mind.
Common English Bible	I applied my mind to investigate and to explore by wisdom all that happens under heaven. It's an unhappy obsession that God has given to human beings.
Contemporary English V.	With all my wisdom I tried to understand everything that happens here on earth. And God has made this so hard for us humans to do.
The Living Bible	And I applied myself to search for understanding about everything in the universe. I discovered that the lot of man, which God has dealt to him, is not a happy one.
New Berkeley Version	I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem; and I applied my heart to seek and to search for wisdom in all that is done under heaven. This is a trying task, which God gives to the sons of men to be afflicted in it.
New Century Version	I decided to use my wisdom to learn about everything that happens on earth. I learned that God has given us terrible things to face.
New Life Version	And I set my mind to look for wisdom to learn about all that has been done under heaven. It is a hard work which God has given to the sons of men to be troubled with.
New Living Translation	I devoted myself to search for understanding and to explore by wisdom everything being done under heaven. I soon discovered that God has dealt a tragic existence to the human race.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	By using my wisdom, I concentrated on understanding everything that was being done on the earth. It is a task that wears me out, just like anyone else who tries it.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	So I set my heart to survey and inquire About all that has happened under the sky. God gave me this to distract me from bad, And to lead sons of men back to Him.
Beck's American Translation	I have used my wisdom to study, search and explore everything done under the sky. It's a sorry task God given human beings to weary themselves with.
International Standard V	I dedicated myself to using wisdom for study and discovery of everything that is done under heaven. [I.e. from a heavenly perspective] God uses terrible things so human beings will struggle with life. [The Heb. lacks with life]
New Advent (Knox) Bible	And it was my resolve to search deep and find out the meaning of all that men do, here under the sun; all that curse of busy toil which God has given to the sons of Adam for their task.

⁵²⁰ Quite frankly, I have noticed on several occasions where the New Simplified Bible had some reasonably difficult words in it.

Translation for Translators By using my wisdom, I concentrated on understanding everything that was being done on the earth [MTY]. *But I found out that God causes all of us to experience things that cause us to be unhappy/miserable.*

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible I am to have given *the sensibility* of my heart, to investigate and to ascertain by wisdom, that what has come to be prepared under the expanse. For it is to be a miserable undertaking He of mighty ones, to have set to the sons of mankind to be afflicted with.

Conservapedia I was passionate about seeking out wisdom concerning all things that are done in the earthly realm: God has given this obligation to the sons of men to be done as His will.

Ferrar-Fenton Bible **The Pursuit of Knowledge**
The Preacher Declares who he is
I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem, and I devoted my mind to investigation, and to scientific Research, over everything that occurs under the skies.—It is a difficult exercise which GOD has imposed upon the sons of Adam, to develop themselves by it.— V. 12 is included for context.

God's Truth (Tyndale) I myself the Preacher, being King of Israel and Jerusalem, applied my mind to seek out and search for the knowledge of all things that are done under heaven. V. 12 is included for context.

HCSB I applied my mind to seek and explore through wisdom all that is done under heaven. God has given people this miserable task to keep them occupied.

Lexham English Bible I applied my mind to seek and to search by wisdom all that is done under the heavens. It [is] a grievous task God has given to {humans}.

NIV, ©2011 I 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 mankind!

Urim-Thummim Version And I gave my heart to seek and search out by Wisdom concerning all things that are done under the cosmos: this bad task has Elohim given to the sons of man to be exercised in it.

Wikipedia Bible Project And I endeavored in my heart to demand and to seek for wisdom, over everything that had been done under the skies: it is a bad business that God gave to men, to agonize over.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (2013) I set my heart on studying and examining critically all that is done under heaven. It is a burdensome task which God has given to the sons of men! The Christian Community Bible places the second sentence with v. 14, which I think may be an unintentional mistake on their part.

The Heritage Bible And I gave my heart to tread seeking and be on the go to gain by wisdom concerning all *things* that are done under the heavens; God has given this evil business to the sons of men with which to humble them.

New American Bible (2002) I, Qoheleth, was king over Israel in Jerusalem, and I applied my mind to search and investigate in wisdom all things that are done under the sun. A thankless task God has appointed for men to be busied about. V. 12 is included for context.

New American Bible (2011) *Twofold Introduction.*
I, Qoheleth, was king over Israel in Jerusalem, and I applied my mind to search and investigate in wisdom all things that are done under the sun. V. 12 is included for context.

New English Bible—1970 I applied my mind to study and explore all that is done under heaven. It is a sorry business that God has given men to busy themselves with.

New Jerusalem Bible	Wisely I have applied myself to investigation and exploration of everything that happens under heaven. What a wearisome task God has given humanity to keep us busy!
Revised English Bible—1989	I, the Speaker, ruled as king over Israel in Jerusalem; and I applied my mind to study and explore by means of wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is a worthless task that God has given to mortals to keep them occupied. V. 12 is included for context.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	I wisely applied myself to seek out and investigate everything done under heaven. What a bothersome task God has given humanity to keep us occupied!.
The Complete Tanach	And I applied my heart to inquire and to search with wisdom all that was done under the heaven. It is a sore task that God has given to the sons of men with which to occupy themselves.

And I applied my heart to inquire: in the Torah, which is wisdom, and to ponder over it concerning all the evil deeds mentioned above, which are committed under the sun, and I pondered that it is a sore task that the Holy One, blessed be He, set before the children of men. (Deut. 30:15): “life and good, and also death and evil.”

a sore task: Heb. עַר וְיָנַע. They have evil behavior.

with which to occupy themselves: Heb. וּבִי תוֹנֵעַל, to behave with it. וְיָנַע may be interpreted as an expression of an abode (וְנוֹעַמ) and a dwelling, and it may also be interpreted as an expression of study (וְנוֹיַע) and thought, and the same is true of תוֹנֵעַל וּבִי.

has given: has placed before them.

exeGesés companion Bible	...and I gave my heart to seek and explore by wisdom concerning all those worked under the heavens - this evil drudgery Elohim gave to the sons of humanity to be humbled therewith.
The Israel Bible	I set my mind to study and to probe with wisdom all that happens under the sun.—An unhappy business, that, which Hashem gave men to be concerned with!
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	I set my mind to study and to probe with wisdom all that happens under the sun.—An unhappy business, that, which God gave men to be concerned with!
Orthodox Jewish Bible	And I set my lev to seek and search out by chochmah concerning all things that are done under Shomayim; what grievous task hath Elohim given to the bnei haAdam to be afflicted therewith.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	And I set my mind to seek and explore by [man’s] wisdom all [human activity] that has been done under heaven. It is a miserable business and a burdensome task which God has given the sons of men with which to be busy <i>and</i> distressed.
The Expanded Bible	I ·decided [devoted myself] to use my wisdom to ·learn [explore] about everything that happens ·on earth [under heaven; v. 3]. I learned that God has given ·us terrible things to face [or the human race an evil/unhappy task to keep us occupied].
Keith Krell	And I set my mind ⁴¹ to seek and explore ⁴² by wisdom ⁴³ concerning all that has been done under heaven. It is a grievous task which God ⁴⁴ has given to the sons of men ⁴⁵ to be afflicted with. I have seen all the works [intellectual] which have been done

under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind.⁴⁶ V. 14 is included for context.

⁴¹ The phrase “I set my mind” (1:13, 17) is what is known as an inclusion (i.e., the bracketing off of a passage by beginning and ending a section with the same or similar word or phrase). The use of this particular inclusion again emphasizes Solomon’s personal experience.

⁴² The word translated “seek” (darash) means to penetrate to the very core of a matter, while the word translated “explore” (tur) means to investigate a subject on all sides. In his quest for satisfaction, Solomon did his homework—he did a thorough job.

⁴³ “Wisdom” (chokmah) in this context does not refer to living life with God in view. It means using human intelligence (“under the sun”) as an instrument to ferret out truth and significance.

⁴⁴ Ecclesiastes does not use the divine title Yahweh, God’s covenantal name (Exod 3:14-15). Instead, the book uses the word Elohim for God twenty-eight times, a word that stresses His sovereignty over all creation. The wisdom writers often use Elohim when they wish to speak of universal truth instead of truths that are peculiar to God’s covenantal relationship to Israel. Ronald B. Allen, “Ecclesiastes,” in Nelsons New Illustrated Bible Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 782.

⁴⁵ Most of our Bibles have translated the Hebrew word adam (“man”) as “men.” The phrase then reads: “It is a grievous task which God has given the sons of men to be afflicted with.” Yet, Solomon seems to be alluding to Adam and the effects of the Fall. Therefore, the idea is: On account of Adam’s fall, the sons of Adam seek and explore in pursuit of the meaning of life, but to no avail.

⁴⁶ “Striving after wind” is only used in the book of Ecclesiastes. Seven of its nine occurrences follow hebel (“vanity,” futile,” etc.) statements (1:14; 2:11, 17, 26; 4:4, 6; 6:9). Constable suggests, “This phrase ‘striving after wind’ occurs frequently in Eccl 1:12-6:9 and is a structural marker that indicates the end of a subsection of Solomon’s thought (cf. 1:17; 2:11, 17, 26; 4:4, 6, 16; 6:9).” Dr. Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Ecclesiastes”; 2007 edition: <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/ecclesiastes.pdf>, 10

Kretzmann’s Commentary

And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom, applying the wisdom given him by the Lord with all zeal, concerning all things that are done under heaven, the motives, acts, and lives of men everywhere; this sore travail, namely, the zealous searching, the steady and ceaseless endeavor to inquire into the works of men, hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith, it is a part of the labor laid upon mankind by the Lord, the acquiring of knowledge is a difficult task. Now Solomon states the result of his studies.

NET Bible®

I decided⁴⁶ to carefully⁴⁷ and thoroughly examine⁴⁸

all that has been accomplished on earth.⁴⁹

I concluded:⁵⁰ God has given people⁵¹ a burdensome task that keeps them⁵³ occupied.⁵⁴

⁴⁶ Heb “I gave my heart” or “I set my mind.” The term יָבַל (libbi, “my heart”) is an example of synecdoche of part (heart) for the whole (myself). Qoheleth uses this figurative expression frequently in the book. On the other hand, in Hebrew mentality, the term “heart” is frequently associated with one’s thoughts and reasoning; thus, this might be a metonymy of association (heart = thoughts). The equivalent English idiom would be “I applied my mind.”

⁴⁷ Heb “with wisdom,” that is, with careful reflection in light of principles observed by the sages.

⁴⁸ Heb “to seek and to search out” (לִדְרוֹשׁ וְלַתְּלוֹךְ, lidrosh vylatur). This is an example of a verbal hendiadys (the use of two synonymous verbs to state a common idea in an emphatic manner). The terms are used because they are closely related synonyms; therefore, the similarities in meaning should be emphasized rather than

the distinctions in meaning. The verb שָׁדַד (darash) means “to inquire about; to investigate; to search out; to study” (HALOT 233 s.v. שָׁדַד ; BDB 205 s.v. שָׁדַד). This verb is used literally of the physical activity of investigating a matter by examining the physical evidence and interviewing eye-witnesses (e.g., Judg 6:29; Deut 13:15; 17:4, 9; 19:18), and figuratively (hypocatastasis) of mentally investigating abstract concepts (e.g., Eccl 1:13; Isa 1:17; 16:5; Pss 111:2; 119:45). Similarly, the verb רָתַת (tur) means “to seek out, discover” (HALOT 1708 s.v. רָתַת 1.c; BDB 1064 רָתַת 2). The verb רָתַת is used literally of the physical action of exploring physical territory (Num 13:16-17; 14:6, 34-36; Job 39:8), and figuratively (hypocatastasis) of mentally exploring things (Eccl 1:13; 7:25; 9:1).

^{49th} Heb “under heaven.”

sn Qoheleth states that he made a thorough investigation of everything that had been accomplished on earth. His position as king gave him access to records and contacts with people that would have been unavailable to others.

^{50th} This phrase does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is added in the translation for clarity.

^{51th} Heb “the sons of men/mankind.”

^{53th} The syntax of this line in Hebrew is intentionally redundant, e.g. (literally), “It is a grievous task [or “unpleasant business”] that God has given to the sons of man to be occupied with it.” The referent of the third masculine singular suffix on תְּוֹנֵעַל (la’anut bo, “to be occupied with it”) is עֲרֵי יָנַעַע (‘inyan ra’, “a grievous task, a rotten business”).

^{54th} Or “that keeps them occupied” or “that busies them.” The verb הִנָּעַע (‘anah, “to be occupied with”) is related to the noun יָנַעַע (‘inyan, “business, task, occupation”) which also occurs in this verse. The verb הִנָּעַע means “to be occupied, to be busy with” (with the preposition בֵּי bet), e.g., Eccl 1:13; 3:10; 5:19 (HALOT 854 s.v. הִנָּעַע; BDB 775 s.v. הִנָּעַע). The Hebrew verb is related to the Aramaic verb “to try hard,” the Arabic verb “to be busily occupied; to worry; to be a matter of concern,” and the Old South Arabic root “to be troubled; to strive with” (HALOT 854).

The Pulpit Commentary

I gave my heart (Eccles. 1:17; Eccles. 7:25; Dan. 10:12). The heart, in the Hebrew conception, was the seat, not of the affections only, but of the understanding and intellectual faculties generally. So the expression here is equivalent to "I applied my mind." To seek and search out. The two words are not synonymous. The former verb (שָׁדַד, darash) implies penetrating into the depth of an object before one; the other word (רָתַת, tur) taking a comprehensive survey of matters further away; so that two methods and scopes of investigation are signified. By wisdom; εὐνοία, σοφία. Wisdom was the means or instrument by which he carried on his researches, which were directed, not merely to the collecting of facts, but to investigating the causes and conditions of things. Concerning all things that are done under heaven; i.e. men’s actions and conduct, political, social, and private life. We have "under the sun" in Eccles. 1:9, and again in Eccles. 1:14. Here there is no question of physical matters, the phenomena of the material world, but only of human circumstances and interests. This sore travail (rather, this is a sore travail that) God hath given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. The word rendered "travail" (יָנַעַע, inyan) occurs often in this book (e.g. Eccles. 2:23, Eccles. 2:26, etc.), and nowhere else in the Old Testament. The same root is found in the word translated "exercised;" hence Wright has, "It is a woeful exercise which God has given to the sons of men wherewith to exercise themselves." If we keep to the word "travail," we may render, "to travail therein." It implies distracting business, engrossing occupation. Septuagint, περιπρασμόν; Vulgate, occupationem. Man feels himself constrained to make this laborious investigation, yet the result is most unsatisfactory, as the next verse shows. "God" is here Elohim, and so throughout the book, the name Jehovah (the God of the covenant, the God of Israel) never once occurring. Those who regard Solomon as the author of the book account for this on the plea that the king,

in his latest years, reflecting sadly on his backsliding and fall, shrank from uttering with his polluted lips the adorable Name once so often used with filial reverence and beloved. But the true reason is found in the design of Koheleth, which was to set forth, not so much Israel's position under the covenant, as the condition of man in the face of the God of nature. The idiosyncrasies and peculiar features of the chosen people are not the subject of his essay; he deals with a wider sphere; his theme is man in his relation to Divine providence; and for this power he uses that name, common alike to the true and false religions, Elohim, applied to the Supreme Being by believers and idolaters.

Syndein/Thieme

{1st Experiment - Academic Achievement for Happiness in the Cosmic System - Nope}

And I devoted myself to study and to explore by academics all that had been done under heaven. What a heavy burden God has laid upon man!

The Voice

I decided to seek out and study the wisdom *of the ages*, of all that had been done under the heavens. *I soon discovered* the harsh realities of the work God has given us that keeps us so busy.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Alpha & Omega Bible

AND I APPLIED MY HEART TO SEEK OUT AND EXAMINE BY WISDOM CONCERNING ALL THINGS THAT ARE DONE UNDER HEAVEN, FOR THEOS (The Alpha & Omega) HAS GIVEN TO THE SONS OF MEN AN EVIL TROUBLE TO BE TROUBLED THEREWITH.

Concordant Literal Version

I applied my heart to inquiring and exploring by wisdom concerning all that is done under the heavens: it is an experience of evil Elohim has given to the sons of humanity to humble them by it.

Context Group Version

And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under the skies: it is an intense travail that God has given to the sons of man to be humbled with it.

Darby Translation

And I applied my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under the heavens: this grievous occupation hath God given to the children of men to weary themselves therewith.

English Standard Version

And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with.

Green's Literal Translation

And I gave my heart to seek and to investigate by wisdom concerning all which is done under the heavens. *It is* an evil task God has given to the sons of men, to be afflicted by it.

Modern English Version

I set my heart to seek and to investigate with wisdom everything that is done under heaven. It is a burdensome task that God has given to the sons of men, by which they may be occupied.

New European Version

I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under the sky. It is a heavy burden that God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with.

New King James Version

And I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom concerning all that has been done under heaven. *It is* a grievous task *which* God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with.

Webster's Bible Translation

And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all *things* that are done under heaven: this grievous labor hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised with it.

Young's Updated LT

And I have given my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning all that has been done under the heavens. *It is* a sad travail God has given to the sons of man to be humbled by it.

The gist of this passage: Solomon devoted himself to studying human wisdom; and observed that it is a sad and difficult life that God has given to the sons of man.

Ecclesiastes 1:13a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
nâthan (נתן) [pronounced <i>naw-THAHN</i>]	<i>to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set; to make</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5414 BDB #678
'êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i>]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced <i>lay^bv</i>]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking; midst</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #3820 BDB #524
The College Press Bible Study: <i>Almost without exception the use of "heart" in the Old Testament should be thought of as the mental faculties. The idea here is to convey the fact that it is to be a mental procedure.</i> ⁵²¹			
The Cambridge Bible: <i>The phrase, so expressive of the spirit of an earnest seeker, is eminently characteristic of this book and meets us again in Eccles. 1:17, chaps. Eccles. 7:25, Eccles. 8:9; Eccles. 8:16.</i> ⁵²²			
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l^e</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
dârash (דָּרַשׁ) [pronounced <i>daw-RASH</i>]	<i>to seek, to make inquiries concerning, to consult, to investigate, to study, to follow, to inquire; to require</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #1875 BDB #205
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l^e</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
tûwr (וּוּר) [pronounced <i>toor</i>]	<i>to spy, to search out, to explore; to go about</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #8446 BDB #1064
Dr. Daniel Hill: <i>The word EXPLORE means to investigate by experimentation, to try this, test it, see if it is valid, cast it away if it doesn't work. But it is limited to what he can come up with as a possible source of significance.</i> ⁵²³			
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88

⁵²¹ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:13–18 (comment).*

⁵²² *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:13.*

⁵²³ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 11, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:13a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
châk ^e mâh (חָכְמָה) [pronounced <i>khawk^e-MAW</i>]	<i>wisdom [in all realms of life], doctrine in the soul; skill [in war]</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #2451 BDB #315
<p>Pastor John Griffith: <i>CHAKMAH - [in this context, is a] natural system for perception in operation with empiricism and rationalism totally the basis for his conclusions.</i>⁵²⁴</p>			
<p>The Easy English Translation: <i>The Teacher uses the words wise and wisdom many times...Often people who do not know God try to be wise. But if you want to be really wise, you need to know God. The Teacher wants us to know God. And he wants us to believe God. Also, he wants us to obey God. He wants us to enjoy the good things that God has given to us. We will still have questions about our life on the earth. Some of them are questions that nobody can answer. But God will be with us during our lives. At some future time, each of us will die. The Teacher is not sure what will happen then. He says, 'Our spirits will return to God' (Ecclesiastes 12:7). In the New Testament, we learn what else will happen.</i>⁵²⁵</p>			
‘al (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over; on the ground of, because of, according to, on account of, on behalf of, with, by, besides, in addition to, to, toward, together with, in the matter of, concerning, as regards to</i>	preposition of relative proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	<i>the whole, all, the entirety, every</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
’ăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
<p>Together, kôl ’ăsher mean <i>all which, all whom, all that [which]; whomever, whatever, whatever else, all whose, all where, wherever.</i></p>			
‘âsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i>]	<i>to be done [made, produced]; to be offered, to be observed, to be used; was made [constructed, fashioned], to be formed, to be prepared</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Niphal perfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793
tachath (תַּחַת) [pronounced <i>TAH-khahth</i>]	<i>underneath, below, under, beneath; instead of, in lieu of; in the place [in which one stands]; in exchange for; on the basis of</i>	preposition of location or foundation	Strong's #8478 BDB #1065

⁵²⁴ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_04.html accessed June 16, 2018.

⁵²⁵ From <https://www.easyenglish.bible/english-learners-bible/ecc-taw.htm> (footnote); accessed May 18, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:13a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shâmayîm (שָׁמַיִם) [pronounced shaw-MAH-yim]	heaven, heavens, skies; the visible heavens, as in as abode of the stars or as the visible universe, the sky, atmosphere, etc.; Heaven (as the abode of God)	masculine dual noun with the definite article	Strong's #8064 BDB #1029

E. W. Bullinger: *under the heavens*. Some codices, with one early printed edition, Aramaean, Syriac, and Vulgate, read "under the sun".⁵²⁶

Translation: So I have given my heart to seek and to search out wisdom regarding all that has been done under [these] heavens;... This is Solomon searching for truth apart from the revelation of God. Solomon knows that God knows everything and can choose to reveal anything. But Solomon decides to investigate these matters differently, apart from God's revelation.

The *heart* in the KJV and in other ancient versions is an accurate translation; and the people of that era understood its meaning. Today, when we speak of the heart, nearly all of the time, we are thinking a lot about a person's emotions. That is *not* how we should understand that here.

We can make a reasonable guess as to just what went wrong with Solomon and his original understanding of God. 1Kings 11:1–5 Now King Solomon loved many foreign women: the daughter of Pharaoh and women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites—nations concerning which Yahweh had said to the people of Israel, "You will not go among them to marry, neither will they come among you, for they will certainly turn your heart to their gods." But Solomon loved these women. Solomon had seven hundred royal wives and three hundred concubines. His wives turned his heart away. For when Solomon grew old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods; his heart was not fully surrendered to Yahweh his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon followed Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and he followed Milcom, the disgusting idol of the Ammonites. (ULB) Solomon, for many years, was square with God. We studied his presentation at the Temple opening in 1Kings 9; and what he said was inspired and clearly the result of his study of the Mosaic Law. However, since then, his thinking has gone awry, which resulted in the book of Ecclesiastes. It is my estimation that Solomon began to recover his spiritual life and wrote Ecclesiastes, including his human viewpoint thinking corrected by divine viewpoint thinking.

Dr. Dan Hill: *Self initiates the search. We can see who is leading who. Solomon is leading Solomon. He is doing this for self. And so self will do it. And in this he thinks he can pull it off. Notice: "I set my mind..." His search is limited by his mind. He begins his search with a liability, his mind. And as a result he will never get beyond his own mental ability.*⁵²⁷

That is, the best that Solomon can hope for is human viewpoint.

J. Vernon McGee: *[T]his man Solomon is making tremendous experiments, and he is making them in the laboratory of life. He is trying everything that is available to man. In his day and position he was able to go into any field that he chose. Not many men today would be able to do what Solomon did. He first gave himself to the study of the laws of nature, as we have seen, but he found nothing he could learn in nature or in science which was new in the sense that it would bring new life to him.*⁵²⁸

⁵²⁶ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:13.

⁵²⁷ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 11, 2018.

⁵²⁸ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt accessed June 21, 2018.

How many Americans have searched for truth in academia; or in eastern religions; or who have even gone to various places in the orient, looking for truth. But they are not really looking for truth. They have rejected the truth of Jesus Christ; so they are simply looking for what they will accept as truth. They see themselves as the final arbiters of the truth.

Dr. Daniel Hill: *[Solomon, like many men,] is seeking. There is something he wants. All of us have restless hearts. We are never really content. Until we find God in a personal and intimate way. We will constantly be lacking and wanting and then wanting more. He is on a quest. He has already determined that what he is seeking can be found in secular wisdom and understanding. His search will be limited by his own experiments.*⁵²⁹

Ecclesiastes 1:13 Therefore, I have given my life to seeking and searching out wisdom regarding all that has been done under these heavens; and to study this life of evil that God has given to the sons of man in order to both humble and afflict him.

To seek and to search (Ecclesiastes 1:13) (various commentators)

The Open Bible: *The Hebrew words translated **search** and **explore** are emphatic; they indicate serious, unrelenting enquiry.*⁵³⁰

Barton: *Search' means to investigate the roots of a matter; 'explore' to explore the subject on all sides.*⁵³¹

The College Press Bible Study: *"Seek" and "explore" are not synonymous. "Seek" carries the idea of studying that which is near at hand while "explore" suggests taking a comprehensive overview of something at a greater distance.*⁵³²

Keil and Delitzsch: *The synonyms דָּרַשׁ (to seek) and רָחַץ (to hold survey over) do not represent a lower and a higher degree of search (Zöck.), but two kinds of searching: one penetrating in depth, the other going out in extent; for the former of these verbs (from the root-idea of grinding, testing) signifies to investigate an object which one already has in hand, to penetrate into it, to search into it thoroughly; and the latter verb (from the root-idea of moving round about).*⁵³³

Dunagan: *"to seek and explore"-to seek with care, to explore with careful examination. Solomon isn't going to leave a stone unturned. This will be a thorough study, an in depth investigation.*⁵³⁴

When Solomon was on negative signals towards the truth, he was on a search for whatever falsehoods that he was willing to accept.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Even though this is the exact same word for *wisdom* which is often applied to divine wisdom (generally for the application of doctrine); here, in context, this word refers to human wisdom.⁵³⁵ Solomon is searching out wisdom of all that which has been done under the heavens—which implies that these are the things of nature and the things of man. There is nothing about searching out all that God has done under the heavens or what God has revealed about what has happened under the heavens.

⁵²⁹ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 11, 2018.

⁵³⁰ *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 860 (footnote).

⁵³¹ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:13–18 (comment).

⁵³² *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:13–18 (comment).

⁵³³ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 1:13.

⁵³⁴ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:13.

⁵³⁵ Many commentators make no such distinction.

Arno Gaebelein: *The great king, filled with wisdom and learning, rich and prosperous as none ever was before him in Jerusalem, nor after him, gives his heart to search out everything that is done under heaven. When he says: "I communed with mine own heart," he states the method of his search. He does it by meditation and not through revelation. He searches not in the light which comes from above, but that which comes from nature and by observation.*⁵³⁶

Dunagan: *"by wisdom"-Solomon isn't naïve or stupid. He is shrewd and clever, he is attempting to find the ideal balance between such things as pleasure and self-control. He realizes like many sharp people today that too much pleasure can spoil finding pleasure in this life. Like so many famous people today he is attempting to find the ideal amount. He wants to avoid the pitfalls of becoming an alcoholic, drug addict, or individual with a sexually transmitted disease. Solomon is Mr. Black Tie, a James Bond type of individual, in which anything which is done, is done right. Down to the smallest detail, everything from buildings, furnishings, the presentation of a meal, etc....is done right!*⁵³⁷

Solomon has access to truth; Solomon had the Word of God at his disposal, along with prophets and priests. But he seems to believe that better explanations were to be found elsewhere.

Wisdom regarding the things done under the heavens refers to human wisdom regarding the things which men do.

Ecclesiastes 1:13 *Therefore, I have given my life to seeking and searching out wisdom regarding all that has been done under these heavens; and to study this life of evil that God has given to the sons of man in order to both humble and afflict him.*

Seeking out wisdom for all which is done under heaven (various commentators)

J. Vernon McGee: *Solomon spent a lot of time studying the philosophy of the world. He lived nearly a thousand years before Christ, and since we live two thousand years on this side, three thousand years have elapsed. Man has come up with a great deal of gadgetry in that time, but actually man doesn't know any more about philosophy and wisdom than he knew three thousand years ago. There has been no improvement in philosophy and wisdom, neither do they satisfy the heart.*⁵³⁸

Adam Clarke: *Solomon...diligently cultivated his mind. His giving himself to the study of natural history, philosophy, poetry, etc., are sufficient proofs of it. He had not intuitive knowledge from God; but he had a capacity to obtain every kind of knowledge useful to man.*⁵³⁹

Dr. John Gill: *Natural wisdom and knowledge, the best thing in the world; yet much of it is only in opinion; a great deal of it false; and none saving, and of any worth, in comparison of the knowledge of Christ, and of God in Christ; all the forms of religion and external righteousness, where there is not the true fear and grace of God, are all vain and empty things.*

Gill continues: *Man, the principal creature in the world, is "vain man"; that is his proper character in nature and religion, destitute of grace: every man is vain, nay, vanity itself; high and low, rich and poor, learned or unlearned; nay, man at his best estate, as worldly and natural, is so; as even Adam was in his state of innocence, being fickle and mutable, and hence he fell, Psalm 39:5; and especially his fallen posterity, whose bodies are tenements of clay; their beauty vain and deceitful; their circumstances changeable; their minds empty of all that is good; their thoughts and imaginations vain; their words, and works, and actions, and their whole life and conversation; they are not at all to be trusted in for help, by themselves or others.*⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁶ Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–18.

⁵³⁷ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:13.

⁵³⁸ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt accessed June 21, 2018.

⁵³⁹ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:13.

⁵⁴⁰ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:2.

Seeking out wisdom for all which is done under heaven (various commentators)

Matthew Henry: *[Solomon] made it his business to acquaint himself with all the things that are done under the sun, that are done by the providence of God or by the art and prudence of man. He set himself to get all the insight he could into philosophy and mathematics, into husbandry and trade, merchandise and mechanics, into the history of former ages and the present state of other kingdoms, their laws, customs, and policies, into men's different tempers, capacities, and projects, and the methods of managing them; he set himself not only to seek, but to search, to pry into, that which is most intricate, and which requires the closes application of mind and the most vigorous and constant prosecution.*

Henry continues: *[Solomon] made a very great progress in his studies, wonderfully improved all the parts of learning, and carried his discoveries much further than any that had been before him. He did not condemn learning, as many do, because they cannot conquer it and will not be at the pains to make themselves masters of it; no, what he aimed at he compassed; he saw all the works that were done under the sun (Eccles. 1:14), works of nature in the upper and lower world, all within this vortex (to use the modern gibberish) which has the sun for its centre, works of art, the product of men's wit, in a personal or social capacity. he had as much satisfaction in the success of his searches as ever any man had; he communed with his own heart concerning his attainments in knowledge, with as much pleasure as ever any rich merchant had in taking account of his stock. He could say, "Lo, I have magnified and increased wisdom, have not only gotten more of it myself, but have done more to propagate it and bring it into reputation, than any, than all that have been before me in Jerusalem."*

Henry continues: *It becomes great men to be studious, and delight themselves most in intellectual pleasures. Where God gives great advantages of getting knowledge he expects improvements accordingly. It is happy with a people when their princes and noblemen study to excel others as much in wisdom and useful knowledge as they do in honour and estate; and they may do that service to the commonwealth of learning by applying themselves to the studies that are proper for them which meaner persons cannot do. Solomon must be acknowledged as competent judge of this matter, for he had not only got his head full of notions, but his heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.*⁵⁴¹

I need to stress that, Solomon speaking of knowledge and wisdom in Proverbs is much different than what we read here in Ecclesiastes. One has to be careful not to intermix these two books. Solomon's knowledge in Ecclesiastes, for the most part, is knowledge which he acquires *under the sun*, a phrase not found in Proverbs.

The Expositor's Bible Commentary: *This wisdom, however, is not a scientific knowledge of facts or of social and political laws, nor is it the result of philosophical speculations on "the first good or the first fair," or on the nature and constitution of man. It is the wisdom that is born of wide and varied experience, not of abstract study. He acquaints himself with the facts of human life, with the circumstances, thoughts, feelings, hopes, and aims of all sorts and conditions of men. He is fain to know "all that men do under the sun," "all that is done under heaven."...we may suppose that Coheleth goes forth in disguise to visit all quarters of the city; to talk with barbers, druggists, calenders, porters, with merchants and mariners, husbandmen and tradesmen, mechanics and artisans; to try conclusions with travellers and with the blunt wits of home keeping men.*

The Expositor's Bible Commentary continues: *He [Solomon] will look with his own eyes and learn for himself what their lives are like, how they conceive of the human lot, and what, if any, are the mysteries which sadden and perplex them. He will ascertain whether they have any key that will unlock his perplexities, any wisdom that will solve his problems or help him to bear his burden with a more cheerful heart. Because his depression was fed by every fresh contemplation of the order of the universe, he turns from nature to "the proper study of mankind."*⁵⁴²

I don't know that I agree with Expositor's above. I would not necessarily exclude scientific, political or social wisdom from all that Solomon seeks.

⁵⁴¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:12–18.

⁵⁴² *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:12–18.

Seeking out wisdom for all which is done under heaven (various commentators)

Dr. John Gill: *concerning all things that are done under heaven; into the nature of all things, animate and inanimate; trees, herbs, plants, fossils, minerals, and metals; beasts, birds, fish, and all creeping things; see 1Kings 4:33; with everything else in nature: he sought to make himself master of all arts and sciences; to get knowledge of all trades and manufactures; to understand everything in politics, relating to kingdoms and states, and the government of them; to observe all the actions of men, wise and foolish, that he might know the difference, and be a judge of what was right and wrong.*⁵⁴³

Joseph Sutcliffe: *After being a student of nature for half a century, he was no nearer an end. He surpassed all others, Ecclesiastes 1:16, in moral and physical science, as is allowed by the sacred historian, 1 Kings 4:30-34; yet the boundaries of infinity circumscribed at every point the daring stretches of his mind.*⁵⁴⁴

One of the great new sciences of the last few hundred years is psychology; and in the past 30 years, there have been great advances in psychotropic drugs. People, if they feel bad, can go to many doctors and be given happy pills of one sort or another. I have known many people my age on a variety of such medications. Is there more happiness in the world? Are there fewer suicides? Is there less depression? Despite the many advances in these fields—particularly within the United States—let me suggest that no, man's psyche has not improved.

There is one new thing, and that is regeneration. I have been a believer on doctrine for many decades—and I don't know that there are believers who are as imperfect as I am—but I know my attitude in life, and I enjoy pretty much every day that I live; and I look forward to each new day. As the recent saying goes, *God is good all the time*. My corollary—I am not.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

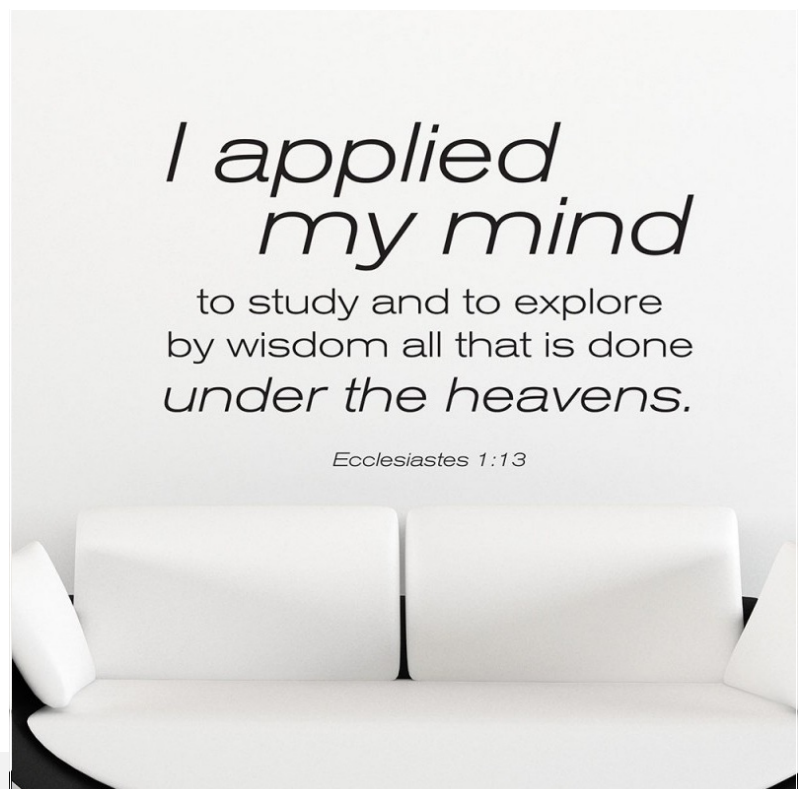
Ecclesiastes 1:13 *Therefore, I have given my life to seeking and searching out wisdom regarding all that has been done under these heavens;...* By this, Solomon describes just what his mission in life came to be. Apart from God, he took it upon himself to search out all the wisdom under the heavens, looking for both meaning and satisfaction with life.

I applied my mind (Ecclesiastes 1:13) (a graphic); from [Divine Walls](#); accessed June 17, 2018.

Solomon, having the greatest resources in his day, was able to pursue knowledge of anything that interested him; and he had the intelligence to understand the wisdom of his day. So, we are not talking about the dreams of some stoner who thinks, the best way to live life is to live it stoned 24/7. Nearly everyone understands that is fundamentally the wrong approach to life.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)



⁵⁴³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:13.

⁵⁴⁴ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jsc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 21, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:13b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
hûw' (אוה) [pronounced hoo]	he, it; him, himself as a demonstrative pronoun: <i>that, this (one); same</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> , is implied	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
ʿin ^ê yân (וּיָנַע) [pronounced ghin-YAWN]	employment, business, occupation, task, job; travail	masculine singular noun; possibly construct form ⁵⁴⁵	Strong's #6045 BDB #81
Possibly, this means a <i>bad business, a bad affair, a bad business transaction.</i>			
Dr. Bob Utley: <i>The word "task" ...is used several times in the book (cf. Eccles. 2:26; Eccles. 3:10; Eccles. 5:3; Eccles. 8:16). God has given humans, made in His image (i.e., Gen. 1:26-27), a desire to know and understand their place and purpose in creation, but sin has destroyed our ability to find the answer.</i> ⁵⁴⁶			
ra' (עַר) [pronounced rahú]	evil, bad, wicked; evil in appearance, deformed; misery, distress, injury; that which is displeasing [disagreeable, unhappy, unfortunate, sad]	masculine singular adjective/noun	Strong's #7451 BDB #948

Dr. Bob Utley: *The adjective...basically means "evil" or "bad." It is used several times in the book (cf. Eccles. 1:13 2:17 4:3 4:8 5:1 5:14 6:2 8:3 8:5 8:9 8:11-12 9:2-3[twice], 12 10:13 12:14) to describe life.*⁵⁴⁷

The NET Bible: *The phrase עַר וּיָנַע ('inyan ra', "rotten business, grievous task") is used only in Ecclesiastes (1:13; 2:23, 26; 3:10; 4:8; 5:2, 13; 8:16). It is parallel with לְבַהּ (hevel) "futile" in 4:8, and describes a "grave misfortune" in 5:13. The noun וּיָנַע ('inyan, "business") refers to something that keeps a person occupied or busy: "business; affair; task; occupation" (HALOT 857 s.v. וּיָנַע; BDB 775 s.v. וּיָנַע). The related verb הִנָּע ('anah) means "to be occupied, to be busy with" (with the preposition ב; bet), e.g., Eccl 1:13; 3:10; 5:19 (HALOT 854 s.v. III הִנָּע; BDB 775 s.v. II הִנָּע). The noun is from the Aramaic loanword אִינְיָנָא ('inyana', "concern, care"). The verb is related to the Aramaic verb "to try hard," the Arabic verb "to be busily occupied; to worry to be a matter of concern," and the Old South Arabic root "to be troubled; to strive with" (HALOT 854 s.v. III הִנָּע). The phrase עַר וּיָנַע is treated creatively by English translations: "sore travail" (KJV, ASV), "sad travail" (YLT), "painful occupation" (Douay), "sorry business" (NEB), "sorry task" (Moffatt), "thankless task" (NAB), "grievous task" (NASB), "trying task" (MLB), "unhappy business" (RSV, NRSV, NJPS), and "heavy burden" (NIV).⁵⁴⁸*

Clarke: *This sore travail - This is the way in which knowledge is to be acquired; and in order to investigate the operations of nature, the most laborious discussions and perplexing experiments must be instituted, and conducted to their proper results.*⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁵ For Owens, this is a question mark; for BHSEK, this is the construct form.

⁵⁴⁶ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 112–15.

⁵⁴⁷ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 112–15.

⁵⁴⁸ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 17, 2018.

⁵⁴⁹ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:13.

Ecclesiastes 1:13b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nâthan (נָתַן) [pronounced naw-THAHN]	to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set; to make	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5414 BDB #678
ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	to, for, towards, in regards to	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
bânîym (בָּנִים) [pronounced baw-NEEM]	sons, descendants; children; people; sometimes rendered men; young men, youths	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
ʾâdâm (אָדָם) [pronounced aw-DAWM]	a man, a human being, mankind; transliterated Adam	masculine singular noun	Strong's #120 & #121 BDB #9

The word *the Adam* can mean *man, mankind, humankind, men, human beings*.

Pastor John Griffith: *With the singular here of adham he is alluding to Adam and the effects of the Fall of which we are all partakers. Rom 5:12.*⁵⁵⁰

lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	to, for, towards, in regards to	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿânâh (עָנָה) [pronounced ʿaw-NAWH]	to humble, to be grace oriented, to be humbled, to be afflicted	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #6031 BDB #776
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within	a preposition of proximity with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #88

Ray Stedman: *That translation misses something of what he meant. In the Hebrew it is not "the sons of men," rather, it is "the sons of man." The word is Adam, "the sons of Adam." So the reference is not to the conglomerate of humanity, it is to the nature of man.*⁵⁵¹

Translation: ...[and to study] this business of evil [that] God has given to the sons of man in order to humble/afflict him. Solomon began to think about the life, the mess, that we all find ourselves in. His focus was no longer on God, but on people. God worked into the picture as Someone Who Solomon could blame.

Ecclesiastes 1:13 Therefore, I have given my life to seeking and searching out wisdom regarding all that has been done under these heavens; and to study this life of evil that God has given to the sons of man in order to both humble and afflict him.

The ESV; capitalized is used below.

⁵⁵⁰ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_04.html accessed June 16, 2018.

⁵⁵¹ Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 1:12–15.

This business of evil (what is it?) (Ecclesiastes 1:13) (a discussion)

There are three views of this *business of evil*: (1) it could refer to all of the literature and philosophies which have been compiled over the centuries to explain life's mysteries; (2) this could be a reference to the search itself; or (3) it could be a reference to life itself.

This unhappy business which God has given to every man is simply the business of life. We all have this life—we do not appear to ask for it or seek it—God just lays it on every single one of us—and we are working within the limit of having life. I don't believe that this sad task of trying to determine what life is all about; it is simply the sad task of life itself (or, of living life).

MacLaren: *With keen and cynical vision he looks out not only over men, as in this first chapter, but over nature; and what mainly strikes him is the enormous amount of work that is being done, and the tragical poverty of its results. The question with which he begins his book is, 'What profit hath a man of all his labour wherein he laboureth under the sun?' And for answer he looks at the sun rising and going down, and being in the same place after its journey through the heavens; and he hears the wind continually howling and yet returning again to its circuits; and the waters now running as rivers into the sea and again drawn up in vapours, and once more falling in rain and running as waters. This wearisome monotony of intense activity in nature is paralleled by all that is done by man under heaven, and the net result of all is 'Vanity and a strife after wind.'*⁵⁵²

What MacLaren describes here, which is simply living life, is the business of evil to which Solomon refers.

Dunagan: *"It is a grievous task"-implying a distracting business, engrossing occupation, one which results in little profit.*⁵⁵³

Kidwell: *[It is] an ill business hard and difficult to toil at, an undertaking which is enough to drive almost any man to despair.*⁵⁵⁴

Some passages may guide us here:

Eccles. 3:9–11 **What gain has the worker from his toil? I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. Man's business is associated with his toil here.**

Eccles. 4:4 **Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.** Here, man is expending toil out of envy of his neighbor. We called this, at one time, *keeping up with the Joneses*.

Eccles. 12:12 **My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.** Study is toil and there is not end to the making of many books.

The curse of our life comes from God cursing Adam: **And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."** (Gen 3:17–19)

Many commentators believe that *this business of evil* refers to the search for knowledge itself:

⁵⁵² Alexander MacLaren, D. D., Litt. D., *Expositions Of Holy Scripture*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:13.

⁵⁵³ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:13.

⁵⁵⁴ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:13.

This business of evil (what is it?) (Ecclesiastes 1:13) (a discussion)

The Cambridge Bible: *[These] words express the feeling with which the writer looked back on his inquiry. It had led to no satisfying result.*⁵⁵⁵

Dr. John Gill: *[Solomon] found by experience it was a heavy task, which God had put upon the children of men, to get wisdom and knowledge in the way it was to be gotten; which was very burdensome and wearisome to the flesh.*⁵⁵⁶

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *this sore travail* — namely, that of “searching out all things done under heaven.” Not human wisdom in general, which comes afterwards (Eccles. 2:12, etc.), but laborious inquires into, and speculations about, the works of men; for example, political science. As man is doomed to get his bread, so his knowledge, by the sweat of his brow (Gen. 3:19) [Gill].⁵⁵⁷

Given Keith Krell’s translation of this passage, he appears to opt for this to be the business of intellectual pursuits: I, the Preacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom concerning all that has been done under heaven. It is a grievous task which God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with. I have seen all the works [intellectual] which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind. What is crooked cannot be straightened and what is lacking cannot be counted.⁵⁵⁸ (Eccles. 1:12–15)

Keith Krell: *[Solomon] found his search to be a “grievous task,” for there are so many things that yield no answers, even when assaulted by the highest of human intelligence. Everywhere Solomon turned with his knowledge and wisdom he found hebel (1:14).*

Krell continues in a footnote: *In Rom 1:21-32, Paul says that man’s thoughts are foolish, futile, dark, immoral, and perverted.*⁵⁵⁹

Rom 1:21–25 *For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.*

Rom 1:26–28 *For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.*

Rom 1:29–32 *They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (ESV; capitalized)*

⁵⁵⁵ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:13.

⁵⁵⁶ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:13.

⁵⁵⁷ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:13.

⁵⁵⁸ From Bible.org, accessed June 23, 2018.

⁵⁵⁹ From Bible.org, accessed June 23, 2018.

In any case, God does not require us to search high and low for truth; He has revealed it in His Word. But truth is not found through conventional human means. 1Cor. 2:9–10 **But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him"— these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.** (ESV; capitalized; Isa. 64:4)

If you really want the truth, God will provide it. But, bear in mind, you accept God and His thinking or you do not. If you do not intend to accept it, God is not under any obligation to provide it.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:13 Therefore, I have given my life to seeking and searching out wisdom regarding all that has been done under these heavens; and to study this life of evil that God has given to the sons of man in order to both humble and afflict him.

Elohim is the Name for God in Ecclesiastes (Ecclesiastes 1:13) (a discussion)

The Personal Name for God—Y^howah—is not used in the book of Ecclesiastes; but this name, *Elohim* (which can also be translated *gods*) is found 39 times. How God's Name is used, in each context, is important to examine.

Everett: *Although Solomon uses the covenant name "YHWH" (יְהוָה) (H3068) frequently throughout the book of Proverbs, he does not use it a single time in the books of Ecclesiastes and Canticles.*⁵⁶⁰

E. W. Bullinger: *The title "Jehovah" is not used in Ecclesiastes, as this book refers to man in relation to his Creator only; not to man in covenant with Him as "Jehovah". Hence the frequent use of Hebrew. 'adam for "man" in this book.*⁵⁶¹

Barnes has a theory as to why this particular title for God is used: *The Preacher does not write of (or, to) the Hebrew race exclusively. There is no express and obvious reference to their national expectations, the events of their national history, or even to the divine oracles which were deposited with them. Hence, it was natural for the wisest and largest-hearted man of his race to take a wider range of observation than any other Hebrew writer before or after him. It became the sovereign of many peoples whose religions diverged more or less remotely from the true religion, to address himself to a more extensive sphere than that which was occupied by the twelve tribes, and to adapt his language accordingly.*⁵⁶²

This understanding of Barnes may be absolutely accurate. Solomon is not using the advantages given to the Hebrew people—the revelation from God Himself. So, despite being king over Israel, Solomon does not appear to appeal to the God of Israel. His approach is as if to any concept of Deity from any man.

Chuck Smith: *The word Jehovah is not used in this book. He does refer to God, the Elohim. But not unto Jehovah God in the personal sense that a person can know God. But God as a worldly man speaks of God, just a force, a power, a title--the Elohim.*⁵⁶³

Perhaps the title *Elohim* reduces God to one of the many factors in Solomon's search for truth, rather than *the* factor.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

MacLaren: *[Solomon, as the author,] does believe in 'God,' but, very significantly, he never uses the sacred name 'Lord.' He has shaken himself free, or he wishes to represent a character who has*

⁵⁶⁰ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:13.

⁵⁶¹ E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:13.

⁵⁶² Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:13.

⁵⁶³ Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–18.

*shaken himself free from Revelation, and is fighting the problem of life, its meaning and worth, without any help from Law, or Prophet, or Psalm. He does retain belief in what he calls 'God,' but his pure Theism, with little, if any, faith in a future life, is a creed which has no power of unravelling the perplexed mysteries of life, and of answering the question, 'What does it all mean?'*⁵⁶⁴

Ecclesiastes 1:13 Therefore, I have given my life to seeking and searching out wisdom regarding all that has been done under these heavens; and to study this life of evil that God has given to the sons of man in order to both humble and afflict him.

Dunagan writes: *If such a task is so grievous, then why has God given it to men? God has given it to men in the sense that of all God's creation on this earth, only man contemplates such questions, mankind is the only creature who asks, "Am I happy", "why", "where did I come from", "does my life have any meaning?" "Am I fulfilled?"*⁵⁶⁵

Kidwell: *Man, however, is restless until he discovers the why. This quest for God in all the things around us is a futile pursuit. The reason it is unfulfilling is that it is directed toward God's creation, and not toward the mind of God which interprets God's creation.*⁵⁶⁶

The unbeliever and the reversionist have two approaches when it comes to God. Some of them act as if God does not exist, as if the grandly-designed universe just suddenly appeared at random; and people are either born with good luck or with bad luck; or God exists, He is not very nice, and He is why life sucks. In both cases, man disregards or under reports his own volitional choices. However, when a person's life is a mess; most of the time, his choices in life have made his life a mess (obviously, there are exceptions to this).

There are several interpretations of what Solomon has written here. My first impression was, this is a part of Solomon's study. Others see the second two phrases as the result of Solomon's study.

David Guzik: *The question in Ecclesiastes isn't about the existence of God; the author is no atheist, and God is always there. The question is whether or not God matters. The answer to that question is vitally connected to a responsibility to God that goes beyond this earthly life.*⁵⁶⁷

Ecclesiastes 1:13 Therefore, I have given my life to seeking and searching out wisdom regarding all that has been done under these heavens; and to study this life of evil that God has given to the sons of man in order to both humble and afflict him.

Man's insatiable desire to know (Ecclesiastes 1:13) (a discussion)

Dr. Bob Utley: *God has given humans who are made in His image an insatiable desire to know, to understand, but it cannot be satisfied in this fallen world. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a disaster, not a blessing! We know evil and ignorance, but not God or ultimate questions. Life is a mystery.*⁵⁶⁸

The Geneva Bible: *Man by nature has a desire to know, and yet is not able to come to the perfection of knowledge, which is the punishment of sin, to humble man, and to teach him to depend only on God.*⁵⁶⁹

I should quickly add that God provides the revelation; for men who are willing to hear, God provides truth for them. If we need to understand life, to understand how we got here, to understand why we are here—those answers are all available via God's revelation to us (that is, the Bible).

⁵⁶⁴ Alexander MacLaren, D. D., Litt. D., *Expositions Of Holy Scripture*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:13.

⁵⁶⁵ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:13.

⁵⁶⁶ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:13.

⁵⁶⁷ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:1.

⁵⁶⁸ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 112–15.

⁵⁶⁹ Geneva Bible Translation Notes; courtesy of e-sword; 1599; Eccles. 1:13.

Man's insatiable desire to know (Ecclesiastes 1:13) (a discussion)

There is certainly the valid question, *if so many men have a desire to learn, to know, to find truth; why do so many of them get it wrong?* The reason is this: men *choose* what they want to believe and some men refuse to believe in Jesus Christ; they choose not to believe that God has given man a Savior. Every man has free will and a sin nature; and when faced with truth or with falsehood, we filter what we hear and decide, and make decisions about what we choose to believe.

Let me propose an analogy: a man is starving and his body requires a specific set of nutrients. If suddenly, the man is able to choose whatever it is he wants to eat, he will not always choose what is good for his body. In the same way, a man who is searching for knowledge does not necessarily choose knowledge which is correct.

If you actually want to know the truth, God must provide it for you.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 1:12–13 I, the lecturer and author of this book, was also king over Israel in Jerusalem. Therefore, I have given my life to seeking and searching out wisdom regarding all that has been done under these heavens; and to study this life of evil that God has given to the sons of man in order to both humble and afflict him.

Given who and what Solomon was, he was uniquely qualified to make such a search.

Ray Stedman: *This man's position gave him unusual opportunity. He was a king, the highest authority in the land; no one would challenge what he did. And he was a king in a time of peace. For 40 years during the reign of Solomon no armies battered at the walls of Jerusalem, as they had been doing all through history and are threatening to do today. His father had amassed great wealth of which Solomon was the heir, and he himself had increased this wealth. For 40 years of the nation's life there was no demand for expenditure for munitions. It was a time of peace and great wealth. Furthermore, during this time the Gentile nations were sending delegates to Jerusalem. The Queen of Sheba came all the way from the ends of the earth, she said, to see and hear the wisdom of this man. Solomon had great opportunity.*

Stedman continues: *Furthermore, he was able to investigate widely. "I applied my mind to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven," he says. He could get into everything. But, with all candor, he has to state, "It is an unhappy business that God has given to the sons of men to be busy with."*

Then Stedman makes the brilliant observation: *I think he [the author] is making reference here to the fall of man. He is recognizing the fact that it is difficult for men to discover answers. There is something wrong inside of man. It is a tricky business for a man, who senses an overwhelming curiosity to discover the secrets of life around him, yet he finds himself baffled all the time by an inadequate understanding. Man cannot put it all together.*⁵⁷⁰

Solomon's search seemed to take him to a place where he could only remark on the futility of life.

Tommy Nelson: *The point that Solomon is making is that you live for seventy or eighty years and then you're gone. Materially speaking, life is short and then you die. You will lose everything you own to the next generation. Your children will rent out your house, purge your possessions, and spend your inheritance. Ultimately, you will be a distant memory at a Thanksgiving meal.*⁵⁷¹

As Solomon will say in the next verse: **I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind.** (Eccles. 1:14; ESV) When God is out of the picture, what is it all for? One generation

⁵⁷⁰ Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 1:12–15.

⁵⁷¹ From Bible.org, accessed June 22, 2018.

leaves the scene; another generation comes in. The winds blow here and then they blow there. The rivers pour into the seas, but the seas are never overflowing. It is so difficult to find any purpose in life, given all that we may observe.

Keith Krell: *Moms understand the truth of this verse. Whether it is washing dishes, cleaning sinks, scouring toilets, or washing floors, there is always more to be done. Not to mention, chasing toddlers, mediating fights between siblings, grocery shopping, and playing taxi in your minivan. My wife informs me that preparing creative, well-balanced meals that everyone is ready to devour without complaining is her most challenging responsibility, on top of everything else she is responsible for.*

Krell continues: *Men can relate to this verse as well. After working and commuting fifty hours a week, you then come home to more work: mowing the lawn, cleaning the garage, changing the oil in the car, doing the taxes, and playing with the kids. All of these responsibilities come at you day-in and day-out. There is no rest for the righteous (or for you either).⁵⁷²*

Ron Snider's translation of Ecclesiastes 1:12–13 I Myself, the Preacher, had been king over Israel in Jerusalem. Now I had set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom concerning all that has been done under heaven. It is a grievous task which God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with.

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:12–13 (Ron Snider)

Solomon begins his personal testimony

1. This begins one section of the book that will conclude at the end of chapter two.
2. Solomon describes the nature of the larger project, which he conducted at an earlier time in his life, and his conclusions in vss. 12-14.
3. With devastating candor, Qoheleth informs the readers that in spite of his great advantages, his search has come to nothing.
4. In order to spare the reader getting his hopes up, Solomon explains the outcome before he takes us through his work (1:16-2:11) and explains the conclusions at which he had arrived. Eccles. 2:12-26
5. Although many interpreters seek to differentiate between Solomon and Qoheleth, what they miss is that they are the same person, but at different stages in life.
6. The bulk of the book, beginning with verse 12, is written in the first person, with Qoheleth recording what we might refer to as an experiment in finding some satisfaction in or resolution to life.
 - 1) Part of his project consisted in taking the accumulated wisdom he had and applying that to what he observed in the world in order to seek some meaningful explanations. Eccles. 1:13,17
 - 2) Part of his project consisted of engaging in particular behaviors, recording the results, and analyzing both the physical outcomes and his emotional responses. Eccles. 2:1ff
 - 3) Neither his wisdom, the proverbial wisdom of the day, nor his endless activities proved to provide an experience that ultimately resolved his issues.
7. Qoheleth is so engrossed in his existential experiment that he uses the first person pronoun or verb some 88 times in a total of 222 verses.
8. What is recorded in verse 12 is similar to what Solomon wrote in verse 1, with the addition of the fact that he was king over all Israel.
9. This additional fact must mean that Solomon is in view since he was David's only son that ruled over all Israel from Jerusalem.
10. Although the term son can refer to a more distant descendant, it should here be understood in its most common sense of a literal son.
11. Since the kingdom was divided not long after the death of Solomon, his son Rehoboam could not be in view since he only reigned over Judah, while Jeroboam reigned over the Northern Kingdom. 1Kings 11:43, 12:17,20
12. The use of the Qal perfect of הָיָה (hayah-to become, to be) has occasioned a great deal of discussion

⁵⁷² From Bible.org, accessed June 22, 2018.

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:12–13 (Ron Snider)

- since it would more naturally be expected to be an imperfect, which would convey the English present tense.
13. However, Solomon is not denying the fact that he is king of Israel at the present time; he is emphasizing that he has been king in Jerusalem for some time.
 14. Although Solomon was still king over Israel at the time of writing, he is emphasizing that he had been king for some time when he began his experiment.
 15. This adds some weight to the contention that this book was written later in Solomon's life, after he had ruled Israel for some time.
 16. Further, what follows about his attempts to uncover some ultimate meaning and satisfaction in life were done in the past, which would indicate that he wrote Ecclesiastes later in his life.
 17. His unique position as unrivaled ruler over the land of Israel, the absolute authority in the kingdom, living during a time of unparalleled peace, and his tremendous prosperity would have afforded Solomon great opportunities to pursue whatever he desired.
 18. Given these advantages, Solomon set about on a quest to understand and explain life; he searched for meaning in the disciplines with which he was familiar, but found nothing that satisfied him.
 19. In the verses that follow, we may observe the following pattern: a statement of the vain nature of external attempts to find meaning in life (vs. 13-14), a proverb quoted in support (vs. 15)—an explanation that internal attempts to make sense of life are equally vain (vs. 16-17), and another proverb quoted in support (vs. 18).
 20. The Hebrew phrase I gave my heart (New American Standard, I set my mind) is an idiom that simply means to devote ones mental faculties to something, to make it a priority. Dan. 10:12
 21. The Hebrew noun לֵב (lebh—heart) can refer to the internal organ; however, it is used in an abstract sense to denote the totality of man's inner or immaterial nature.
 22. It should generally be understood to refer to the core being—the thoughts, beliefs, and priorities that make a person who he is.
 23. The term is used to refer to many of the personality functions of mankind—the emotions, the thoughts, and the will.
 24. One aspect or another may be the dominant meaning in any given passage; the interpreter should seek to be clear about what aspect of the inner life is in view—here, it is the mind or thinking.
 25. The two infinitive constructs that follow (both with a prefixed lamed (ל), set forth the purpose or intention of the younger Solomon with respect to his pursuit of wisdom.
 26. The first infinitive is used extensively in the Old Testament, and has the nuance of carefully seeking or searching out something; it contains the idea of the diligence and care one takes to get to the root of a matter. Gen. 9:5
 27. The second infinitive is used far less often; it is most notably used for the activity of the spies as they searched out the land of Canaan. Num. 13:2,16,17
 28. Although they appear to be synonymous, the semantic difference would seem to be between the depth of the search and the width of it.
 29. Solomon would have carefully examined all the things that were part of the Jewish life and tradition; further, he expanded his search to other places and nations.
 30. In that regard, his extensive contacts and interactions with other cultures would have allowed him to acquire information that might not be available as readily to the average person.
 31. The next term has also occasioned some discussion, with some seeing the prefixed כּ (k) acting as a preposition (denoting the means by which Solomon conducts his investigation), and others seeing it as a marker of the direct object (wisdom being the object of his search).
 32. A similar construction is used later, which is clearly to indicate the means by which Solomon conducts his search into life. Eccles. 2:3, 7:23
 33. In that regard, Solomon is indicating to his readers that he has not abandoned the "wisdom tradition" of Israel; he is pursuing his objectives according to the best and wisest methods he knows.
 34. He does not simply accept what he has been told, he questions everything thoroughly; this is the approach of a tough-minded individual that will not be deterred from getting to the bottom of things.
 35. The Hebrew term חִכְמָה (chakhmah—wisdom) is used to express a number of facets of the human

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:12–13 (Ron Snider)

- experience; it is used of technical skill (Ex. 28:3), craftsmanship (Ex. 31:3), tactics in warfare (Isa. 10:13), and administrative skills for those in authority. Deut. 34:9; 2Sam. 14:20
36. True wisdom comes from God and leads to a fear of the Lord; it is characterized by the positive concepts of shrewdness (practical wisdom), prudence (cautious wisdom), understanding (comprehending wisdom), insight (depth of wisdom), and discernment (discriminating wisdom).
 37. Solomon applied all the disciplines with which he was familiar in order to investigate all that has been done under the heavens, which is designed to indicate the comprehensive nature of his research.
 38. Obviously, no one could fully investigate every area of endeavor in one lifetime; however, Solomon is indicating that he left no area available to him untouched in his quest.
 39. The research must have been confined to historical persons and events, as seen in the Niphal perfect of *עָשָׂה* (*asah*—has been done).
 40. This is the first of three times that Solomon uses the phrase under the heavens, which may only differ from the more common phrase under the sun in that it obliquely seems to bring God into the picture. Eccles. 3:1
 41. This desire to inspect all things, to research history, to examine every type of behavior and work in order to understand things does not leave any real place for faith; it relies on human abilities and rationalism.
 42. Although the term (*עֲשָׂה*) (*'inyan*—task) is unique to Ecclesiastes, and may be derived from several potential roots, later rabbinic materials used the word in the sense of task, occupation, or situation.
 43. The adjective *עָרָא* (*ra'*—evil, wicked) can be used in the sense of badly made, of little value, or not beneficial; it is used to refer to things that seem to function so as to cause distress, displeasure, or sorrow.
 44. The phrase is translated variously as grievous task, wearisome task, heavy burden, unhappy business, or evil distraction.
 45. One question that arises is why Solomon indicates that God has given this task to men, when he previously stated that he had voluntarily assumed it?
 46. Part of the answer would seem to be found in the change to the plural, which brings all men into the picture and not just Solomon.
 47. In spite of the fall, it is certain that even unbelievers have manifested a desire to know the truth at some level, to get to the bottom of things, and to provide some explanation of life.
 48. Solomon, like all people, eventually comes to recognize the existence of God; however, how does one decipher God's actions in a world that would appear at times to contradict what we know of God?
 49. The events of human history might seem to suggest that God is not involved; yet, Solomon knows that God is involved, even if we can't always understand His intentions.
 50. Mankind is not like the lower creation; mankind seems to be afflicted with some inner desire to find some meaning in the events that comprise its existence. Eccles. 3:11
 51. This creates a tension, which leads to a desire to be able to explain things in a fashion that makes some sense of it all and provides some measure of understanding, comfort, contentment, and resolution.
 52. For a person to make a serious inquiry into any matter requires laborious research, various forms of experimentation, logging of results, evaluation of results, and the mental energy to come to the appropriate conclusion.
 53. The acquisition of knowledge about life is no easy task, but Solomon acknowledges that God will not permit it to be any other way.
 54. It is of interest to note that the phrase translated sons of men is literally sons of the man, which is likely designed to allude to the fallen condition of mankind that came to us through Adam. Rom. 5:12
 55. In fact, the definite article is used with the noun *אָדָם* (*'adham*—man, Adam) to refer specifically to Adam the first 21 times in Genesis.
 56. With the fall of man, the earth was subjected to futility; in fact, the LXX uses the Greek term *ματαιότης* (*matiotēs*—futility, vanity) to translate the Hebrew term *לְבָבָה* (*hebhel*—vanity). Rom. 8:20
 57. Mankind lost the exalted position that he had in Eden, and was disciplined by God with the experiential realities of hard work and sweat in order to sustain his existence. Gen. 3:17-19
 58. This phrase then would relate the human experience back to the fall, which causes even the very wise Solomon to recognize that there exists a real difficulty for man in figuring some things out.

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:12–13 (Ron Snider)

59. This is because there is something fundamentally wrong with man; mankind was changed at the fall when its genetics were permanently altered to produce the indwelling sin nature.
60. However, it is this very difficulty that should give man pause to seek something better; the unfulfilling nature of life and his toil should cause him to seek God.
61. Although the statement of God may sound more like bitterness than faith, it should be evident that Solomon does not see mankind at the mercy of chance or impersonal forces in the universe.
62. The Hebrew is intentionally redundant and literally says that this grievous task was given to the sons of men to keep them occupied with it.
63. Therefore, the grievous task of deciphering what the world means (and God's part in all this) is not just difficult, it is irksome (1:13b), vain (1:14b), and is accompanied by mental distress. Eccles. 1:18

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (this will open as a Word document on your computer); accessed June 16, 2018.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

There are 3 key phrases in this verse: *under the sun*, *all is vanity* [*vapor, emptiness*]; and *all of this...is chasing* [*striving after, feeding upon*] *the wind*. These are the key phrases for the book of Ecclesiastes.

I have seen all the works which are done under the sun and behold, the all [is] a vapor and a striving of wind [or, *spirit*].

Ecclesiastes
1:14

I have seen all of the works which are done under the sun, and behold, [it is] all vapor [or, *breath, emptiness, vanity*] and chasing wind.

I have seen all the works of man which are done under the sun, and I have observed that man's life and works are empty and chasing after the wind.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	I have seen all the works which are done under the sun and behold, the all [is] a vapor and a striving of wind [or, <i>spirit</i>].
Aramaic Targum	I saw all the works <u>of the children of men</u> which were done under the sun <u>in this world</u> ; behold, all is vanity and breaking of the spirit.
Revised Douay-Rheims	I have seen all things that are done under the sun, and behold all is vanity, and vexation of spirit.
Peshitta (Syriac)	I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	I beheld all the works that were wrought under the sun; and, beheld, all were vanity and <u>waywardness</u> of spirit.

Significant differences: Additional text in the targum. The Greek has *waywardness* rather than *striving* or *vexation*.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English	I have seen all the works which are done under the sun; all is to no purpose, and desire for wind.
Easy English	I have seen all the things that happen on the earth. There is no reason for any of them. It is like somebody who tries to catch the wind.

Easy-to-Read Version—2006	I looked at everything done on earth, and I saw that it is all a waste of time. It is like trying to catch the wind. <i>trying to catch the wind</i> Or “It is very troubling to the spirit.” The word for “troubling” can also mean “craving,” and the word for “spirit” can also mean “wind.” Also in verse 17
God’s Word™	I have seen everything that is done under the sun. Look at it! It’s all pointless. It’s like trying to catch the wind. No doubt, a translation inspired by Donovan .
Good News Bible (TEV)	I have seen everything done in this world, and I tell you, it is all useless. It is like chasing the wind.
The Message	God hasn’t made it easy for us. I’ve seen it all and it’s nothing but smoke—smoke, and spitting into the wind.
NIRV	I’ve seen what is done on this earth. All of it is meaningless. It’s like chasing the wind.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	Everything the sun shines upon, I have seen. The conclusion I have reached is the same: nothing discovered upon the earth will fully satisfy man’s longings; everything is as filling as feasting on the wind!
Contemporary English V. The Living Bible	I have seen it all, and everything is just as senseless as chasing the wind. I discovered that the lot of man, which God has dealt to him, is not a happy one. It is all foolishness, chasing the wind.
New Berkeley Version	I saw all the things which were done under the sun and turly, all is worthlessness and chasing of wind.
New Life Version	I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun. And see, it is all for nothing. It is like trying to catch the wind. No doubt, a translation inspired by Donovan .
New Living Translation	I observed everything going on under the sun, and really, it is all meaningless—like chasing the wind.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	It seems that nothing that happens on the earth really enables us to do anything useful. It is like trying to control the wind.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	I’ve seen all that’s done under the sun, And I find it to be a waste of [good] breath.
Beck’s American Translation	I have seen everything that is done under the sun. It’s all a vapor, like trying to catch the wind.
International Standard V	I observed every activity done on earth. My conclusion: all of it is pointless—like chasing after the wind.
Translation for Translators	It seems that nothing that happens on the earth really enables us to do anything useful. It is add <i>like</i> [MET] chasing the wind.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Alpha & Omega Bible	I BEHELD ALL THE WORKS THAT WERE WORKED UNDER THE SUN; AND, BEHELD, ALL WERE VANITY & WAYWARDNESS OF SPIRIT.
Awful Scroll Bible	I am to have perceived the deeds, which are to have become prepared under the sun, that they are to be vapor and longing after wind!
Conservapedia	I have seen everything that is done here on earth; and see, it has amounted to nothing but vanity and vexation of the spirit. I took vexation to mean an attempt to confuse and satisfy the cravings of the spirit, but did not know how to write that with out the language becoming stilted and awkward

Ferrar-Fenton Bible	I examined all the things which they produced under the skies, and saw that all was vanity and vexation of spirit!
God's Truth (Tyndale)	Thus I have considered all the things that come to pass under the Sun, and, lo, they are all but vanity and vexation of mind.
HCSB	I have seen all the things that are done under the sun and have found everything to be futile, a pursuit of the wind.
Lexham English Bible	I saw all the works that are done under the sun. Look! Everything [is] vanity and chasing wind.
Unlocked Literal Bible	I have seen all the deeds that are done under the sun, and look, they all amount to vapor and an attempt to shepherd the wind.
Urim-Thummim Version	I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and a striving of mind.
Wikipedia Bible Project	I saw all the doings that had been done under the sun, and here it is all mirage, herding the wind.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

New American Bible (2002)	I have seen all things that are done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a chase after wind. Chase after wind: futility, like an attempt to corral the winds. Cf ⇒ Hosea 12:2. The ancient versions understood "affliction of spirit." These words are used to conclude sections of the discourse, as far as ⇒ Eccl 6:9.
New American Bible (2011)	I have seen all things that are done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a chase after wind. Eccl 2:11, 17. A chase after wind: an image of futile activity, like an attempt to corral the winds; cf. Hos 12:2. The ancient versions understood "affliction, dissipation of the spirit." This phrase concludes sections of the text as far as 6:9.
New English Bible—1970	I have seen all the deeds that are done here under the sun; they are all emptiness and chasing the wind.
New Jerusalem Bible	I have seen everything that is done under the sun: how futile it all is, mere chasing after the wind!
Revised English Bible—1989	I have seen everything that has been done here under the sun; it is all futility and a chasing of the wind.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	I have seen all the activities that are done under the sun, and it's all pointless, feeding on wind.
The Complete Tanach	I saw all the deeds that were done under the sun, and behold, everything is vanity and frustration.

and frustration: Heb. חור תוערו, the breaking of the will, like (Isa. 8:9): "Shatter (וער), O peoples, and be broken." חור is synonymous with talant in Old French, will. The end of the deed is that he comes to heartache.

exeGeses companion Bible	I saw all the works worked under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and gnawing of spirit.
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	I observed all the happenings beneath the sun, and I found that all is futile and pursuit of wind:...
Orthodox Jewish Bible	I have seen all the ma'asim that are done under the shemesh; and, hinei, all is hevel and chasing after ruach (wind).
The Scriptures 1998	I have seen all the works that are done under the sun. And see, all was futile and feeding on wind.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Amplified Bible	I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity, a futile grasping <i>and</i> chasing after the wind.
The Expanded Bible	I looked at [observed] everything done on earth [under the sun; v. 3] and saw that it is all useless [v. 2], like chasing the wind.
Kretzmann's Commentary	I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, in a careful observation of the ways of men; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit, efforts which bring about no lasting good, for all the affliction of mind with which men strive to go forward cannot bring them lasting good fortune and true happiness. What this world only has to offer will always fall short of the mark.
NET Bible®	I reflected on everything that is accomplished by man ⁵⁵ on earth, ⁵⁶ and I concluded: Everything ⁵⁷ he has accomplished ⁵⁸ is futile ⁵⁹ – like chasing the wind! ⁶⁰ ^{55tn} The phrase “by man” does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity. ^{56tn} Heb “under the sun.” ^{57tn} ...“everything” in 1:2, the term לְכֹל (hakkol, “everything”) is often limited in reference to the specific topic at hand in the context...[here, it] focuses on secular human achievement. ^{58tn} The phrase “he has accomplished” does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity. ^{59tn} This usage of לְבַה (hevel) denotes “futile, profitless, fruitless”...[this is] a graphic picture of an expenditure of effort in vain because no one can catch the wind by chasing it...Despite everything that man has accomplished in history, it is ultimately futile because nothing on earth really changes. ^{60tn} Heb “striving of wind.” The word “like” does not appear in the Hebrew text; it has been added in the translation to make the comparative notion clear.
The Pulpit Commentary	Here is the result of this examination of human actions. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun. In his varied experience nothing had escaped his notice. And behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit; reuth ruach; afflictio spiritus (Vulgate); προαίρεσις πνεύματος, "choice of spirit," or, "wind"; νομή α'νέμου (Aquila and Theodotion); βουθήσις ανέμου, "feeding on wind" (Symmachus). This last translation, or "striving after wind," seems to be most agreeable to the etymology of the word תוֹקֵר, which, except in this book (Eccles. 2:11, Eccles. 2:17, Eccles. 2:26, etc.), occurs elsewhere only in the Chaldee portion of Ezra (Ezra 5:17; Ezra 7:18). Whichever sense is taken, the import is much the same. What is implied is the unsubstantial and unsatisfying nature of human labors and endeavors. Many compare Hosea 12:2, "Ephraim feedeth on wind," and Isa. 44:20, "He feedeth on ashes." In contrast, perhaps, to this constantly recurring complaint, the author of the Book of Wisdom teaches that murmuring is unprofitable and blasphemous (Wis. 1:11).
Syndein/Thieme	I have seen all the things that are done under the sun. All of them are meaningless. And I found myself chasing the wind.
The Voice	I have witnessed all that is done under the sun, and indeed, all is fleeting, like trying to embrace the wind.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Charles Thompson OT	I the preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem; and I applied my heart to seek and make diligent search by wisdom concerning all the things which are done on the earth. Because God hath assigned to the sons of men painful employment, that they may be kept employed, I took a view of all the different sorts of work which are done under the sun. And behold they are all vanity and vexation of spirit. Vv. 12–13 are included for context.
---------------------	---

Concordant Literal Version	I saw all the deeds that are done under the sun, And behold, the whole is vanity and a grazing on wind."
Darby Translation	I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and pursuit of the wind.
Emphasized Bible	And I gave my heart to seek and to search out, wisely, concerning all things which are done under the heavens,—the same, is the vexatious employment God hath given to the sons of men, to work toilsomely therein, I saw all the works which were done under the sun,—and lo! all, was vanity, and a feeding on wind. V. 13 is included for context.
New American Standard B.	I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind.
New King James Version	I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind.
R. B. Thieme, Jr.	I have seen all the things that are done under the sun and have found everything to be futile [= feeding on air], a pursuit of the wind. This is probably a combination of Bob's notes and the HCSB.
World English Bible	I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and a chasing after wind.
Young's Literal Translation	I have seen all the works that have been done under the sun, and lo, the whole is vanity and vexation of spirit!

The gist of this passage: Solomon has studied all that man has done, and it is empty and chasing after wind.

Ecclesiastes 1:14a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
râ'âh (רָאָה) [pronounced raw-AWH]	<i>to see, to look, to look at, to view, to behold; to observe; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #7200 BDB #906
'êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]	<i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of</i>	masculine singular construct followed by a definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
ma'ăšîym (מַעֲשֵׂי) [pronounced mah-ġuh-SEEM]	<i>deeds, works, production, that which is produced or done [crops, property, goods]; profession, occupation</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #4639 BDB #795
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced sheh]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
'âsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced ġaw-SAWH]	<i>to be done [made, produced]; to be offered, to be observed, to be used; was made [constructed, fashioned], to be formed, to be prepared</i>	3 rd person plural, Niphal perfect	Strong's #6213 BDB #793

Ecclesiastes 1:14a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
tachath (תַּחַת) [pronounced TAH-khahth]	<i>underneath, below, under, beneath; instead of, in lieu of; in the place [in which one stands]; in exchange for; on the basis of</i>	preposition of location or foundation	Strong's #8478 BDB #1065
shemesh (שֶׁמֶשׁ) [pronounced SHEH-mesh]	<i>sun; sunrise, sun-rising, east, sun-setting, west (of direction); openly, publically</i>	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #8121 BDB #1039

Translation: *I have seen all of the works which are done under the sun,...* Solomon has spent 20 years watching men of all different stations performing all kind of different works—some menial and some work which requires great skills and training. No matter, given what life is—fleeting and temporary—a man might work all of his life, but there is nothing to him in the end. At best, a family with a house or some sort of dwelling—not much good to a man who is dying. When all is said and done, everything seems so futile.

Matthew Poole: *I have seen, i.e. diligently observed, and in great measure understood.*⁵⁷³

He no doubt took time after this, perhaps to study the writings and other sorts of works done by men.

Solomon is looking at this strictly from human viewpoint, hence the words *done under the sun*.

We have many different statements which indicate that this is a set of Solomon's human viewpoint observations. We have the words like *I have seen, I have observed, I see*; and here, what Solomon observes are *all of the works which are done under the sun*. We get, first of all, that this is Solomon's perception; and secondly, this is what he observes *under the sun*.

There is a musical called *Chicago*, and at the beginning of the film, there is a closeup of the eye of one of the actors/singers in the film. That closeup of her eye indicates to us that we are seeing this movie from her personal viewpoint. This verse is the literary equivalent of that—we are seeing the world from Solomon's viewpoint (and, specifically, Solomon's viewpoint while searching for truth and meaning *under the sun*).

Gill: *All things...that were on the earth, and in it...; he considered them, and endeavoured to search into the nature of them; and did attain to a very great knowledge of them, so that he could speak of them to the instruction of others; see 1Kings 4:33; and all that were done by men, by their head, or by their hands; all that were written or wrought by them; all their philosophical works and experiments, and all their mechanic operations; as well as all their good and bad works, in a moral sense.*

Dr. Bob Utley: *[The phrase (or a parallel phrase) "under the sun" ...is used (cf. Eccles. 1:3 Eccles. 1:9 Eccles. 1:13-14 Eccles. 2:11 Eccles. 2:17-20 Eccles. 2:22 Eccles. 3:16 Eccles. 4:1 Eccles. 4:3 Eccles. 4:7 Eccles. 4:15 Eccles. 5:13 Eccles. 5:18 Eccles. 6:1 Eccles. 6:5 Eccles. 6:12 Eccles. 7:11 Eccles. 8:15[twice],17 Eccles. 9:3 Eccles. 9:9[twice],11,13; Eccles. 10:5).]*⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷³ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:14.

⁵⁷⁴ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 112–15.

Ecclesiastes 1:14b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wāw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
hinnêh (הִנֵּה) [pronounced <i>hin-NAY</i>]	<i>lo, behold, or more freely, observe, look here, look, listen, note, take note, duly note [that]; pay attention, get this, check this out</i>	interjection, exclamatory particle, demonstrative particle	Strong's #2009 (and #518, 2006) BDB #243

This seems to attempt to take others and put them in the place of the person saying this (so that they see the same thing); or to grab the attention of the reader. From the many times I have seen this word used in a narrative, I believe that we may update the translation to, *he observed [that]; he saw; suddenly, unexpectedly, dramatically*. This goes along with the idea that this word is to cause us to see things from the viewpoint of someone in the narrative.

kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]; also kol (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kol</i>]	<i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
--	---	---	----------------------------

The NET Bible: As mentioned in the note on “everything” in 1:2, the term לְכֹל (*hakkol*, “everything”) is often limited in reference to the specific topic at hand in the context (e.g., BDB 482 s.v. כֹּל 2). The argument of 1:12-15, like 1:3-11, focuses on secular human achievement. This is clear from the repetition of the root הָשַׁע (*’asah*, “do, work, accomplish, achieve”) in 1:12-13.⁵⁷⁵

hebel (לְבָה) [pronounced <i>HEH^b-vef</i>]	<i>vapor, breath; mist, darkness; unsubstantial, emptiness, empty, vanity, meaningless, vacuous; vain, vainly; idol</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1892 BDB #210
--	---	-------------------------	----------------------------

Used figuratively for *something transitory and unsatisfactory*. Often used of things which are transitory, evanescent or frail.

The NET Bible: This usage of לְבָה (*hevel*) denotes “futile, profitless, fruitless” (e.g., 2 Kgs 17:15; Ps 78:33; Prov 13:11; 21:6; Eccl 1:2, 14; 2:1, 14-15; 4:8; Jer 2:5; 10:3; Lam 4:17; see HALOT 236–37 s.v. לְבָה I; BDB 210–11 s.v. I לְבָה). The term is used with the simile “like striving after the wind” (חֹר תוּעֵר, *ry’ut ruakh*) – a graphic picture of an expenditure of effort in vain because no one can catch the wind by chasing it (e.g., 1:14, 17; 2:11, 17, 26; 4:4, 6, 16; 6:9; 7:14). When used in this sense, the term is often used with the following synonyms: וְהֵתַל (lytohu, “for nothing, in vain, for no reason”; Isa 49:4); קִיר (riq, “profitless; useless”; Isa 30:7; Eccl 6:11); לִיעוּה אֵל (ly’eh, “worthless, profitless”; Is 30:6; 57:12; Jer 16:19); “what profit?” (נֹרְתֵי־הַמַּה, *mah-yyitron*); and “no profit” (נֹרְתֵי־נֵיא, *en yyitron*; e.g., 2:11; 3:19; 6:9). It is also used in antithesis to terms connoting value: בֹּט (tov, “good, benefit, advantage”) and נֹרְתֵי (yot’yron, “profit, advantage, gain”). Despite everything that man has accomplished in history, it is ultimately futile because nothing on earth really changes.⁵⁷⁶

Translation: ...and behold, [it is] all vapor [or, breath, emptiness, vanity]... He concludes that all of these works are vapor, empty and vain. All of this work is empty; it lacks meaning; it lacks ultimate purpose.

We work—and some of us work quite hard—but where is it? All of this work is a vapor.

⁵⁷⁵ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 18, 2018.

⁵⁷⁶ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 18, 2018.

I often work on houses, fixing them up. I enjoy taking before and after pictures—it shows me what I have accomplished. But, in the long term, 50 years from now, it is very likely that these houses that I am working on—they may not even be there any more. So all of the repairs and fix-up work will be completely gone—as if they had never existed.

King Solomon does not realize it, but this tremendous Temple that he built—a few hundred years in the future, and it will be completely gone.

Ecclesiastes 1:14c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wāw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
r ^e c ^u wth (תוער) [pronounced <i>reh-GOOH</i>]	<i>longing, striving; grasping after; chasing after; a vexation</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #7469 BDB #946
The Cambridge Bible: <i>The word in question occurs seven times in Ecclesiastes but is not found elsewhere. The rendering "vexation" rests apparently on a false etymology.</i> ⁵⁷⁷			
r ^u wach (חור) [pronounced <i>ROO-ahkh</i>]	<i>wind, breath, spirit, apparition</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #7307 BDB #924
This phrase is found in Eccles. 1:14, 17 2:11, 17, 26 4:4,6,16 6:9.			
Whedon: <i>The phrase vexation of spirit is strangely inaccurate. It should be, a grasping after wind.</i> ⁵⁷⁸			

Translation: ...and chasing wind. This is a new phrase not used before; it means *chasing the wind, grasping after a spirit, longing, pursuing nothing or striving for breath*. There is nothing there; and yet, this is the pursuit of man; this is what man is after—but when all is said and done, it is nothing.

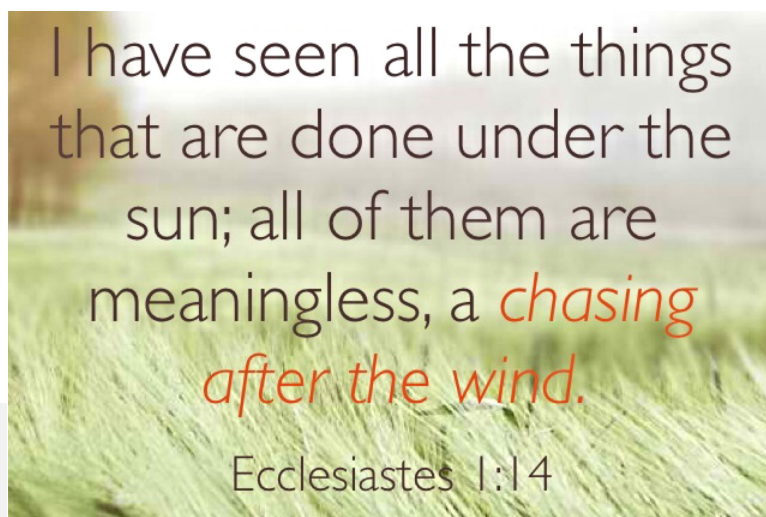
Trying to find truth by searching using human means and human wisdom, is like chasing after wind.

Ecclesiastes 1:14 (a graphic); from [Aging Capriciously](#); accessed June 17, 2018.

Solomon, speaking from human viewpoint, speaking as a man who either does not know God or has forgotten Him, cannot seem to find any meaning in this life.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines



⁵⁷⁷ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:14.

⁵⁷⁸ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:14.

Ecclesiastes 1:14 I have seen all the works of man which are done under the sun, and I have observed that man's life and works are empty and chasing after the wind.

Striving after wind (Ecclesiastes 1:14) (various commentators)

Matthew Poole: *[This phrase] signifies a fruitless or lost labour, and a disappointment of their hopes and desires of satisfaction.*⁵⁷⁹

Dr. Bob Utley: *[The phrase (or a parallel phrase) "all is vanity and striving after wind"...characterizes this book (cf. Eccles. 1:2; Eccles. 1:14; Eccles. 2:1; Eccles. 2:11; Eccles. 2:15; Eccles. 2:17; Eccles. 2:19; Eccles. 2:21; Eccles. 2:23; Eccles. 2:26; Eccles. 3:19; Eccles. 4:4; Eccles. 4:6; Eccles. 4:8; Eccles. 4:16; Eccles. 5:7; Eccles. 5:16; Eccles. 6:2; Eccles. 6:4; Eccles. 6:9; Eccles. 6:11; Eccles. 7:6; Eccles. 7:15; Eccles. 8:10; Eccles. 8:14[twice]; Eccles. 9:9; Eccles. 11:8; Eccles. 11:10; Eccles. 12:8). See word study at Eccles. 1:17. It characterizes human's search for meaning, happiness, and purpose without God. Life without God in a fallen world is frustrating and empty! Life with God in a fallen world is mysterious and unexplainable! Our hope is in the unseen God of revelation (Scripture). He has revealed Himself, but we still live in a fallen world and reap its chaos and evil.*⁵⁸⁰

Barnes: *Vexation of spirit - A phrase which occurs 7 times, and may be otherwise translated, "feeding on wind." Modern Hebrew grammarians assert that the word rendered "vexation" must be derived from a root signifying "to feed," "follow," "strive after." This being admitted, it remains to choose between two translations:*

- (1) "striving after wind," or "windy effort;" adopted by the Septuagint and the majority of modern interpreters; or
- (2) feeding on wind. Compare Hosea 12:1 : and similar phrases in Prov. 15:14; Isa. 44:20; Psalm 37:3.⁵⁸¹

Joseph Sutcliffe: *He adds, "vexation of spirit," because his researches found neither bottom nor end. Thus Paul, in the study of providence, exclaimed, ο βάθος, "oh the depth!" We cannot penetrate far into the expanse of heaven, yet we see enough to charm the eye, and delight the mind.*⁵⁸²

Dunagan provides alternate translations: "futile business" (Moffatt); "frustration and lost labor" (Knox).⁵⁸³

Or, as Donovan put it, "Ah, but I might as well try to catch the wind."

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Dr. Peter Pett: *The Preacher...gave himself to use his wisdom to discover knowledge, but declares that the search for such wisdom and understanding turned out to be a useless and painful effort because of the difficulty of finding anything out. Although all that is under heaven is looked into, the effort only turns out to be effort spent in vain (compare Eccles. 12:12). One is reminded here especially of the study of modern philosophy, where men seemed to be getting somewhere and finished up arguing about the meaning of words and mathematical formulae. Learned, yes, but not getting anywhere.*⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁷⁹ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:14.

⁵⁸⁰ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 112–15.

⁵⁸¹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:14.

⁵⁸² From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/jsc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 21, 2018.

⁵⁸³ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:14.

⁵⁸⁴ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:12–13.

The Cambridge Bible: *[T]he Hebrew...must read “vanity and feeding upon wind.” The phrase has its parallel in Hosea 12:2 (“Ephraim feeds on wind”) and Isa. 44:20 (“feeds on ashes”) and expresses, with a bold vividness, the sense of emptiness which accompanies unsatisfied desire.*⁵⁸⁵

Having considered pursuing philosophy in my younger years in college, I can vouch for Pett’s observations here.

Ecclesiastes 1:14 I have seen all the works of man which are done under the sun, and I have observed that man’s life and works are empty and chasing after the wind.

Solomon’s search eventually was fruitless and pointless (various commentators)

Pastor John Griffith: *[Solomon] paints a very graphic picture here of effort expended with no results gained - since no one can catch the wind. The good and profit that any part of this world has to offer is emptiness, worthless and is chasing after the wind.*⁵⁸⁶

Keil and Delitzsch: *[Here, Solomon discovers] the fleeting, unsubstantial, fruitless nature of all human actions and endeavours.*⁵⁸⁷

Matthew Poole: *All is vanity and vexation of spirit; and not only unsatisfying, but also troublesome, and an affliction or breaking to a man’s spirit or mind.*⁵⁸⁸

Benson: *Diligently observed, and, in a great measure, understood them; and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit — Not only unsatisfying, but also an affliction or breaking to a man’s spirit.*⁵⁸⁹

Clarke: *After all these discussions and experiments..., I have found only rational satisfaction; but not that supreme good by which alone the soul can be made happy.*⁵⁹⁰

The College Press Bible Study: *[Solomon] explores everything that comes within his power to see or hear. He is faced with endless observations but his conclusion is that all of it is afflicted with the mark of the vanity of this world. He calls it a “grievous” task and “striving after wind.”*⁵⁹¹

Gill: *and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit; not only the things known, but the knowledge of them; it is mere vanity, there is nothing solid and substantial in it, or that can make a man happy; yea, on the contrary, it is vexatious and distressing; it is not only a weariness to the flesh to obtain it, but, in the reflection of it, gives pain and uneasiness to the mind: it is a “breaking of the spirit”...of the man...; it wastes and consumes his spirit, as well as his time, and all to no purpose; it is..., a “feeding on wind”...useless and unprofitable.*⁵⁹²

Dr. Peter Pett: *[Solomon] had searched out everywhere what men did, but whatever they did, it was in the end fruitless and profitless, both spiritually and rationally. It was simply temporal and material. Seeking to find meaning to life was like striving after the wind. It was impossible to grasp and lay hold of what they were looking for, some extra meaning and lasting significance in life. All they had was the works that man continually did and which were in the end without any really final important significance.*⁵⁹³

⁵⁸⁵ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:14 (slightly edited).

⁵⁸⁶ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_05.html accessed June 16, 2018.

⁵⁸⁷ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 1:14.

⁵⁸⁸ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:14.

⁵⁸⁹ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:14–15.

⁵⁹⁰ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:14.

⁵⁹¹ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:13–18 (comment).

⁵⁹² Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:14.

⁵⁹³ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:14.

Solomon's search eventually was fruitless and pointless (various commentators)

A. W. Momerie: *Koheleth...was forced to the conclusion that all human pursuits were vanity and vexation of spirit, or, according to the literal Hebrew, were but vapour and striving after the wind. There was no solidity, nothing permanent, nothing enduring, about human possessions or achievements. For man was doomed to pass away into nothingness.*

Momerie continues: *Having stated his position in these general terms, he now enters into the subject a little more in detail. He reminds himself how at one time he had tried to find his happiness in pleasure and amusement; but pleasure had palled upon him, and appeared good for nothing; and as for amusements, Koheleth thinks that life might, perhaps, be tolerable without them. Having discovered the unsatisfactoriness of pleasure, Koheleth proceeds to inquire if there is anything else that could take its place. What of wisdom? Can that make life a desirable possession? He proceeds to institute a comparison between wisdom and pleasure. Pleasure is but momentary; wisdom may last for a lifetime. Pleasure is but a shadow; wisdom is comparatively substantial and real. The lover of wisdom will follow her till he dies. Ay, there's the rub—till he dies. One event happens to them all. What then is the good of wisdom? This, too, is vanity.⁵⁹⁴*

College Press Bible Study: *False gods are worshipped throughout the world. False idols are established in every land. Why? Because these are expressions of man's frustrations and despair. He is searching in harmony with the grievous task in his mind, yet his results are inconsistent and unrewarding. His ultimate frustration is depicted by the Athenians in their erecting an altar to an unknown god!*

College Press continues: *It is an "affliction" because man is honest enough to admit that God is only longed for, not discovered. He must also admit, as Solomon does, that the mark of sin is so heavy upon both man and his world that nothing can really be changed, and that which is lacking in man and nature is still lacking. Man is not capable of remaking his world or himself. Cracks can be plastered, and cosmetically treated, but not healed. On our own, we can be pretenders and mask wearers, but we really can't make the crooked straight or add to man's account in order to make him acceptable before God.⁵⁹⁵*

McGee draws some conclusions: *All systems of philosophy lead up a blind alley. You can make the same experiment yourself. You can spend your time in studying this subject, and you will find it is actually a waste of time.*

He continues: *We are living in a day when educators are declaring that all the past methods of education were just a waste of time. I wonder how good our present method is. I think that it is also a waste of time. Man can never learn the really important thing — he cannot know God by wisdom and philosophy. His knowledge of God comes only through revelation. Philosophy generally leads a person to a pessimistic viewpoint of life.*

J. Vernon McGee: *You cannot take natural man — man who is a lost sinner alienated from God — and give him an education, expecting that education to solve the problems of his life. It will not do that. Philosophy and psychology cannot change human nature, nor can they correct the old nature of man.⁵⁹⁶*

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Dr. Thomas Constable: *Solomon was saying that there is no type of effort or activity that can produce something ultimately permanent and therefore satisfying. There is nothing people can do that will yield this, no type of work or activity.⁵⁹⁷*

⁵⁹⁴ *The Sermon Bible Commentary*; ©1888-1893; in the Public Domain; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll, M.A., LL.D., from e-sword, Eccles. 1:12–3:22.

⁵⁹⁵ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:13–18 (comment).

⁵⁹⁶ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt accessed June 21, 2018.

⁵⁹⁷ Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:12–15.

One of the things which is emphasized in the Christian life is divine good, which is eternal good. At first, this may not seem to be that important to the believer in Jesus Christ; but then, when you look at things as Solomon does, that may alter your thinking somewhat. If all that you work for and all that you accomplish is gone 50 years later (or a 100 years later or whatever), then what good is it, really?

David Guzik: *This burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised: The seeming futility of life comes from God; He has given it to man. God has deliberately built a system where life seems meaningless and vanity without the understanding of a living, active God to whom we must give account.*

Guzik continues: *It may seem cruel of God to devise such a system, but it actually evidence of His great love and mercy. He built within us the desire and need for that which brings meaning and fulfillment to live. As Augustine wrote, the Creator made a God-shaped space in each of us, which can only be filled with Him.*

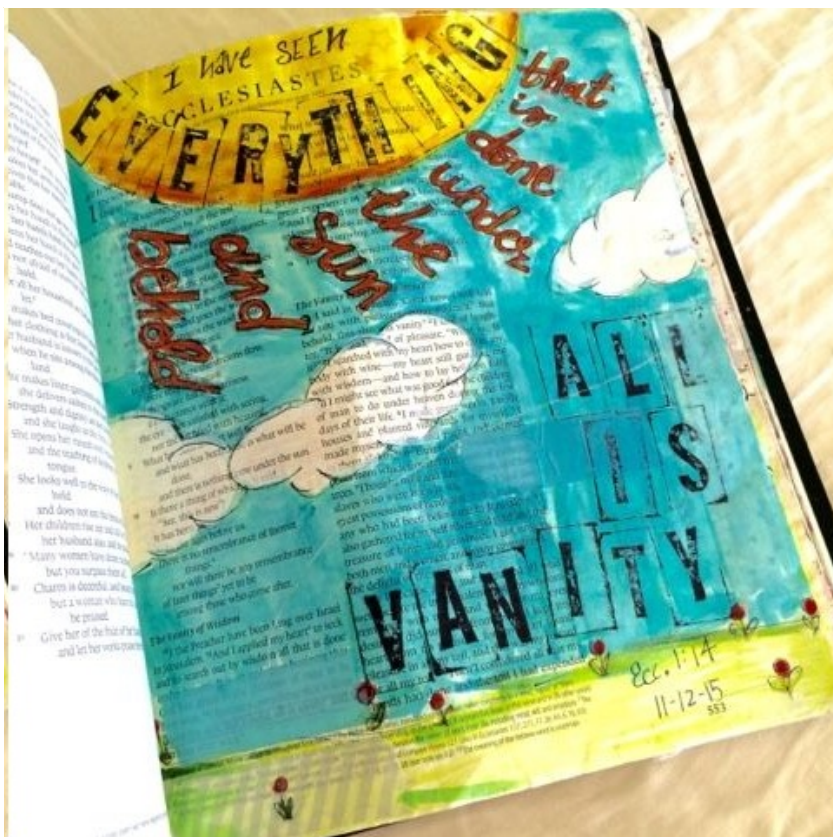
Guzik continues: *This is true not only of us as people, but also as creation. God also subjected creation to this futility until He one day brings the promised fulfillment. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope (Rom. 8:20).*

Guzik continues: *At the same time, this is a burdensome task. It isn't always easy to find these answers, because our pride, self-reliance, and self-love work against finding them.*

Guzik concludes: *What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be numbered: The Preacher's initial search for the answers in wisdom (under the sun) brought him only despair.⁵⁹⁸*

Kidner: *With his usual devastating candour Qoheleth is quick to tell us the worst. The search has come to nothing.⁵⁹⁹*

The Christian life is so much different than this. Our lives have purpose, meaning and definition. Our lives are neither random or empty.



Ecclesiastes 1:14 (Bible journaling) (a graphic); from [Pinterest](#); accessed June 17, 2018.

⁵⁹⁸ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:12–15.

⁵⁹⁹ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:12–15.

What is crooked is not able to be made straight; and what is lacking is not able to be numbered. Ecclesiastes 1:15 **The crooked cannot be made straight and what is lacking cannot be numbered.**

The crooked cannot be made straight and what is lacking cannot be numbered.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	What is crooked is not able to be made straight; and what is lacking is not able to be numbered.
Aramaic Targum	<u>A man whose ways are perverted in this world, and who dies therein and does not repent, has no power to become right after his death; and whoever departs from the law and the precepts in his life, has no power to be numbered with the righteous in paradise after his death.</u>
Revised Douay-Rheims Peshitta (Syriac)	The perverse are hard to be corrected, and the <u>number of fools is infinite.</u> The chaotic cannot be made orderly; and <u>he who is lacking knowledge</u> cannot be supplied with it.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and deficiency cannot be numbered.

Significant differences: The targum is in full and complete interpretation mode. The Latin and Syriac went with reasonable alternate translations. The second half of the Latin seems quite interpretive. Additional words are found in the Syriac; I assume to try to smooth things out.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Easy English	People may do things that are wrong. This is like something that you have bent. When you have bent it, you cannot make it straight again. Neither can you count things that are not there.
Easy-to-Read Version–2001	{You can't change these things.} If something is crooked, you can't say it is straight. And if something is missing, you can't say it is there.
Easy-to-Read Version–2006	If something is crooked, you cannot say it is straight. And if something is missing, you cannot say it is there.
God's Word™	No one can straighten what is bent. No one can count what is not there.
Good News Bible (TEV) <i>The Message</i>	You can't straighten out what is crooked; you can't count things that aren't there. Life's a corkscrew that can't be straightened, A minus that won't add up.

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	Let me illustrate what I have just said: man tries to bring harmony to the overwhelming chaos of past and present events, but he despairs because it is a futile effort. Also, there are so many things lacking among the pieces of life that one cannot even count them, let alone find them!
The Living Bible	What is wrong cannot be righted; it is water over the dam; and there is no use thinking of what might have been.
New Century Version	If something is crooked, you can't make it straight. If something is missing,

	you can't say it is there.
New Life Version	What is not straight cannot be made straight. What is not there cannot be numbered.
New Living Translation	What is wrong cannot be made right. What is missing cannot be recovered.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	Many things that are crooked cannot be caused to become straight. We cannot count things that we cannot see.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	For, things that go wrong are never made right, And there's too much that's wrong to be counted.
Beck's American Translation	You can't straighten out what is twisted, and you can't count what is not there.
New Advent (Knox) Bible	All that men do beneath the sun I marked, and found it was but frustration and lost labour, all of it; there was no curing men's cross-grained nature, no reckoning up their follies. V. 14 is included for context.
Translation for Translators	<i>Many</i> things that are crooked cannot be caused to become straight; we cannot count things that do not exist.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Alpha & Omega Bible	THAT WHICH IS CROOKED CANNOT BE MADE STRAIGHT: AND DEFICIENCY CANNOT BE NUMBERED.
Awful Scroll Bible	That what is coming to be made crooked - sustains it able to be made straight? - either remains that lacking able to be numbered?
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	The crooked could not be straightened; and the wrong could not be righted.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	The crooked man cannot be made straight, and the faults cannot be numbered.
Unlocked Literal Bible	The twisted cannot be straightened! The missing cannot be counted!

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (2013)	What is bent cannot be straightened; what is not will not come to be.
The Heritage Bible	The twisted cannot be made straight, and the deficient cannot be weighed out.
New American Bible (2002)	What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is missing cannot be supplied.
New American Bible (2011)	What is crooked cannot be made straight, and you cannot count what is not there. You cannot count what is not there: perhaps originally a commercial metaphor alluding to loss or deficit in the accounts ledger.
Revised English Bible–1989	What is crooked cannot become straight; what is not there cannot be counted.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	What is crooked can't be straightened; what is not there can't be counted.
The Complete Tanach	What is crooked will not be able to be straightened, and what is missing will not be able to be counted.

What is crooked: during his lifetime, will not be able to be straightened after he dies. Whoever toiled on the eve of the Sabbath will eat on the Sabbath, and our Sages explained this as referring to one who was intimate with a woman forbidden to him and begot a mamzer, or to a Torah scholar who parted with the Torah, who was originally straight and became crooked.

and what is missing will not be able to be counted: One who excluded himself from the number of the righteous will not be able to be counted with them in their reception of reward.

JPS (Tanakh—1985) Orthodox Jewish Bible A twisted thing that cannot be made straight, A lack that cannot be made good. That which is crooked cannot be made straight; and chesron (that which is lacking) cannot be numbered.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

- The Amplified Bible* What is crooked cannot be straightened and what is defective *and* lacking cannot be counted.
- The Expanded Bible If something is ·crooked [bent],
you can't make it straight.
If something is missing,
you can't ·say it is there [^Lcount it; ^Csomething is wrong with the world and it cannot be fixed].
- Kretzmann's Commentary That which is crooked cannot be made straight, human beings cannot alter what has been determined by God, even as they cannot, by their own reason and strength, change their sinful hearts to such as are well-pleasing to God; **and that which is wanting cannot be numbered**, if it is missing, it cannot be accounted for, what is wholly defective cannot be supplied.
- NET Bible® What is bent⁶¹ cannot be straightened,⁶²
and what is missing⁶³ cannot be supplied.⁶⁴
^{61tn} The term...is used substantively ("what is bent; what is crooked") in reference to irregularities in life and obstacles to human secular achievement accomplishing anything of ultimate value.
^{62tn} A parallel statement occurs in 7:13.
^{63tn} The Hebrew noun כֶּסְרוֹן (khesron) is used in the OT only here and means "what is lacking" (as an antonym to יִצְרוֹן [yitron], "what is profitable").
^{64tn} Heb "cannot be counted" or "cannot be numbered."
- The Pulpit Commentary **That which is crooked cannot be made straight.** This is intended as a confirmation of Eccles. 1:14. By the utmost exercise of his powers and faculties man cannot change the course of events; he is constantly met by anomalies which he can neither explain nor rectify (comp. Eccles. 7:13). The above is probably a proverbial saying. Knobel quotes Suidas: Ξύλον ἀγκυλον ου'δέποτε ὀρθόν. The Vulgate takes the whole maxim as applying only to morals: "Perverse men are hardly corrected, and the number of tools is infinite." So too the Syriac and Targum. The Septuagint rightly as the Authorized Version. The writer is not referring merely to man's sins and delinquencies, but to the perplexities in which he finds himself involved, and extrication from which is impracticable.
That which is wanting cannot be numbered. The word ποῖτις, "loss, defect," is ἀΐπαξ λεγόμενον in the Old Testament. We cannot reckon where there is nothing to count; no skill in arithmetic will avail to make up for a substantial deficit. So nothing man can do is able to remedy the anomalies by which he is surrounded, or to supply the defects which are pressed upon his notice.
- Syndein/Thieme {Illustration}
That which is crooked cannot be straightened. What is lacking cannot be counted {mathematics of infinity}.
- The Voice *There is an old saying:*
Something crooked cannot be made straight,
and something missing cannot be counted.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Concordant Literal Version Charles Thompson OT What is distorted cannot be set in order, And what is lacking cannot be counted."
That which is crooked cannot be made straight, nor can wants be numbered.

Emphasized Bible	That which is crooked, cannot be straight,—and, that which is wanting, cannot be reckoned.
Modern English Version	What is bent cannot be straightened, and what is missing cannot be counted.
New King James Version	<i>What is crooked cannot be made straight, And what is lacking cannot be numbered.</i>
World English Bible	That which is crooked can't be made straight; and that which is lacking can't be counted.
Young's Updated LT	A crooked thing <i>one</i> is not able to make straight, and a lacking thing is not able to be numbered.

The gist of this passage: The crooked thing cannot be made straight; when something is not there, it cannot be numbered.

Ecclesiastes 1:15a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿāvath (אָוַת) [pronounced <i>gaw-VAHTH</i>]	<i>crooked, bent; perverted; a thing which has been bent</i>	Pual participle	Strong's #5791 BDB #736
The NET Bible: <i>The term אָוַת, mǝʿuvvat (Pual participle masculine singular from אָוַת, 'avat, "to bend") is used substantively ("what is bent; what is crooked") in reference to irregularities in life and obstacles to human secular achievement accomplishing anything of ultimate value.</i> ⁶⁰⁰			
lô' (לֹא or לוֹא) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
yâkôl (יָכוֹל) [also yâkôwl (יָכוֹל)] [pronounced <i>yaw-COAL</i>]	<i>to be able, can, to have the ability, to have the power to; to be able to bear; to be able to bring oneself [to do anything]; to be lawful, to be permitted; to be powerful, to prevail</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3201 BDB #407
With the negative, this means <i>cannot, to be unable to, to lack the ability to, to be powerless to, to lack permission to, to not be permitted to; to lack the power to.</i>			
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
tâqan (תָּקַן) [pronounced <i>taw-KAHN</i>]	<i>to become straight; to arrange; to put right; to set in order; to be well-ordered; to be established, firm</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #8626 BDB #1075
The NET Bible: <i>A parallel statement occurs in 7:13 which employs the active form of אָוַת, ('avat, "to bend") with God as the subject: "Who is able to strengthen what God bends?" The passive form occurs here: "No one is able to straighten what is bent" (אֵין מִי יִשְׁתָּרֵם לֹא-יִשְׁתָּרֵם, mǝʿuvvat lo'-yukhal lotÿqon). In the light of 7:13, the personal agent of the passive form is God.</i> ⁶⁰¹			

⁶⁰⁰ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 18, 2018.

⁶⁰¹ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 18, 2018.

Translation: *The crooked cannot be made straight...* From my original understanding, what we have here are two mathematical problems of that era. Here, I believe the idea is, an arc or a circle cannot be straightened. I do not know exactly what that means, other than, there cannot be a rational value to a circle which can be resolved to a rational value for the radius or diameter. I have assumed that this is a relationship between the diameter and the circle, but those are not exactly the words used here.

Another approach is, Solomon is correctly applying two sayings of his era to the philosophical issues that he has raised. The key to each lament and difficulty is, God. Without God, every complaint, shortcoming, inequity or lament that Solomon points out is true and cannot be resolved. But, when God becomes integral to the discussion, then real answers emerge.

J. H. Jowett: *[M]en gaze upon the affairs of human kind, and are afflicted with the sense of crookedness. It does not require much insight to perceive that much in human nature is marred and crooked, and life is gnarled and twisted. The world is a place of grand plans and poor executions, a realm of broken columns, snapped friendships, strained relationships. It abounds in crooked things.*⁶⁰²

Ecclesiastes 1:15 *The crooked cannot be made straight and what is lacking cannot be numbered.*

Making the crooked straight (Ecclesiastes 1:15) (various commentators)

J. Vernon McGee: *"That which is crooked cannot be made straight" — as the twig is bent, the tree inclines. The tree grows crooked because the twig was bent. You and I start out in life with an old nature. We can educate it and do many things to improve it, but, as the Lord Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." It will always be flesh, my friend. That is the reason we must have a new nature — ". . . that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6).*⁶⁰³

Pastor John Griffith: *Human efforts and actions cannot remedy man's position in Adam, his state of being spiritually dead and all the consequences. All under the sun solutions cannot solve them ONLY God who is above the sun has the power and ability to solve them thru His grace provision.*⁶⁰⁴

John W. Ritenbaugh: *When Solomon states, "What is crooked cannot be made straight," he is referring, not to anything material like a piece of steel, but rather to the circumstances and events of communal life. An obvious example is that the past cannot be changed. An injustice might be resolved or an apology given, but many lasting effects remain.*

Ritenbaugh continues: *The Living Bible paraphrases this verse as, "What is wrong cannot be righted; it is water over the dam; and there is no use thinking of what might have been." We must remember, though, that God has the power to straighten out what is twisted and to supply what is lacking, yet even He will not change the past. However, He can change the way the past affects us, which is most encouraging to those who believe.*

Ritenbaugh continues: *Thus, by looking at it through the eyes of faith, we can know about life to some degree, but at this point in Ecclesiastes, Solomon is warning us that it contains a great deal of inequity, disappointment and discouragement, evil, apparent injustice, and pain. Nations enter into wars without our permission, governments and their systems are corrupt, the courts are unfair, and businessmen lie and steal—all clearly caused by the minds and hands of men. There is so much of this, he says, it is beyond count. God could easily stop these events, but He does not!*

Ritenbaugh continues: *One of the unwritten questions in Ecclesiastes is, "Why does God not stop these things?" It is not answered completely either, so verse 16 shows Solomon searching for where he might find it.*⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰² *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:15.

⁶⁰³ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt accessed June 21, 2018.

⁶⁰⁴ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_05.html accessed June 16, 2018.

⁶⁰⁵ From [Bible tools](#) accessed June 18, 2018.

Making the crooked straight (Ecclesiastes 1:15) (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *Nothing that man can do can remedy the anomalies with which he is surrounded.*⁶⁰⁶

John Dummelow: *The world is disordered, and there is no cure discoverable.*⁶⁰⁷

James Burton Coffman: *The inadequacy of all systems of government, economics, education, etc., are utterly beyond his power to improve or correct them. In a word, "He is stuck with the situation into which he was born."*⁶⁰⁸

Benson's take: *All our knowledge serves only to discover our miseries, but is utterly insufficient to remove them; it cannot rectify those disorders which are either in our own hearts and lives, or in the men and things of the world.*⁶⁰⁹

Clarke: *That which is crooked cannot be made straight - There are many apparent irregularities and anomalies in nature for which we cannot account; and there are many defects that cannot be supplied. This is the impression from a general view of nature; but the more we study and investigate its operations, the more we shall be convinced that all is a consecutive and well-ordered whole; and that in the chain of nature not one link is broken, deficient, or lost.*⁶¹⁰

Dr. John Gill: *By all the art and cunning, wisdom and knowledge of man, that he can attain unto; whatever he, in the vanity of his mind, may find fault with in the works of God, either of nature or providence, and which he may call crooked, it is not in his power to make them straight, or to mend them.*

Gill continues: *There is something which, through sin, is crooked, in the hearts, in the nature, in the principles, ways and works, of men; which can never be made straight, corrected or amended, by all the natural wisdom and knowledge of men, which shows the insufficiency of it: the wisest philosophers among men, with all their parade of wit and learning, could never effect anything of this kind; this only is done by the Spirit and grace of God.*⁶¹¹

Isa. 42:16 *And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them. (ESV)*

Dunagan: *No government can create the ideal society, the great society or an earthly utopia. Even the wealthiest of men stand powerless in the face of all sorts of problems. We cannot eliminate crime, poverty, prejudice or corruption in government or the business community. "human achievements leave much to be desired. Human effort and action cannot remedy all the irregularities or counteract all the deficiencies observable in the nature of things" (Bible Knowledge Comm. p. 981).*⁶¹²

Dr. Daniel Hill: *There will always be things in this fallen world that are crooked. And try as man will he cannot make them straight. There will always be the problems and annoyances that come with living in a fallen world with fallen men.*⁶¹³

⁶⁰⁶ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

⁶⁰⁷ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 22, 2018.

⁶⁰⁸ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

⁶⁰⁹ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:14–15.

⁶¹⁰ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:15.

⁶¹¹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:15.

⁶¹² Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:15.

⁶¹³ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 11, 2018.

Making the crooked straight (Ecclesiastes 1:15) (various commentators)

Matthew Poole: *That which is crooked cannot be made straight*; all our knowledge serves only to discover our diseases and miseries, but is oft itself utterly insufficient to heal or remove them; it cannot rectify those confusions and disorders which are either in our own hearts and lives, or in the men and things of the world.⁶¹⁴

Dr. Peter Pett: This simply means that everything in life is basically marred and lacking in meaningful content. Everything is lacking in some way. It is 'unstraight (crooked)'. And whatever we do it is not possible to make it 'straight'. Whatever we do to it, it remains unstraight. We cannot give it a perfection that it does not have (the perfection he was looking for). It is not possible to obtain something complete from something else which is incomplete and thus diametrically opposite to it and totally unlike it. Nor is it possible make something of account which is in fact not so. All in life is to be seen as like things that are in essence crooked (marred in some way and incomplete). All are the same essentially. And perfection cannot be obtained from imperfection. Thus it is impossible to look behind such things and find anything that is essentially meaningful, i.e. something that is straight. Nothing can be transformed into something different, for all is essentially the same. What he was actually looking for, something that was essentially different from everything else and had an element of perfection, appeared in fact to be lacking. Thus it was impossible to give any account of it. It was all a part of his vain search into the meaning of life.⁶¹⁵

Whedon: *That which is crooked* — This refers to the discouraged state of the writer's mind. It should be translated, *That which is bowed cannot be set up*. The effort at a philosophical view was vain, for it yielded no relief to his depression previously stated.⁶¹⁶

David C. Grabbe: By way of definition, the Hebrew word translated as "crooked," 'avath (Strong's #5791), is used less than a dozen times in the rest of the Old Testament. Its basic meaning is "to wrest," which is "to forcibly pull something from a person's grasp" or "to obtain by wrenching with violent, twisting movements." In essence, it is the assertion of one person's will against another's, and the result is damage that can never truly be repaired.

Grabbe continues: In other places, 'avath is linked with the perversion of justice (Job 8:3; 34:12). It can mean wronging someone or dealing perversely with someone (Psalm 119:78). It indicates turning things upside down or upsetting the natural order of things (Job 19:6; Psalm 146:9). Finally, it can refer to subverting someone in his cause and falsifying the scales (Lamentations 3:36; Amos 8:5).

Grabbe continues: Solomon is saying that, once the natural order of things has been upset by this willfulness, it is essentially impossible to make those things right again. The order of things cannot be equalized (which is what the word translated as "straight" means), even though there may be a salve that can be applied. When something has been wrested from another—when one person's will has been asserted at the expense of someone else's—it sets things into motion that cannot be equalized. A measure of crookedness will always remain in man's works.

Grabbe continues: Thus, because of human nature and willfulness, anywhere we find human actions, we also find disorder and incompleteness. We see irregularity and deficiency. Not only that, but we also discover mankind's utter inability to truly fix them or fill in what is lacking.⁶¹⁷

Elsewhere, David C. Grabbe writes: When Solomon speaks of crookedness, he is not specifically speaking about sin. In fact, some crookedness is actually good, because it is created by God (Ecclesiastes 7:13)! But in general, sin and crookedness overlap in many ways because, when one person is wrenching something from another, whether physically or metaphorically, sin is almost always involved. It is the "way of get"; it is an act of self-centeredness.

⁶¹⁴ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:15.

⁶¹⁵ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:15.

⁶¹⁶ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:15.

⁶¹⁷ From [Bible tools](#) accessed June 18, 2018.

Making the crooked straight (Ecclesiastes 1:15) (various commentators)

Grabbe continues: *On a human level, the crookedness in the world began in the Garden of Eden, when Adam upset the order of things by heeding the voice of Eve rather than the voice of God. He made a choice, and that choice introduced crookedness into the relationship between God and man. What Adam made crooked could not be made straight by any subsequent human action.*⁶¹⁸

It is likely that this was a common saying of that era.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Solomon essentially had all of the means by which to discover truth; he had virtually unlimited means and unlimited freedom to search out the truth of man and his life on earth. Nothing stood in his way. And Solomon's findings are as pertinent today as they have ever been.

J. Vernon McGee makes this application: *For a time we thought that education would solve the problems of life. Now higher education, in fact all education, is coming under the scrutiny of a great many thoughtful people. A committee to study higher education has come up with a novel explanation of our present conditions. They say the rebellion and the general immorality in our schools is taking place because the young people today are more inquiring and more interested in politics and what is happening in their world. I agree that people are more aware of the many terrible things that are happening. The media gather news from the four corners of the earth and broadcast it the same evening. This makes us more aware of what takes place in the world than ever before. There was a time when it took six weeks to complete all the information after an election; so it took that long to find out who had been elected president. Today they can tell you who is going to be elected before they have the election! So I agree with the fact that young people are more aware today. But I heartily disagree with the implication that the things happening on our campuses are actually an improvement because the young people are so well informed. There is a deterioration on our campuses. We have come to the day when evil is called good, and good evil. Only an educated man could come up with the conclusion that the deterioration on campuses is not deterioration but actually improvement! If you believe fairy stories, you may want to believe that, but we need to face reality. Education cannot solve the problems of life. Neither can psychology provide the answer. In our day there are clever men and women who have come up with little psychological clichés to explain and solve the problems of life. They coat them with a little Bible, like a bitter pill that is covered with a sugar coating, to make them appear as the biblical solutions. My friend, the Word of God in its entirety contains for the Christians the answers to the problems of life. There are no easy solutions. Studying the Word of God requires a great deal of time and effort and mental "perspiration." Oh, how that is needed among Christians!*⁶¹⁹

So many people have a variety of human solutions. President Bush believed that the solution was to give democracy to two Muslim nations, and that would be the key to fixing them. It is now about 15 years later, and that did not work. Many leftists today would like nothing more than to transform the United States into a socialist nation, with someone like Obama at the head of the nation. These are human solutions. Now, do you know when a divine solution was applied to world politics? That was when General MacArthur, at the close of World War II said to President Truman (and to the public at large), send Bibles and missionaries to Japan (and elsewhere to the conquered countries of WWII). Somehow, South Korea was the recipient of such a movement. And two of the greatest allies of the United States are Japan and South Korea. What God does is far more permanent than what man does.

Japan and South Korea are going to be allied with the United States for many decades to come. Do you know what nations will probably not be allied with the US? Iraq and Afghanistan. You cannot simply impose a

⁶¹⁸ From [Bible tools](#) accessed June 18, 2018.

⁶¹⁹ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt accessed June 21, 2018.

democracy on a nation. However, if you imposed a democracy and sent them Bibles and missionaries, that would do the trick (providing, of course, there is some positive volition in those nations).

Ecclesiastes 1:15b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
cheçrôn (חֶסְרוֹן) [pronounced <i>khehç-ROHN</i>]	<i>the thing lacking, defect, deficiency, wanting</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2642 BDB #341
This word is only found here. This comes from the verb châçêr (חָצַר) [pronounced <i>khaw-SEHR</i>], which is found 22 times in the Old Testament.			
The NET Bible: <i>The Hebrew noun חֶסְרוֹן (khesron) is used in the OT only here and means "what is lacking" (as an antonym to יוֹרֵתִי [yitron], "what is profitable"; HALOT 339 s.v. יוֹרֵתִי; BDB 341 s.v. חֶסְרוֹן). It is an Aramaic loanword meaning "deficit." The related verb חָצַר (khasar) means "to lack, to be in need of, to decrease, to lessen [in number]"; the related noun חֶסֶר (khaser) refers to "one in want of"; and the noun חֶסֶר (kheser) means "poverty, want" (HALOT 338 s.v. חֶסֶר; BDB 341 s.v. חֶסֶר). It refers to what is absent (zero in terms of quantity) rather than what is deficient (poor in terms of quality).</i>			
The NET Bible continues: <i>The LXX misunderstood the term and rendered it as ὑστέρημα (usterhema, "deficiency"): "deficiency cannot be numbered." It is also misunderstood by a few English versions: "nor can you count up the defects in life" (Moffatt); "the number of fools is infinite" (Douay). However, most English versions correctly understand it as referring to what is lacking in terms of quantity: "what is lacking" (RSV, MLB, NASB, NIV, NRSV), "a lack" (NJPS), "that which is wanting" (KJV, ASV), "what is not there" (NEB), and "what is missing" (NAB).⁶²⁰</i>			
lô' (אוּל אוֹל) [pronounced <i>low</i>]	<i>not, no</i>	negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation	Strong's #3808 BDB #518
yâkôl (לִכְי) [also yâkôwl (לוֹכִי)] [pronounced <i>yaw-COAL</i>]	<i>to be able, can, to have the ability, to have the power to; to be able to bear; to be able to bring oneself [to do anything]; to be lawful, to be permitted; to be powerful, to prevail</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #3201 BDB #407
With the negative, this means <i>cannot, to be unable to, to lack the ability to, to be powerless to, to lack permission to, to not be permitted to; to lack the power to.</i>			
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
mânâh (חֲנָה) [pronounced <i>maw-NAW</i>]	<i>to be counted, to be numbered [with]</i>	Niphal infinitive construct	Strong's #4487 BDB #584

⁶²⁰ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 18, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:15b

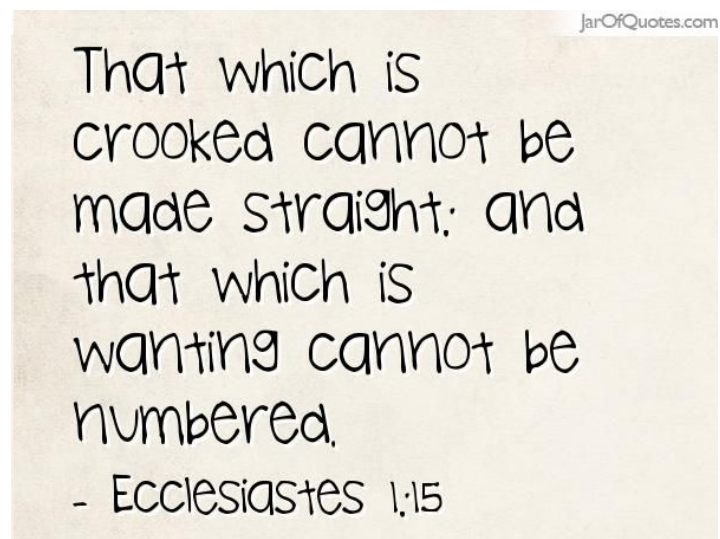
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>The NET Bible: <i>Heb “cannot be counted” or “cannot be numbered.” The term תִּנְנָה (himmanot, Niphal infinitive construct from נָנָה, manah, “to count”) is rendered literally by most translations: “[cannot] be counted” or “[cannot] be numbered” (KJV, ASV, RSV, MLB, NEB, NASB, NIV, NRSV, JPS, NJPS). However, the nuance “count” might function as a metonymy of effect for cause, that is, “to supply.” What is absent cannot be supplied (cause) therefore, it cannot be counted as present (effect). NAB adopts this approach: “what is missing cannot be supplied.”⁶²¹</i></p>			

Translation: ...and what is lacking cannot be numbered. I do not know the mathematical problem being set forth here. Solomon’s assertion here is lost on me.

Ecclesiastes 1:15 (a graphic); from [Pinterest](#); accessed June 17, 2018.

There are things which man cannot do in this world. Man can come up with the concept, but man cannot actually make the concept into a reality.

The examples here is, that which is crooked cannot be made straight. Certainly that which has become corrupted cannot be uncorrupted. What we seem to lack in life cannot be made up.



Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

I have to defer to other commentators on this verse.

Ecclesiastes 1:15 [The crooked cannot be made straight and what is lacking cannot be numbered.](#)

What is lacking cannot be numbered (Ecclesiastes 1:15) (various commentators)

Whedon: *That which is wanting* — Most versions refer this to persons. “He who is gone, cannot be numbered,” and it is as a reason for what is just stated.⁶²²

Benson: *That which is wanting* — *In our knowledge*, and in order to man’s complete satisfaction and happiness; *cannot be numbered* — Or, counted out to us from the treasures of human learning, but what is wanting will be so still; all our enjoyments here, when we have done our utmost to bring them to perfection, are still defective: and that which is wanting in our own knowledge is so much, that it cannot be numbered. The more we know, the more we see of our own ignorance.⁶²³

John Dummelow: *The required numbers are lacking, which were needed to make up the sum of human action, and no amount of skill in arithmetic can supply the deficiency.*⁶²⁴

⁶²¹ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 18, 2018.

⁶²² Whedon’s *Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:15.

⁶²³ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:14–15.

⁶²⁴ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 22, 2018.

What is lacking cannot be numbered (Ecclesiastes 1:15) (various commentators)

The Pulpit Commentary: *We cannot reckon where there is nothing to count; no skill in arithmetic will avail to make up for a substantial deficit. So nothing man can do is able to remedy the anomalies by which he is surrounded, or to supply the defects which are pressed upon his notice.*⁶²⁵

Dr. John Gill: *and that which is wanting cannot be numbered; the deficiencies in human science are so many, that they cannot be reckoned up; and the defects in human nature can never be supplied or made up by natural knowledge and wisdom; and which are so numerous, as that they cannot be understood and counted.*⁶²⁶

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *numbered* — so as to make a complete number; so equivalent to “supplied” [Maurer]. Or, rather, man’s state is utterly wanting; and that which is wholly defective cannot be numbered or calculated. The investigator thinks he can draw up, in accurate numbers, statistics of man’s wants; but these, including the defects in the investigator’s labor, are not partial, but total.⁶²⁷

Dunagan: *Far from solving the problems of life, man is met with more problems than he can number. So much for the idea that man can solve all his problems, right all wrongs, wipe out poverty and disease and bring about a golden age upon this earth. Man can’t save himself.*⁶²⁸

Matthew Poole: *That which is wanting, to wit, in our knowledge, and in order to man’s complete satisfaction and felicity, cannot be numbered; we know little of what we should or might know, or did know in the state of innocency, or shall know in the future life.*⁶²⁹

Dr. Dan Hill: *What is lacking is anything when there is never enough. And there never is. Again, man always wants MORE AND MORE.*⁶³⁰

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 1:15 The crooked cannot be made straight and what is lacking cannot be numbered.

Crooked and lacking (Ecclesiastes 1:15) (various comentators)

The Open Bible: *He despairs of straightening out the world’s problems—or even counting them.*⁶³¹

Keith Krell: *Things that were crooked to his mind he couldn’t straighten out; and there were many gaps he couldn’t fill in.*⁶³²

Barnes: *[Solomon] saw clearly both the disorder and incompleteness of human actions (compare the marginal reference), and also man’s impotence to rectify them.*⁶³³

The Geneva Bible: *Man is not able by all his diligence to cause things to go other than they do: neither can he number the faults that are committed, much less remedy them.*⁶³⁴

⁶²⁵ *The Pulpit Commentary*; 1880-1919; by Joseph S. Exell, Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:15.

⁶²⁶ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:15.

⁶²⁷ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:15.

⁶²⁸ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:15.

⁶²⁹ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:15.

⁶³⁰ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 11, 2018.

⁶³¹ *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 860 (footnote).

⁶³² From Bible.org, accessed June 23, 2018.

⁶³³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:15.

⁶³⁴ Geneva Bible Translation Notes; courtesy of e-sword; 1599; Eccles. 1:15.

Crooked and lacking (Ecclesiastes 1:15) (various comentators)

Ray Stedman: "I have seen everything," he [the author] says. Yet there were certain limitations inherent in that. That is what he quotes in a proverb, "What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be numbered." It is difficult for man to discover the answers to life, because when he sees something wrong there is yet somehow an inbuilt difficulty that prevents him from correcting it. Have you ever felt, as I have, that when things go wrong in your family, although you long to put them right somehow you cannot get hold of it, you cannot make it right? "That which is crooked cannot be made straight." One of the great frustrations of life is that no matter how hard you try there are some things you cannot set straight. Also, no matter how much you may discover, there is information you would long to have that you cannot find.⁶³⁵

College Press Bible Study: Man is crooked and lacking, but God is not responsible for this. It was man who violated God's order, and thus suffers the consequences of sin. He and his world stand out of joint and in debt before God. God placed the curse upon both man and the world because of sin. In a sense it can be said that God bends things and people out of shape. But it is only in the sense that God made the righteous rules which were violated by men, and God placed the subsequent punishments upon that which violates the rules. It is in the light of this truth that Solomon admonishes us, "consider the work of God. Who is able to straighten what he has bent?" (Eccles. 7:13).

College Press continues: Man is in debt to God. Solomon in all his wisdom cannot help. Paul goes a step further and declares that even the world cannot help. "Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through wisdom did not come to know God, God was well pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe...we preach Christ crucified...because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1Cor. 1:20-25).⁶³⁶

Eaton: The third conclusion explains why the 'under the sun' thinker is so frustrated. It is because there are twists (what is crooked) and gaps (what is lacking) in all thinking. No matter how the thinker ponders, he cannot straighten out life's anomalies, nor reduce all he sees to a neat system.⁶³⁷

Dr. Bob Utley: Life is a mystery and it cannot be understood or changed by those walking through it. In historical context, this may be a slap at divination or simply a realistic statement of mankind's inability to correct the human condition (but God can, cf. Eccles. 7:13 Job 12:14 Isa. 14:27). Wisdom knows some things cannot be changed and goes on with life, but it also knows some things can be changed by godly living, godly choices. The problem is knowing which is which.⁶³⁸

To be more specific, life is a mystery, apart from God's revelation to man.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: Investigation (Eccles. 1:13) into human ways is vain labor, for they are hopelessly "crooked" and "cannot be made straight" by it (Eccles. 7:13). God, the chief good, alone can do this (Isa. 40:4; Isa. 45:2).⁶³⁹

Keil and Delitzsch: The judgment contained in the words, "vanity and a striving after the wind," is confirmed: "That which is crooked cannot become straight; and a deficit cannot be numerable," i.e., cannot be taken into account (thus Theod., after the Syro-Hex.), as if as much were present as is actually wanting; for, according to the proverb, "Where there is nothing, nothing further is to be counted."

⁶³⁵ Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 1:12–15.

⁶³⁶ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:13–18 (comment).

⁶³⁷ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:12–15.

⁶³⁸ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 112–15.

⁶³⁹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:15.

Crooked and lacking (Ecclesiastes 1:15) (various comentators)

Keil and Delitzsch then add: *But the preceding statement refers only to labour under the sun, and to philosophical research and observation directed thereto. This places before the eyes of the observer irregularities and wants, brings such irregularities and wants to his consciousness, - which are certainly partly brought about and destined by God, but for the most part are due to the transgressions of man himself, - and what avails the observer the discovery and investigation? - he has only lamentation over it, for with all his wisdom he can bring no help.*⁶⁴⁰

Brian Bell Commentary: *Remember however God can straighten the twisted & supply what's lacking. He won't change the past, but He can change the way the past affects us. Is your past an iceberg that sinks you, or an anchor that hinders you, or a rudder that guides you forward?*⁶⁴¹

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

The NIV Study Bible: *Because of the inalterableness of events, human effort is meaningless and hopeless. We should therefore learn to happily accept things the way they are and to accept our divinely appointed lot in life, as the Teacher later counsels.*⁶⁴²

Everett: *Man Cannot Remedy His Vanities - Since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, man has been trying to find a remedy for the ills of this planet Earth. What man lost in the Garden cannot be restored until the fullness of times. Man cannot prevent war, nor feed all of the poor, nor make life pleasant again. All of creation is out of order and it is beyond man's ability to set it back in order. Thus, our labours are in vain.*⁶⁴³

To provide some explanation for the above, *man cannot prevent all wars; man cannot feed all of the poor.* If we consider man apart from God, he is far worse at such enterprises than man with God.

Ron Snider's translation of Ecclesiastes 1:14–15 *I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind. What is crooked cannot be straightened, and what is lacking cannot be counted.*

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:14–15 (Ron Snider)

1. Solomon continues to describe his experiment and some pertinent observations about the nature of life as he had found it in this world.
2. It should be evident that he makes no claim to Divine revelation; Solomon simply sets his mind to the task as he perceived it (vs. 13), basing his conclusions on what he had personally studied or observed.
3. Solomon consistently speaks in universal terms as he begins to set forth the plight of humanity and the pervasive nature of the transient, vain, and futile course of man's existence.
4. When one examines the works of mankind over the centuries, it should be obvious that man's work certainly is characterized by the quality of transience.
5. Even if a man's works outlive him, they are subject to the ravages of time and decay, and will ultimately pass from the historical scene.
6. In one sense, all an investigator of the human condition can do is to evaluate history and consider that which man has produced from the fruit of his labor.
7. The often repeated phrase under the sun is possibly also designed to conjure up the image of men relentlessly working to accomplish their tasks during the heat of the day.
8. Solomon uses the interjection הִנֵּה (hinneh—behold, look) six times in this book to grab the reader's

⁶⁴⁰ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 1:15.

⁶⁴¹ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/cbb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 25, 2018.

⁶⁴² *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 986 (footnote).

⁶⁴³ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:14–15.

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:14–15 (Ron Snider)

- attention about some conclusion or observation he has seen.
9. The only time he directs it toward himself is when he has an inner dialogue at the end of this chapter. Eccles. 1:16
 10. This interjection is used to demand attention; normally, the attention is directed to what follows it.
 11. Having observed the endless cycles of nature, which parallel the human experience, (vs. 4-8), Solomon had become palpably weary of his investigations and the conclusions to which they had led him.
 12. As he considers the endless generations of men, their works, accomplishments, and achievements, he concludes in verse 14 that it is all simply a way for men to fill the time they have in life.
 13. The last phrase at the end of verse 14 has occasioned a good deal of discussion since the precise translation of the noun תוֹעֵר (re'uth—striving) has been debated.
 14. There are four possible translations that have been offered:
 - 1) To shepherd, to tend.
 - 2) To associate with, to be a companion.
 - 3) To strive.
 - 4) To desire.
 15. It makes little difference which option one chooses, and commentators are generally tentative about demanding that any one of the possibilities is the correct one.
 16. The term that follows is the noun רוּחַ (ruach—breath, wind, or spirit) should be understood in this context as referring to the wind.
 17. Whether one is chasing the wind, striving after the wind, or herding the wind makes no real difference; all these translations suggest that he is engaged in a fruitless endeavor.
 18. Verse 15 introduces a proverbial saying that is offered as documentation for the assertions that Solomon has just made.
 19. The reasons for identifying this as a proverb are its parallel structure, and the fact that the syntax of each parallel line is nearly identical.
 20. Both begin with a subject, followed by the same negated verb, and both end with an infinitive construct with a prefixed lammed.
 21. Other reasons for identifying this as a proverbial expression are that it is brief, precise, and it has a slightly enigmatic character that is designed to provoke thought.
 22. The proverb acknowledges that there are some things that are bent or crooked by nature and that man, with all his striving and work cannot change some fundamental things in this world.
 23. In Ecclesiastes, the word seems to be used in a physical sense of things that are bent or crooked (Eccles. 7:13, 12:3); in other places it is clearly used in a moral sense to refer to subverting the truth or justice. Job 8:3, 34:12
 24. In our book, Solomon acknowledges that things that are fundamentally bent are bent because God has bent them in the first place. Eccles. 7:13
 25. This is the first real clue that the younger Solomon understood God's involvement in this world, even if he could not figure out all God's intentions.
 26. Therefore, in spite of all efforts to pursue wisdom and understanding, one will find that they are straightening out none of the many crooked things they find.
 27. The second line is designed to parallel (synonymous parallelism) the first; this strengthens the argument that there are some things that simply are the way they are; man can do nothing about them.
 28. Both statements employ a Qal imperfect 3rd person singular verb, which interpreters have needlessly attempted to read as passives.
 29. The sense is that he is not able to straighten or count, with the unnamed subject referring to any man that attempts to alter the fundamental nature of things.
 30. This is simply another way of emphasizing that fallen man is powerless to effectively do much about certain aspects of the environment in which God has placed him.
 31. While the younger Solomon recognizes that God is the Creator, he also recognizes that there are some fundamental imperfections that one can observe on earth.
 32. This leads to tension and frustration when a man comes to the conclusion that he can do absolutely nothing about the created or uncreated flaws.

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:14–15 (Ron Snider)

33. One of the great frustrations of life is that no matter how hard man works, there are some things that he cannot set straight; either physically or morally.
34. Further, no matter how much one may figure out, there is information that is unavailable; this contributes to more tension and frustration with an imperfect world.
35. Both of these proverbs serve to demonstrate that what we find in the world falls short of anything that Solomon would consider an ideal state.
36. Solomon recognizes these imperfections, and cites this proverb to acknowledge that the world will always be an imperfect place.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (this will open as a Word document on your computer); accessed June 16, 2018.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Solomon's first experiment is the pursuit of human wisdom.

I spoke—[even] I—with my heart, to say, “I [even] I have made great and I have increased wisdom over all who were to my faces over Jerusalem.” And my heart has seen much wisdom and knowledge.

Ecclesiastes
1:16

I, even I, spoke with my heart, saying, “I, even I, have done great things and I have increased [in my] wisdom over all who were before me in Jerusalem.” My heart has seen much [by way of] wisdom and knowledge.

I said to myself, “I have done great things and I have increased in my wisdom over all who went before me.” My heart has learned much by way of wisdom and knowledge.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	I spoke—[even] I—with my heart, to say, “I [even] I have made great and I have increased wisdom over all who were to my faces over Jerusalem.” And my heart has seen much wisdom and knowledge.
Aramaic Targum	I spake with <u>the thoughts of</u> my heart, saying: I, behold! I have increased and multiplied wisdom above all <u>the wise</u> who were before me in Jerusalem, and my heart has seen much wisdom and knowledge;...
Revised Douay-Rheims	I have spoken in my heart, saying: Behold I am become great, and have gone beyond all in wisdom, that were before me in Jerusalem: and my mind has contemplated many things wisely, and I have learned.
Peshitta (Syriac)	I have communed with my own heart, saying, Lo, I have become great, and have gotten more wisdom than all they who were before me in Jerusalem; yea, my heart has <u>had great experience</u> of wisdom and knowledge.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	I spoke in my heart, saying, Behold, I am increased, and have acquired wisdom beyond all who were before me in Jerusalem: also I applied my heart to know wisdom and knowledge.

Significant differences: Additional verbiage in the targum. *To my faces* can legitimately be translated *before me*. The Syriac has *had great experience*; and the Hebrew has *has seen*.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Easy English	'I have become a really great man', I told myself. 'There have been other kings who have ruled in Jerusalem. But I am more wise than any of them', I thought.
God's Word™	The Spokesman Begins to Study Life
	I thought to myself, "I have grown wiser than anyone who has ruled Jerusalem before me. I've had a lot of experience with wisdom and knowledge."
Good News Bible (TEV)	I told myself, "I have become a great man, far wiser than anyone who ruled Jerusalem before me. I know what wisdom and knowledge really are."
<i>The Message</i>	I said to myself, "I know more and I'm wiser than anyone before me in Jerusalem. I've stockpiled wisdom and knowledge."
NIRV	I said to myself, "Look, I've now grown wiser than anyone who ruled over Jerusalem in the past. I have a lot of wisdom and knowledge."
New Simplified Bible	I said to my heart, »I have become great and have acquired more wisdom than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Yes, my heart has seen an abundance of wisdom and knowledge.«

Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	Speaking to myself I said, "Your effort was successful in that you expanded your wisdom far beyond that possessed by any who have ever ruled in Jerusalem. Your unlimited resources made it possible that you could examine heretofore unexplored areas of wisdom and knowledge."
Common English Bible	I said to myself, Look here, I have grown much wiser than any who ruled over Jerusalem before me. My mind has absorbed great wisdom and knowledge.
Contemporary English V.	I said to myself, "You are by far the wisest person who has ever lived in Jerusalem. You are eager to learn, and you have learned a lot."
The Living Bible	I said to myself, "Look, I am better educated than any of the kings before me in Jerusalem. I have greater wisdom and knowledge."
New Berkeley Version	I said to myself, "Look at me, how I have increased and added wisdom more than all who ruled Jerusalem before me, and my heart has observed an abundance of wisdom and knowledge."
New Century Version	I said to myself, "I have become very wise and am now wiser than anyone who ruled Jerusalem before me. I know what wisdom and knowledge really are."
New Life Version	I said to myself, "I have received more wisdom than all who were over Jerusalem before me. My mind has seen much wisdom and much learning."
New Living Translation	I said to myself, "Look, I am wiser than any of the kings who ruled in Jerusalem before me. I have greater wisdom and knowledge than any of them."
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	I said to myself, "I am wiser than any of those who ruled in Jerusalem before me. I am wiser and know more than any of them!"

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	Once I spoke in my heart and I said: 'Look how great I've become! For, I've been given more wisdom Than all who have lived before me!'
International Standard V	I told myself, "I have become greater and wiser than anyone who ruled before me in Jerusalem—yes, I have acquired a great deal of wisdom and knowledge."
New Advent (Knox) Bible	I at least (so I flattered myself) have risen above the rest; a king so wise never reigned at Jerusalem; ^[2] here is a mind has reflected much, and much learned. ^[2] The Hebrew text here seems to imply that king Solomon was wiser than anyone who had reigned before him at Jerusalem, whereas David was in fact his only (Israelite) predecessor. But we need not attach too much importance to a conventional turn of phrase; cf. III Kg. 14.9.

Translation for Translators I said to myself, “ Hey, I am wiser than any of the kings that ruled in Jerusalem before *I became the king*. I am wiser and I know more than any of them!”

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible	I am to have been the speaker from <i>the sensibility</i> of my heart, to the intent, "I have been made greatened and have been made increased in wisdom, turned before Jerusalem. <i>The sensibility</i> of my heart, has been made to consider wisdom and knowledge.
Christian Standard Bible	I said to myself, “See, I have amassed wisdom far beyond all those who were over Jerusalem before me, and my mind has thoroughly grasped wisdom and knowledge.”
Conservapedia	I searched within my own heart, and considered that I have amassed great wealth, and have gained wisdom beyond any who lived in Jerusalem before me: yes, my heart has experienced great wisdom and insight.
Ferrar-Fenton Bible	So I said to my heart,—and said to myself,———I have enlarged and extended science beyond all who were bet`ore mein jerusalem; and my mind has examined the result of Science, and Knowledge; I also gave my mind to the investigation of Science, and the investigation of Madness and Folly. I learnt that their pursuit was feeding on wind I Science is a great grief; and who- ever increases Knowledge increases sorrow! Vv. 17–18 are included for context.
Lexham English Bible	{I said to myself}, "Look! I have become great and have increased [in] wisdom more than anyone who {has preceded} me over Jerusalem. {I have acquired a great deal of wisdom and knowledge}."
Urim-Thummim Version	I communed with my own heart saying, lo, I am come to great estate and have obtained more Wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yes, my heart had great experience of Wisdom and knowledge.
Wikipedia Bible Project	I spoke to my own heart, saying: "Here have I grown and added to my knowledge, over everything which set before me over jerusalem, and my heart has seen much wisdom and knowledge.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (2013)	I thought to myself, "See, I have increased and promoted wisdom more than anyone who ruled Jerusalem before me and I have experienced to the full both wisdom and knowledge."
The Heritage Bible	I spoke with my own heart, saying, Lo, I have become great, and facing back have added more wisdom than all who have been in Jerusalem, and my heart had seen abundant wisdom and knowledge.
New American Bible (2002)	Though I said to myself, "Behold, I have become great and stored up wisdom beyond all who were before me in Jerusalem, and my mind has broad experience of wisdom and knowledge";...
New American Bible (2011)	Though I said to myself, “See, I have greatly increased my wisdom beyond all who were before me in Jerusalem, and my mind has broad experience of wisdom and knowledge,”... Eccl 2:9.
New Jerusalem Bible	I thought to myself: I have acquired a greater stock of wisdom than anyone before me in Jerusalem. I myself have mastered every kind of wisdom and science.
Revised English Bible–1989	I thought to myself, “I have amassed great wisdom, surpassing all my predecessors on the throne at Jerusalem; I have become familiar with wisdom and knowledge.”

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

The Complete Tanach	I spoke to myself, saying, "I acquired and increased great wisdom, more than all who were before me over Jerusalem"; and my heart saw much wisdom and knowledge.
	<p>I spoke to myself: Now that I have sunk from my greatness, I set my heart, saying, "Who would have said about me that I would come to such a state?"</p> <p>Look, I have acquired great wisdom, etc.:</p>
exeGesés companion Bible	I worded with my own heart, saying, I - behold, I greatened and increased more in wisdom than all at my face in Yeru Shalem; yes, my heart saw great wisdom and knowledge:...
JPS (Tanakh—1985)	I said to myself: "Here I have grown richer and wiser than any that ruled before me over Jerusalem, and my mind has zealously absorbed wisdom and learning."
Orthodox Jewish Bible	I communed with mine own lev, saying, Hinei, I am come to greatness, even greater chochmah than all they that have been before me over Yerushalayim; yea, my lev had great experience of chochmah and da'as.

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	I spoke with my heart, saying, "Behold, I have acquired great [human] wisdom and experience, more than all who were over Jerusalem before me; and my mind has observed a wealth of [moral] wisdom and [scientific] knowledge."
The Expanded Bible	I ·said to myself [·spoke with/to my heart], "I have ·become very wise and am now wiser than [surpassed in wisdom] anyone who ruled Jerusalem before me. I ·know what wisdom and knowledge really are [· have observed much wisdom and knowledge]."
Kretzmann's Commentary	I communed with mine own heart, in a careful contemplation or consideration of the difficulty presented, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, being possessed of incalculable wealth, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem, for the Lord had conferred upon Solomon a most extraordinary amount of wisdom, 2Chron. 1:12; yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge, he not only possessed a great measure of wisdom from the beginning, but he also grew in circumspection and caution from day to day and from year to year.
NET Bible®	<p><i>Futility of Secular Wisdom</i></p> <p>I thought to myself,⁶⁵</p> <p>"I have become much wiser⁶⁶ than any of my predecessors who ruled⁶⁷ over Jerusalem;</p> <p>I⁶⁹ have acquired much wisdom and knowledge."⁷⁰</p> <p>⁶⁵tn Heb "I spoke, I, with my heart."</p> <p>⁶⁶tn Heb "I, look, I have made great and increased wisdom."...</p> <p>⁶⁷tn The phrase "who ruled" does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.</p> <p>⁶⁹tn Heb "my heart" (לבִּי, libbi). The term "heart" is a metonymy of part for the whole ("my heart" = myself).</p> <p>⁷⁰tn Heb "My heart has seen much wisdom and knowledge."</p>
The Pulpit Commentary	Koheleth now arrives at his first conclusion, that wisdom is vanity. I communed with mine own heart. The expression suggests, as it were, an internal dialogue, as the Greek Venetian puts it, Διείλεγμαί ε'γώ ξὺν τη? καρδία μου (comp. Eccles. 2:1, Eccles. 2:15). Lo, I am come to great estate. If this be taken by itself, it makes Koheleth speak of his power and majesty first, and of his progress in wisdom afterwards; but it is best to connect it with what follows, and to confine the clause to one idea; thus: "I have obtained great and ever greater wisdom"—I have

continually added to my stores of knowledge and experience. **Than all they (above all) that have been before me in (over) Jerusalem.** Who are the rulers alluded to? Solomon himself was only the second of the Israelite kings who reigned there; of the Canaanite princes who may have made that their capital, we have no knowledge, nor is R likely that Solomon would compare himself with them. The Targum has altered the approved reading, and gives, "Above all the wise men that were in Jerusalem before me." The reading, "in [instead of 'over'] Jerusalem," has indeed some manuscript authority, and is confirmed by the Septuagint, Vulgate, and Syriac, but it is evidently a correction of the text by critics who saw the difficulty of the authorized wording. Motais and others assert that the preposition in the Masoretic text, לַע (all, often means "in," as well as "over," when the reference is to an elevated spot; e.g. Isa. 38:20; Hosea 11:11. But even granting this, we are still uncertain who are the persons meant. Commentators point to Melchizedek, Adonizedek, and Araunah among rulers, and to Ethan, Heman, Chalcol, and Darda (1Kings 4:31) among sages. But we know nothing of the wisdom of the former, and there is no tangible reason why the latter should be designated "before me in Jerusalem." Doubtless the words point to a succession of kings who had reigned in Jerusalem, and the writer, involuntarily, perhaps, betrays his assumed character, in relying on an excusable anachronism, while giving to the personated monarch a position which could not belong to the historical Solomon. **Yea, my heart had great experience of (hath seen abundantly, κατὰ πολὺ Venetian) wisdom and knowledge,** הִבְרָה used adverbially qualifies the word before it, "hath seen." The heart, as we have observed (verse 13), is considered the seat of the intellectual life. In saying that the heart hath seen wisdom, the writer means that his mind has taken it in, apprehended and appropriated it (comp. Eccles. 8:16; Job. 4:8). Wisdom and knowledge; chokmah and daath; σοφίαν καὶ γνῶσις, the former regarding the ethical and practical side, the latter the speculative, which leads to the other (comp. Isa. 33:6; Rom. 11:33).

Syndein/Thieme

I thought to myself . . . look . . . I have grown into more wisdom than anyone who has ruled Jerusalem before me. I have experienced much wisdom and much knowledge {human viewpoint knowledge - not divine viewpoint}.

The Voice

I mused over it all and thought to myself, "I have done great things, and I have gained more wisdom than anyone who reigned over Jerusalem before me. I have contemplated great wisdom and knowledge."

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Concordant Literal Version	I spoke with my heart, saying, Behold, I have grown great and have added in wisdom Over all who were before me in Jerusalem; My heart has seen much of wisdom and knowledge."
English Standard Version	I said in my heart, "I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge."
Green's Literal Translation	I spoke with my heart, saying, Lo, I have become great and have increased wisdom over all that have been over Jerusalem before me. Yea, my heart has seen much wisdom and knowledge.
New American Standard B.	I said to myself, "Behold, I have magnified and increased wisdom more than all who were over Jerusalem before me; and my mind has observed a wealth of wisdom and knowledge."
New King James Version	I communed with my heart, saying, "Look, I have attained greatness, and have gained more wisdom than all who were before me in Jerusalem. My heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge."

Webster's Bible Translation	I communed with my own heart, saying, Lo, I have come to great estate, and have gained more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: and my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.
World English Bible	I said to myself, "Behold, I have obtained for myself great wisdom above all who were before me in Jerusalem. Yes, my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge."
Young's Updated LT	—I spoke with my heart, saying, "I, lo, I have magnified and added wisdom above every one who has been before me at Jerusalem, and my heart has seen abundantly wisdom and knowledge.

The gist of this passage: Solomon claims that he has attained a greatness of wisdom more than any king in Jerusalem before him.

Ecclesiastes 1:16a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
dābar (דָּבַר) [pronounced daw ^b -VAHR]	<i>to speak, to talk [and back with action], to give an opinion, to expound, to make a formal speech, to speak out, to promise, to propose, to speak kindly of, to declare, to proclaim, to announce</i>	1 st person singular, Piel perfect	Strong's #1696 BDB #180
'ānîy (אֲנִי) [pronounced aw-NEE]	<i>I, me; in answer to a question, it means I am, it is I</i>	1 st person singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #589 BDB #58
'im (עִם) [pronounced geeem]	<i>with, at, by, near; like; from</i>	preposition of nearness and vicinity	Strong's #5973 BDB #767
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced lay ^b v]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking; midst</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #3820 BDB #524

Translation: *I, even I, spoke with my heart,...* Solomon gives himself a self-evaluation. Solomon began considering his situation, his own wisdom. He is considering the world and his own abilities.

His focus is upon himself; he looks *within* for truth. Bear in mind that, when you have been influenced by a thousand women, what you have inside of you might not resemble truth.

When you go to your heart (Psalm 4:4 77:6), it is important that you have ample and accurate resources there.

Dr. John Gill: *I communed with my own heart,.... That is, looked into it, examined it, and considered what a stock and fund of knowledge he had in it, after all his researches into it; what happiness accrued to him by it, and what judgment upon the whole was to be formed upon it; and he spoke within himself.*⁶⁴⁴

Dr. Bob Utley: *"I said to myself" This statement reflects the ego problem in the human search for wisdom and happiness.*⁶⁴⁵

⁶⁴⁴ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:16.

⁶⁴⁵ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:16–18.

Ecclesiastes 1:16b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i> ʰ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʾâmar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i>]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #559 BDB #55
ʾânîy (אֲנִי) [pronounced <i>aw-NEE</i>]	<i>I, me; in answer to a question, it means I am, it is I</i>	1 st person singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #589 BDB #58
hinnêh (הִנֵּה) [pronounced <i>hin-NAY</i>]	<i>lo, behold, or more freely, observe, look here, look, listen, note, take note, duly note [that]; pay attention, get this, check this out</i>	interjection, exclamatory particle, demonstrative particle	Strong's #2009 (and #518, 2006) BDB #243

This seems to attempt to take others and put them in the place of the person saying this (so that they see the same thing); or to grab the attention of the reader. From the many times I have seen this word used in a narrative, I believe that we may update the translation to, *he observed [that]; he saw; suddenly, unexpectedly, dramatically*. This goes along with the idea that this word is to cause us to see things from the viewpoint of someone in the narrative.

gâdal (גָּדַל) [pronounced <i>gaw-DAHL</i>]	<i>to make great, to cause to be lifted high, to magnify, to do great things (in a good or bad sense)</i>	1 st person singular, Hiphil perfect	Strong's #1431 BDB #152
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
yâçaph (יָצַף) [pronounced <i>yaw-SAPPH</i>]	<i>to add, to augment, to increase, to multiply; to add to do = to do again; to continue to</i>	1 st person singular, Hiphil perfect	Strong's #3254 BDB #414
châk ^e mâh (חָכְמָה) [pronounced <i>khawk^e-MAW</i>]	<i>wisdom [in all realms of life], doctrine in the soul; skill [in war]</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #2451 BDB #315

The NET Bible: *The expression הִגְדַּלְתִּי וַיְהוֹסַפְתִּי (higdalti vÿhosafti) is a verbal hendiadys; it means that Qoheleth had become the wisest man in the history of Jerusalem.*⁶⁴⁶

⁶⁴⁶ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 18, 2018.

Ecclesiastes 1:16b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
‘al (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over; on the ground of, because of, according to, on account of, on behalf of, with, by, besides, in addition to, to, toward, together with, in the matter of, concerning, as regards to</i>	preposition of relative proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i>]	<i>the whole, all, the entirety, every</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
’ăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i>]	<i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
Together, kôl ‘ăsher mean <i>all which, all whom, all that [which]; whomever, whatever, whatever else, all whose, all where, wherever.</i>			
hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i>]	<i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1961 BDB #224
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i> ʰ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
pânîym (פְּנֵי) [pronounced <i>paw-NEEM</i>]	<i>face, faces countenance; presence</i>	masculine plural noun (plural acts like English singular); with the 1 st person plural suffix	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Together, they mean <i>before us, before our faces, in our presence, in our sight, in front of us.</i>			
Literally, this would be translated <i>to faces of me, to my faces.</i> Together, these words mean <i>before me, before my face, in my presence, in my sight, in front of me; before me (in the sense of, before my time), prior to my being here.</i>			
‘al (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over; on the ground of, because of, according to, on account of, on behalf of, with, by, besides, in addition to, to, toward, together with, in the matter of, concerning, as regards to</i>	preposition of relative proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
Y ^e rûwshâlayim (יְרוּשָׁלַיִם) [pronounced <i>y'roo-shaw-LAH-yim</i>]	possibly means <i>founded upon peace</i> or <i>city of the Jebusites</i> (or both); it is transliterated <i>Jerusalem</i>	proper singular noun, location; pausal form	Strong's #3389 BDB #436

Translation: ...saying, “I, even I, have done great things and I have increased [in my] wisdom over all who were before me in Jerusalem.” In considering everything, Solomon knows of his own wisdom, and how much that he

knows; and how much wisdom that he has, more than anyone else in his realm. The key to all of this is, just what sort of wisdom is Solomon referring to?

J. Vernon McGee: *I believe that Solomon was led to a certain amount of arrogance, a certain amount of conceit, since he was wiser than the others. Paul writes that "Knowledge puffs up . . ." (1Cor. 8:1). It can inflate an individual like a balloon if he feels that he is a little smarter or better educated than those around him. Remember that education is based on experience, and experience cannot be trusted. Experience must be tested by the Word of God. Unfortunately, many folk today are testing the Word of God by their experience. My friend, if your experience is contrary to the Bible, then it is your experience, not the Word of God, which is wrong.*⁶⁴⁷

Ecclesiastes 1:16 I said to myself, "I have done great things and I have increased in my wisdom over all who went before me." My heart has learned much by way of wisdom and knowledge.

The accumulation of wisdom (Ecclesiastes 1:16) (various commentators)

Pastor John Griffith: *[Solomon] emphasize[s] the knowledge gained from all his experiences. Speaks of having done something - observed the results - and learned from it.*⁶⁴⁸

What Solomon has learned is, his search thus far has been unfruitful.

Dr. Peter Pett: *The Preacher had convinced himself that he had accumulated a wisdom and understanding above any who had been before him in Jerusalem, whether king, priest, wise man or prophet. He was convinced that he had great resources within himself of wisdom and knowledge, which had come through his meditation on truth as he saw it, and through his experience of life. None had quite achieved what he had achieved.*⁶⁴⁹

Benson: *[I] have added, more wisdom — As I had a large stock of wisdom infused into me by God, so I have greatly improved it by conversation, study, and experience; than all they that were before me — Whether governors, priests, or private persons. This was no vain boast, but a known and confessed truth, and the profession of it was necessary to demonstrate his assertion; in Jerusalem — Which was then the most eminent place in the world for wisdom and knowledge.*⁶⁵⁰

Dunagan: *It appears that here we find a sober reflection, almost a frustration. Here is a man who had outstripped all his forerunners and contemporaries in wisdom, and he knew it. And yet with all his wisdom and vast experience---he was failing to find meaning and happiness in this life.*⁶⁵¹

Matthew Poole: *More wisdom than all they that have been before me, whether governors, or priests, or private persons; which was no vain boast, but a known and confessed truth, and profession hereof was necessary to demonstrate his assertion.*⁶⁵²

Dr. Dan Hill: *Solomon, as declared by God, was the wisest man who has ever lived. Not only was he given a gift of wisdom but he was wise even a part from that gift. He had been taught well as a child and as a young man the value of wisdom. But now, seeking significance in his life and for his life, he turns to wisdom and gains even more. He called in the best teachers, the finest tutors, the most gifted scholars. After all, who could refuse the King? He gained a wealth of wisdom and knowledge.*⁶⁵³

⁶⁴⁷ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt accessed June 21, 2018 (slightly edited).

⁶⁴⁸ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_05.html accessed June 16, 2018.

⁶⁴⁹ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:16–18.

⁶⁵⁰ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:16–17.

⁶⁵¹ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:16.

⁶⁵² Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:16.

⁶⁵³ From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 11, 2018.

The accumulation of wisdom (Ecclesiastes 1:16) (various commentators)

Keith Krell: *Solomon's point in 1:16 is that he is the wisest man that has ever lived, yet he still couldn't find satisfaction in education and learning.*⁶⁵⁴

Solomon has collected human viewpoint wisdom.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Solomon has, by himself, come to this conclusion about himself.

Ecclesiastes 1:16 I, even I, spoke with my heart, saying, "I, even I, have done great things and I have increased [in my] wisdom over all who were before me in Jerusalem." My heart has seen much [by way of] wisdom and knowledge.

Over Jerusalem (Ecclesiastes 1:16) (various commentators)

Dr. John Gill: *and have gotten more wisdom than all they...that before me were over Jerusalem...; governors of it, or in it; not only than the Jebusites, but than Saul, the first king of Israel, or than even his father David; or,...than any princes, rulers, and civil magistrates in Jerusalem, in his own days or in the days of his father; and also than all the priests and prophets, as well as princes, that ever had been there: and indeed he was wiser than all men, 1Kings 4:30; and even than any that had been in Jerusalem, or any where else, or that should be hereafter, excepting the Messiah.*⁶⁵⁵

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *[N]amely, the priests, judges, and two kings that preceded Solomon. His wisdom exceeded that of all before Jesus Christ.*⁶⁵⁶

Keil and Delitzsch: *there must have been well-known great men with whom Solomon measures himself, and these could not be such dissimilarly great men as the Canaanitish kings to the time of Melchizedek; and since the Jebusites, even under Saul, were in possession of Zion, and Jerusalem was for the first time completely subdued by David (2Sam. 5:7, cf. Joshua 15:63).*⁶⁵⁷

Matthew Poole: *In Jerusalem; which was then the most eminent place in the world for wisdom and knowledge.*⁶⁵⁸

The Cambridge Bible: *Those who maintain the late origin of the book point to this apparent retrospect over a long series of predecessors as betraying, or possibly as intended to indicate, the pseudonymous authorship. The historical Solomon, it is said, had but one predecessor over Jerusalem. The inference is, however, scarcely conclusive. Even on the theory of personated authorship, the writer would scarcely have slipped into so glaring an anachronism, and the words admit of being referred, on either view, either to the line of unknown Jebusite rulers, including perhaps Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18), Adonizedek (Joshua 15:63; 2Sam. 5:7) and others, or to the sages "Ethan the Ezrahite and Heman and Chalcol and Darda the sons of Mahol," who are named in 1Kings 4:31, and who may, in some sense, as teachers and guides, have been "over" as well as "in" Jerusalem.*⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁴ From Bible.org, accessed June 23, 2018.

⁶⁵⁵ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:16.

⁶⁵⁶ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:16.

⁶⁵⁷ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 1:16–18.

⁶⁵⁸ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:16.

⁶⁵⁹ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:16.

Over Jerusalem (Ecclesiastes 1:16) (various commentators)

The Cambridge Bible also suggests that some manuscripts have *in* rather than *over*. The problem here is, it is easy to see how one might change *over* into *in*; but not vice versa. And given the dramatic difference between these prepositions in the Hebrew, no such error could have been accidentally made.

There are a variety of ways a person can be *over* Jerusalem; this was not a position that only a king could hold.

Uteley (and others) say⁶⁶⁰ that this is why Solomon could not historically fit as the author of Ecclesiastes (which opinion I take issue with). Regarding this approach, there is no surfeit of wisdom which follows after Solomon. There are a handful of good kings in the southern kingdom; but none of them are spoken of as having wisdom similar to Solomon's.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:16c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced <i>lay^bv</i>]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking; midst</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #3820 BDB #524
râ'âh (רָאָה) [pronounced <i>raw-AWH</i>]	<i>to see, to look, to look at, to view, to behold; to observe; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #7200 BDB #906
râbâh (רָבַח) [pronounced <i>raw^b-VAWH</i>]	<i>to make [do] much; to multiply, to increase; to give much; to lay much; to have much; to make great; many [as a Hiphil infinitive construct]</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #7235 BDB #915

When the Hiphil is followed by an infinitive and gerund—or by a finite verb—it can mean *much*.

The Hiphil infinitive absolute is often used as an adverb: *in doing much, very much, exceedingly great* (the latter two with the adverb *m^eôd*).

châk ^e mâh (חַכְמָה) [pronounced <i>khawk^e-MAW</i>]	<i>wisdom [in all realms of life], doctrine in the soul; skill [in war]</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #2451 BDB #315
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
da'ath (דַּעַת) [pronounced <i>DAH-ğahth</i>]	<i>knowledge, knowing; intelligence, understanding, wisdom</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #1847 BDB #395

⁶⁶⁰ Dr. Bob Uteley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:16.

Ecclesiastes 1:16c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
----------------------	-------------------------	------------------	--------------------------

James Rickard: *DAATH*, *דַּאֲת*...means, “knowledge, perception, skill, discernment, understanding.” This is *GNOSIS* doctrine turned into *EPIGNOSIS* doctrine in the right lobe of your soul.⁶⁶¹

Translation: My heart has seen much [by way of] wisdom and knowledge. Solomon has learned great divine wisdom; but it appears as if he has conflated his divine wisdom with human viewpoint wisdom at this point.

There is much *wisdom* out there in the world; and Solomon has accumulated this sort of wisdom. This is the sort of thing that people believe is wisdom, but it is not truth. Furthermore, nowhere in Ecclesiastes does Solomon associate his wisdom with the fear of the LORD, as he did in Prov. 1:7.

Ecclesiastes 1:16 I said to myself, “I have done great things and I have increased in my wisdom over all who went before me.” My heart has learned much by way of wisdom and knowledge.

Comparing and contrasting “wisdom and knowledge” (Ecclesiastes 1:16)

Matthew Poole: *Wisdom and knowledge*; two words signifying the same thing, as may be gathered from Eccles. 1:18, and from the promiscuous use of them in this book, and in the Proverbs, and elsewhere, and implying all manner of knowledge, Divine or human, speculative or practical, political or philosophical.⁶⁶²

The Cambridge Bible: The two nouns are related, like the Greek *σοφία* and *ἐπιστημὴ*, the former expressing the ethical, the latter the speculative, scientific side of knowledge.⁶⁶³

Keil and Delitzsch: In general, we may say that *chokma* is the fact of a powerful knowledge of the true and the right, and the property which arises out of this intellectual possession; but *dââth* is knowledge penetrating into the depth of the essence of things, by which wisdom is acquired and in which wisdom establishes itself.⁶⁶⁴

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Even though, this thinking is attributed to Solomon, what he is saying is very likely true—at least in terms of an accumulation of human wisdom and knowledge.

Dr. John Gill: *my heart...saw much wisdom and knowledge...; he thoroughly understood it, he was a complete master of it; it was not a superficial knowledge he had attained unto, or a few lessons of it he had committed to memory; some slight notions in his head, or scraps of things he had collected together, in an undigested manner; but he had made himself thoroughly acquainted with everything worthy to be known, and had digested it in his mind.*⁶⁶⁵

Kidner: *But he says nothing of its first principle, the fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7). And we can assume that the wisdom he speaks of is the best thinking that man can do on his own.... So Qoheleth is taking*

⁶⁶¹ From <http://gracedoctrine.org/proverbs-chapter-8-2/> accessed November 18, 2015.

⁶⁶² Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:16.

⁶⁶³ *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:16.

⁶⁶⁴ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 1:16–18.

⁶⁶⁵ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:16.

wisdom with proper seriousness, as a discipline concerned with ultimate questions, not simply a tool for getting things done.⁶⁶⁶

And so I gave my heart to know wisdom and to know madneses and folly; to know which also this: he is striving after wind; for in much wisdom [is] much provoking and he adds knowledge, he adds anguish.

Ecclesiastes
1:17–18

Therefore, I gave my heart to know wisdom, but [also] to know boastful foolishness and folly; [and] to know this is [just like] chasing after wind; for in much wisdom [is also] much frustration; and the one [who] adds [secular sophistry and human viewpoint] knowledge [also] adds sorrow.

Therefore, I studiously investigated secular wisdom; as well as arrogant human viewpoint thinking, which is foolishness and folly; but to know all of this is chasing after the wind; for in the acquisition of knowledge, there is also an acquisition of frustration; and the man who increases his secular knowledge also increases his sorrow.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)	And so I gave my heart to know wisdom and to know madneses and folly; to know which also this: he is striving after wind; for in much wisdom [is] much provoking and he adds knowledge, he adds anguish.
Aramaic Targum	...and I gave my heart to know wisdom, <u>and the fear of the Kingdom, and knowledge and discretion</u> , I know it by experience that even this is a breaking of the spirit <u>to the man who is employed to find them out</u> . Because a man who increases his knowledge when he <u>is guilty, and does not repent, increases the anger of God; and he who accumulates wisdom and dies in his youth</u> , increases the sadness of heart to his relations.
Revised Douay-Rheims	And I have given my heart to know prudence, and learning, and errors, and folly: and I have perceived that in these also <u>there was labour, and vexation of spirit</u> , Because In much wisdom there is much indignation: and he that adds knowledge, adds also labour.
Peshitta (Syriac)	And I gave my heart to know wisdom and <u>proverbs and understanding</u> ; but I have perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. Because in much wisdom there is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.
Updated Brenton (Greek)	And my heart knew <u>much</u> —wisdom, and knowledge, <u>parables and understanding</u> : I perceived that this also is <u>waywardness of spirit</u> . For in the abundance of wisdom is abundance of <u>knowledge</u> ; and he that increases knowledge will increase sorrow.

Significant differences:

The Hebrew says, *and I gave my heart to know*; but the Greek has, *and my heart knew much*. Instead of knowing *madness and folly* (as per the Hebrew), the targum has, *and the fear of the Kingdom, and knowledge and discretion*; the Syriac has *proverbs and understanding*, and the Greek has *parables and understanding*.

There are additional words in the targum and Latin. The Greek has *waywardness of spirit*, rather than *striving after wind*. Those are similar phrases.

At the end, the Greek has *knowledge* and the Hebrew has some more negative (*provoking*).

⁶⁶⁶ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:16.

Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Ecclesiastes 1:18 (GNT) (a graphic); from [Pinterest](#); accessed June 17, 2018.

Bible in Basic English

And I gave my heart to getting knowledge of wisdom, and of the ways of the foolish. And I saw that this again was desire for wind. Because in much wisdom is much grief, and increase of knowledge is increase of sorrow.

Easy English

I wanted to learn all that I could learn about wisdom. I also wanted to know how a fool thinks.

But this, too, was like somebody who tries to catch the wind.

If I learn to be very wise, I will be very sad.

If I learn a lot about many things, that will be very painful for me.

The Teacher is very honest. He does not say that life is good. He knows that it is not always good. Without God's wisdom, he cannot understand the things that happen on the earth.

Easy-to-Read Version—2006

I decided to learn how wisdom and knowledge are better than thinking foolish thoughts. But I learned that trying to become wise is like trying to catch the wind. With much wisdom comes frustration. The one who gains more wisdom also gains more sorrow.

God's Word™

I've used my mind to understand wisdom and knowledge as well as madness and stupidity. Now I know that this is like trying to catch the wind.

With a lot of wisdom comes a lot of heartache.

The greater your knowledge, the greater your pain.

Good News Bible (TEV)

I was determined to learn the difference between knowledge and foolishness, wisdom and madness. But I found out that I might as well be chasing the wind. The wiser you are, the more worries you have; the more you know, the more it hurts.

The Message

What I've finally concluded is that so-called wisdom and knowledge are mindless and witless—nothing but spitting into the wind.

Much learning earns you much trouble.

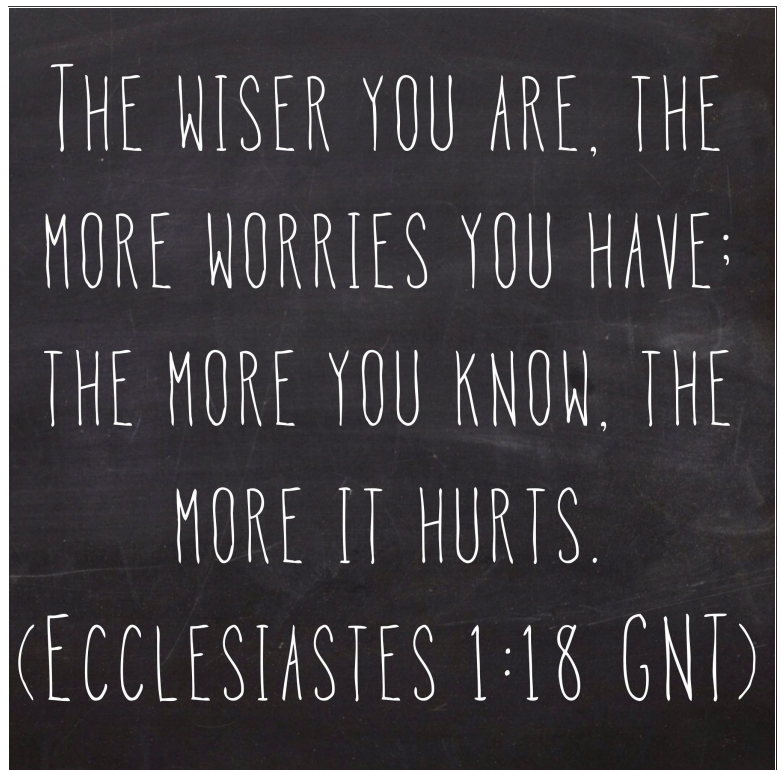
The more you know, the more you hurt.

NIRV

Then I used my mind to understand what it really means to be wise. And I wanted to know what foolish pleasure is all about. But I found out that it's also like chasing the wind.

A lot of human wisdom leads to a lot of sorrow.

More knowledge only brings more sadness.



Thought-for-thought translations; dynamic translations; paraphrases:

College Press Bible Study	Certainly it is no secret to myself that I explored every facet of life. I was determined to learn about the disorder of proper thoughts and subsequent consequences. I was determined to learn about evil and wickedness as they are entreated by others. Once again, I concluded that such knowledge is as satisfying as feasting on the wind! As I expanded my understanding of the various aspects of wisdom and knowledge, I discovered that my capacity to suffer grief and pain had also been increased. Not only is this true, but the increased information actually increased my sorrow.
Common English Bible	But when I set my mind to understand wisdom, and also to understand madness and folly, I realized that this too was just wind chasing. Remember: In much wisdom is much aggravation; the more knowledge, the more pain.
Contemporary English V.	Then I decided to find out all I could about wisdom and foolishness. Soon I realized that this too was as senseless as chasing the wind. The more you know, the more you hurt; the more you understand, the more you suffer.
The Living Bible	So I worked hard to be wise instead of foolish[c]—but now I realize that even this was like chasing the wind. For the more my wisdom, the more my grief; to increase knowledge only increases distress.
New Berkeley Version	I applied my heart to know wisdom and knowledge, madness and folly. I discovered that this, too, is chasing after wind. For in more wisdom is more vexation, and increasing one's knowledge increases one's distress.
New Century Version	So I decided to find out about wisdom and knowledge and also about foolish thinking, but this turned out to be like chasing the wind. With much wisdom comes much disappointment; the person who gains more knowledge also gains more sorrow.
New Life Version	And I set my mind to know wisdom and to know what is crazy and foolish. I saw that this also is like trying to catch the wind. Because in much wisdom there is much trouble. And he who gets much learning gets much sorrow.
New Living Translation	So I set out to learn everything from wisdom to madness and folly. But I learned firsthand that pursuing all this is like chasing the wind. The greater my wisdom, the greater my grief. To increase knowledge only increases sorrow.
Unlocked Dynamic Bible	So I determined to learn more about being wise, and also to learn about doing things that are very stupid and foolish. But I found out that trying to understand those things was also useless, like trying to control the wind. Anyone who becomes very wise also becomes very frustrated. The more one knows, the sadder he becomes.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible	And wisdom and knowledge, my heart then beheld, As well as higher learning and proverbs. It became the resolve of my spirit To gain an abundance of wisdom, Along with vast volumes of knowledge. But, those who gain knowledge also gain pain.
Beck's American Translation	I've studied to master wisdom as well as madness and foolishness. I'm convinced this also is like trying to catch the wind. If you have a lot of wisdom, you have a lot of irritation, and the more knowledge, the more grief you have.
International Standard V	So I dedicated myself to learn about wisdom and knowledge, and about insanity and foolishness. And I discovered that this is also like chasing after the wind. For with much wisdom there is much sorrow; the more someone adds to knowledge,

the more someone adds to grief.

New Advent (Knox) Bible	And therewith I applied my mind to a new study; what meant wisdom and learning, what meant ignorance and folly? And I found that this too was labour lost; much wisdom, much woe; who adds to learning, adds to the load we bear.
Translation for Translators	So I determined to learn <i>more</i> about being wise and to learn about knowing about many things, and <i>also</i> to learn about <i>doing things that are</i> very foolish [DOU]. But I found out that trying to understand those things was also <i>useless, like</i> chasing the wind. The wiser I became, the more disappointed I became. The more things I knew about, the sadder I became.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Alpha & Omega Bible	AND MY HEART KNEW MUCH; WISDOM, AND KNOWLEDGE, PARABLES AND UNDERSTANDING: I PERCEIVED THAT THIS ALSO IS WAYWARDNESS OF SPIRIT. FOR IN THE ABUNDANCE OF WISDOM IS ABUNDANCE OF KNOWLEDGE; AND HE THAT INCREASES KNOWLEDGE WILL INCREASE SORROW.
Awful Scroll Bible	(")I assert to give <i>the sensibility</i> of my heart to know wisdom, also to know bragging and langourousness." I am to have known this also is longing after wind, for in great amount of wisdom there is to be great amount of annoyance, even he set to keep to increase knowledge is set to keep to increase pain.
Conservapedia	I spent the passions of my heart on seeking wisdom and understanding madness and folly: I realize now that this is also a vexation of the spirit. I have found grief in my wisdom; as one's knowledge grows so does one's sorrow.
God's Truth (Tyndale)	I communed with mine own heart, saying: Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom, than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem. Yes, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge, for there unto I applied my mind: that I might know what were wisdom and understanding, what were error and foolishness. And I perceived that this also was but a vexation of mind: For where much wisdom is, there is also great travail and disquietness: and the more knowledge a man has, the more is his care. V. 16 is included for context.
Jubilee Bible 2000	And I gave my heart to know wisdom and knowledge and to know folly and <i>those who are</i> mad; I learned <i>in the end</i> that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increases knowledge increases sorrow.
Lexham English Bible	So {I dedicated myself} to learn about wisdom and [to] learn about delusion and folly. However, I discovered that this also [is] chasing wind. For in much wisdom [is] much frustration, and whoever increases knowledge increases sorrow.
Tree of Life Version	So I applied my heart to know wisdom as well as to know madness and folly. I learned that this too was pursuit of the wind. For with much wisdom comes much grief, and whoever keeps increasing knowledge, increases heartache.
Unlocked Literal Bible	So I applied my heart to know wisdom and also madness and folly. I came to understand that this also was an attempt to shepherd the wind. For in the abundance of wisdom there is much frustration, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.
Urim-Thummim Version	And I gave my heart to know Wisdom and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is a striving of mind. Because in much Wisdom is much grief: and he that increases knowledge increases sorrow.
Wikipedia Bible Project	And I gave my heart to knowing wisdom, and to know madness and foolishness, and I knew that this too is herding the wind. Because as wisdom grows, anger grows, and he who adds knowledge, adds pain.

Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (2013)	I set my heart on comparing wisdom with foolishness and stupidity, and I discovered that this also is chasing the wind. For the wiser you are, the more worries you have, and the more you learn, the more you suffer.
The Heritage Bible	And I gave my heart to know by seeing wisdom, and to know by seeing folly and stupidity; I knew by seeing that they also are a grasping of spirit, Because in abundant wisdom is abundant provocation, and he who adds knowledge adds sorrow.
New American Bible (2002)	...yet when I applied my mind to know wisdom and knowledge, madness and folly, I learned that this also is a chase after wind. For in much wisdom there is much sorrow, and he who stores up knowledge stores up grief.
New American Bible (2011)	Though I said to myself, "See, I have greatly increased my wisdom beyond all who were before me in Jerusalem, and my mind has broad experience of wisdom and knowledge," yet when I applied my mind to know wisdom and knowledge, madness and folly, I learned that this also is a chase after wind [Eccl 1:3; 8:16]. For in much wisdom there is much sorrow; whoever increases knowledge increases grief. V. 16 is included for context. Sorrow...grief: these terms refer not just to a store of knowledge or to psychological or emotional pain. Corporal punishment, sometimes quite harsh, was also employed frequently by parents and teachers.
New English Bible—1970	So I applied my mind to understand wisdom and knowledge, madness and folly, and I came to see that this too is chasing the wind, for in much wisdom is much vexation, and the more a man knows, the more he has to suffer.
New Jerusalem Bible	I have applied myself to understanding philosophy and science, stupidity and folly, and I now realise that all this too is chasing after the wind. Much wisdom, much grief; the more knowledge, the more sorrow.

Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible	I said to myself, "Look, I have acquired much wisdom, more than anyone ruling Yerushalayim before me." Yes, I experienced a great deal of wisdom and knowledge; yet when I applied myself to understanding wisdom and knowledge, as well as stupidity and folly, I came to see that this too was merely feeding on wind. For in much wisdom is much grief; the more knowledge, the more suffering. V. 16 is included for context.
The Complete Tanach	And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly; I know that this too is a frustration.

And I applied: my heart now to know the nature of wisdom, what its end is, and the nature of madness and folly.

madness: Heb. תוּלָלָה, dullness and confusion of thoughts, an expression of mixing, like (Isa. 1:22): "diluted (לוּחַמָּה) with water."

and folly: foolishness.

I know: now that also wisdom has frustration in it, for in great wisdom, a person relies on his great wisdom and does not distance himself from prohibition, and much vexation comes to the Holy One, blessed be He. I said, "I will acquire many horses, but I will not return the people to Egypt," but ultimately, I returned [them]. I said, "I will take many wives, but they will not turn my heart away," but it is written about me, (1 Kings 11:4): "his wives turned away his heart." And so he says, (Prov. 30:1): "The words of the man concerning, 'God is with me'; yea, God is with me, and I will be able."

For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge, increases pain.

exeGesés companion Bible	I gave my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly;
--------------------------	---

I perceived that this also is gnawing of spirit.
 For in abundant wisdom
 is abundant vexation;
 and he who increases knowledge
 increases sorrow.

- JPS (Tanakh—1985) And so I set my mind to appraise wisdom and to appraise madness and folly. And I learned—that this too was pursuit of wind:
 For as wisdom grows, vexation grows; To increase learning is to increase heartache.
- Orthodox Jewish Bible And I applied my lev to have da'as of chochmah, and to have da'as of holelot (madness) and sichlut (folly); I perceived that this also is striving after ruach (wind). For in much chochmah (wisdom) is much ka'as (grief, vexation); and he that increaseth da'as increaseth mach'ov (sorrow).

Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

- The Amplified Bible* And I set my mind to know [practical] wisdom and to discern [the character of] madness and folly [in which men seem to find satisfaction]; I realized that this too is a futile grasping and chasing after the wind. For in much [human] wisdom there is much displeasure *and* exasperation; increasing knowledge increases sorrow.
- The Expanded Bible So I decided to find out about [I gave my heart to understand] wisdom and knowledge and also about foolish thinking [madness and folly], but this turned out to be like chasing the wind.
 With much wisdom comes much disappointment [frustration];
 the person who gains more knowledge also gains more sorrow [pain].
- Keith Krell I said to myself, 'Behold, I have magnified and increased wisdom more than all who were over Jerusalem before me; and my mind has observed a wealth of wisdom and knowledge.' And I set my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly; I realized⁵¹ that this also is striving after wind. Because in much wisdom there is much grief, and increasing knowledge results in increasing pain. V. 16 is included for context.
⁵¹ The phrase "I realized" and its synonyms occur frequently in Ecclesiastes (cf. 1:13; 2:1, 3, 14, 15; 3:17, 18, 22; 7:25; 8:9, 16; 9:1).
- Kretzmann's Commentary And I gave my heart to know wisdom, on its positive side, and to know madness and folly, the error and foolishness of men, to estimate it properly; I perceived that this also, namely, the activity of striving after such knowledge, is vexation of spirit, a miserable and troublesome exertion.
 For in much wisdom is much grief, lack of knowledge or deliberate ignorance saving a person many a disagreeable meditation on the weakness and meanness of human nature; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow, for he will have an understanding of conditions as they actually exist, he will be able to judge things as they are, and the realities of this world, due to sin, are always disagreeable and vexatious. It takes much trust in the Lord to overcome the offense of this world.
- NET Bible® So I decided⁷¹ to discern the benefit of⁷² wisdom and knowledge over⁷³ foolish behavior and ideas;
 however, I concluded⁷⁵ that even⁷⁶ this endeavor⁷⁷ is like⁷⁸ trying to chase the wind!⁷⁹
 For with great wisdom comes⁸⁰ great frustration;
 whoever increases his⁸¹ knowledge merely⁸² increases his⁸³ heartache.
⁷¹tn Heb "gave my heart," or "set my mind." See v. 13.
⁷²tn The phrase "the benefit of" does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.
⁷³tn The word "over" does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

^{75tn} Heb "I know."

^{76tn} The term גַּם (gam, "even") is a particle of association and emphasis (HALOT 195 s.v. גַּם).

^{77tn} This term does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

^{78tn} This term does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

^{79tn} Heb "striving of wind."

^{80tn} This term does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

^{81tn} This term does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

^{82tn} This term does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

^{83tn} This term does not appear in the Hebrew text, but is supplied in the translation for clarity.

The Pulpit Commentary

And I gave my heart. He reiterates the expression in order to emphasize his earnestness and energy in the pursuit of wisdom. And knowing, as St. Jerome says, that "contrariis contraria intelliguntur," he studies the opposite of wisdom, and learns the truth by contrasting it with error. **And to know madness and folly** (Eccles. 2:12). The former word, holeloth (intensive plural), by its etymology points to a confusion of thought, i.e. an unwisdom which deranges all ideas of order and propriety; and folly (here sikluth), throughout the sapiential books, is identified with vice and wickedness, the contradictory of practical godliness. The LXX. has παραβολὰς καὶ ἐπιστήμην, "parables and knowledge," and some editors have altered the Hebrew text in accordance with this version, which they consider more suitable to the context. But Koheleth's standpoint is quite consistent. To use the words of St. Jerome in his 'Commentary,' "AEqualis studii fuit Salomoni, scire sapientiam et scientiam, et e regione errores et stultitiam, ut in aliis appetendis et aliis declinandis vera ejus sapientia probaretur." On the other hand, Den-Sirs gives a much-needed warning against touching pitch (Ecclesiasticus 13:1), and argues expressly that "the knowledge of wickedness is not wisdom" (Ecclesiasticus 19:22). Plumptre unnecessarily sees in the use of the term "madness" an echo of the teaching of the Stoics, who regarded men's weaknesses as forms of insanity. The moralist had no need to travel beyond his own experience in order to learn that sin was the acme of unwisdom, a declension from reason which might well be called madness... Thus far we have had Koheleth's secret thoughts—what he communed with his own heart (Eccles. 1:16). The result of his studies was most unsatisfying **I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit;** or, a striving after wind, as Eccles. 1:14 Though the word is somewhat different. As such labor is wasted, for man cannot control issues.

For in much wisdom is much grief. The more one knows of men's lives, the deeper insight one obtains of their actions and circumstances, the greater is the cause of grief at the incomplete and unsatisfactory nature of all human affairs. **He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow;** not in others, but in himself. With added experience and more minute examination, the wise man becomes more conscious of his own ignorance and impotence, of the unsympathizing and uncontrollable course of nature, of the gigantic evils which he is powerless to remedy; this causes his sorrowful confession (Eccles. 1:17). St. Gregory, taking the religious view of the passage, comments, "The more a man begins to know what he has lost the more he begins to bewail the sentence of his corruption, which he has met with" ('Moral.,' 18.65); and, "He that already knows the high state which he does not as yet enjoy is the more grieved for the low condition in which he is yet held" (ibid; 1.34). The statement in our text is paralleled in Ecclesiasticus 21:12, "There is a

Syndein/Thieme	wisdom which multiplieth bitterness," and contrasted in Wis. 8:16 with the comfort and pleasure which true wisdom brings. Then I applied myself to understanding academics also madness and folly. {RBT says this refers to psychology and psychiatric}. But I learned that this too is chasing after the wind. {Solomon's conclusion on Experiment number 1 - Happiness through Academics in Cosmic System} For with much academics comes much sorrow. The more knowledge . . . the more grief {human viewpoint thinking - exclusive of study of the Word will be explained later}.
The Voice	I decided to study wisdom and <i>instead acquainted myself with</i> madness and folly. It, too, seemed like trying to pursue the wind, for as my wisdom increased, so did my vexation. As <i>my</i> knowledge grew, so did my pain.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Charles Thompson OT	And my mind hath taken a view of many things; of wisdom and knowledge; of parables and science. I have found by experience that this also is indeed vexation of spirit. Because by much wisdom there is much knowledge; and he who addeth to his knowledge will add to his sorrow;
Concordant Literal Version	Then I applied my heart to know wisdom, As well as to know about raving and frivolity; I realize that even this, it is a grazing on wind." For in much wisdom is much vexation, And he who adds knowledge adds pain."
Context Group Version	And I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and senseless shame: I perceived that this also was a striving after wind. For in much wisdom is much grief; and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.
Modern English Version	And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know the folly of ideas and to know foolish behavior, and I know that this as well is like chasing the wind. For in an abundance of wisdom is an abundance of frustration, and he who increases in knowledge also increases in sorrow.
New American Standard B.	And I set my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly; I realized that this also is striving after wind. Because in much wisdom there is much grief, and increasing knowledge <i>results in</i> increasing pain.
New King James Version	And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind. For in much wisdom <i>is</i> much grief, And he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.
Young's Updated LT	And I give my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I have known that even this is vexation of spirit; for, in abundance of wisdom is abundance of sadness, and he who adds knowledge adds pain."

The gist of this passage: Solomon gave himself over to know wisdom, as well as madness and folly. But all of that was like chasing the wind; and with all this knowledge came sorrow.

17-18

Ecclesiastes 1:17a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced <i>wah</i>]	<i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>	wâw consecutive	No Strong's # BDB #253
nâthan (נָתַן) [pronounced <i>naw-THAHN</i>]	<i>to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set; to make</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5414 BDB #678

Ecclesiastes 1:17a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced lay ^b v]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking; midst</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #3820 BDB #524
Hubbard: 'Heart' points to the combined use of mind and will in the quest for knowledge. Biblical Hebrew has no specific words for mind or brain. Thinking and understanding and deciding are all done by the 'heart.' ⁶⁶⁷			
NASB, NRSV	"I applied my mind"		
NKJV	"I set my heart"		
TEV	"I was determined"		
NJB	"I have applied myself"		
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ^e]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
yâda ^c (יָדָע) [pronounced yaw-DAHĠ]	<i>to know, to perceive, to acquire knowledge, to become acquainted with, to know by experience, to have a knowledge of something; to see; to learn; to recognize [admit, acknowledge, confess]</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #3045 BDB #393
châk ^e mâh (חָכְמָה) [pronounced khawk ^e -MAW]	<i>wisdom [in all realms of life], doctrine in the soul; skill [in war]</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #2451 BDB #315

Translation: *Therefore, I gave my heart to know wisdom...* Solomon originally studied divine wisdom; but he also put his mind to understand madness and folly. The *wisdom* here is human viewpoint or perhaps this is the philosophies of the east.

Ecclesiastes 1:17–18 *Therefore, I studiously investigated secular wisdom; as well as arrogant human viewpoint thinking, which is foolishness and folly; but to know all of this is chasing after the wind; for in the acquisition of knowledge, there is also an acquisition of frustration; and the man who increases his secular knowledge also increases his sorrow.*

"I gave my heart to know wisdom" (Ecclesiastes 1:17a) (various commentators)

Guzik on *I gave my heart*: *This is natural for anyone who looks for the answers under the sun, apart from an eternal perspective. They look inward for wisdom and answers, instead of to the God who rules eternity.*⁶⁶⁸

Benson: *I gave my heart to know wisdom, &c.* — *That I might thoroughly understand the nature and difference of truth, and error, of virtue and vice.*⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁷ Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:16–18.

⁶⁶⁸ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:16–18.

⁶⁶⁹ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:16–17.

“I gave my heart to know wisdom” (Ecclesiastes 1:17a) (various commentators)

Keil and Delitzsch: *[H]e bears evidence to himself as to the end which, thus equipped with wisdom and knowledge, he gave his heart to attain unto (cf. 13a), i.e., toward which he directed the concentration of his intellectual strength.*⁶⁷⁰

Dr. John Gill: *And I gave my heart to know wisdom,....Which is repeated, for the confirmation of it, from Eccles. 1:13, and that it might be taken notice of how assiduous and diligent he had been in acquiring it; a circumstance not to be overlooked.*⁶⁷¹

Dunagan: *"to know wisdom"-Like many people, Solomon first tried to find meaning in intellectual pursuits. Will stimulation of the mind, learning, acquiring knowledge bring happiness? And when Solomon says, "I set my mind", he is saying, "I threw myself into this endeavor"*⁶⁷²

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge suggests: Eccles. 1:13 2:3, 12 7:23–25.⁶⁷³

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Ecclesiastes 1:17b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wāw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lāmed (ל) [pronounced <i>leh</i>]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
yāda' (יָדָעַ) [pronounced <i>yaw-DAHG</i>]	<i>to know, to perceive, to acquire knowledge, to become acquainted with, to know by experience, to have a knowledge of something; to see; to learn; to recognize [admit, acknowledge, confess]</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #3045 BDB #393
hōlêlāh (הִלְלוּ) [pronounced <i>hō-lay-LAW</i>]	<i>madness, folly</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #1947 BDB #239

This word is only found in Ecclesiastes and comes from the verb *hālal* (לָלַח) [pronounced *haw-LAHL*], which means, *to shine, to give light; to be clear, to be brilliant; to be boastful, to praise; to be foolish*. Strong's #1984 BDB #237. I believe that this definition is given primarily based upon the other thing (word) that Solomon studies.

I have no idea about the plural as versus the singular.

⁶⁷⁰ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 1:17.

⁶⁷¹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:17.

⁶⁷² Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:17.

⁶⁷³ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 1:17.

Ecclesiastes 1:17b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
The Cambridge Bible: <i>Some critics, indeed (e.g. Ginsburg), think that the present text originated in an error of transcription and that we ought to read "to know wisdom and knowledge."</i> ⁶⁷⁴ This does not explain both words which follow <i>wisdom</i> .			
E. W. Bullinger: <i>[Madness is] the opposite of wisdom, as displayed in the loss of self-control; raving with self-conceit. So elsewhere in this book.</i> ⁶⁷⁵ The problem is, this word is not found elsewhere in this book.			
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
sik ^e luwth (תולכש) [pronounced sihk-LOOTH]	folly, silliness, foolishness	feminine singular noun	Strong's #5531 BDB #698

Also spelled çik^eluwth (תולכס) [pronounced sihk-LOOTH]. The verb it comes from means *to be foolish, to be a fool*. This noun is only found here in Ecclesiastes.

Translation: ...but [also] to know boastful foolishness and folly;... Note the information about the word generally translated *madness*. The word is only found here, and it comes from a verb which means, *to shine, to give light; to be clear, to be brilliant; to be boastful, to praise; to be foolish*. Strong's #1984 BDB #237. This is stuff which may seem brilliant and filled with light to the unbeliever; but it is not truth. I suspect that it receives the translation that it does simply by being associated with the word *folly*.

Ecclesiastes 1:17 Therefore, I studiously investigated secular wisdom; as well as arrogant human viewpoint thinking, which is foolishness and folly; but to know all of this is chasing after the wind;...

Alternative translations to "madness and folly" (Ecclesiastes 1:17b) (a discussion)

Clarke: "Parables and science." - Septuagint. So the Syriac; nearly so the Arabic.

Clarke continues: "What were error and foolishness." - Coverdale. Perhaps gayety and sobriety may be the better meaning for these two difficult words. I can scarcely think they are taken in that bad sense in which our translation exhibits them. "I tried pleasure in all its forms; and sobriety and self-abnegation to their utmost extent." Chohemoth paraphrases, "Even fools and madmen taught me rules."⁶⁷⁶

The NET Bible: The terms תולכש (sikhlut, "folly") and תוללוה (holelot, "foolishness") are synonyms. The term תולכש (alternate spelling of תולכס, sikhlut) refers to foolish behavior (HALOT 755 s.v. תולכס), while תוללוה refers to foolish ideas and mental blindness (HALOT 242 s.v. תוללוה). Qoheleth uses these terms to refer to foolish ideas and self-indulgent pleasures (e.g., Eccl 2:2-3, 12-14; 7:25; 9:3; 10:1, 6, 13).⁶⁷⁷

The Geneva Bible: That is, [these are] vain things, which served to pleasure, in which was no convenience, but grief and trouble of conscience.⁶⁷⁸

⁶⁷⁴ The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:17.

⁶⁷⁵ E. W. Bullinger, Companion Bible Notes; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:17.

⁶⁷⁶ Adam Clarke, Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:17.

⁶⁷⁷ From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?ecc1.htm> (footnote); accessed May 18, 2018.

⁶⁷⁸ Geneva Bible Translation Notes; courtesy of e-sword; 1599; Eccles. 1:17.

Alternative translations to “madness and folly” (Ecclesiastes 1:17b) (a discussion)

John W. Ritenbaugh: *When he writes in verse 17 that he set his heart "to know madness and folly," he means that he will search for answers by exploring the opposites of wisdom so that, he hopes, the contrast might reveal a deeper, clearer understanding of wisdom. The Hebrew term translated as "madness" is somewhat misleading because it is closer in meaning to "recklessness," indicating error in thinking. It is not the type of recklessness that would bring bodily injury, but it could mislead his search for factual truths.*⁶⁷⁹

Matthew Poole: *I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly, that I might thoroughly understand the nature and difference of truth and error, of virtue and vice, all things being best understood by contraries, and might discern if there were any opinion or practice amongst men which would give him full satisfaction.*⁶⁸⁰

Kidner: *[I]n Scripture both 'madness' and 'folly' imply moral perversity rather than mental oddity.*⁶⁸¹

However, we have no other illustration of this in Scripture.

It is logical for *madness and folly* to be in parallel with *wisdom and knowledge*.

This is how Gill understands these words: *and to know madness and folly: that he might the better know wisdom, and learn the difference between the one and the other, since opposites illustrate each other; and that he might shun madness and folly, and the ways thereof, and expose the actions of mad and foolish men.*⁶⁸²

Plato: *[I]gnorance is a disease, of which there are two kinds, madness and folly.*⁶⁸³

Dr. John Gill: *The Targum, Septuagint, and all the Oriental versions, interpret the last word, translated "folly", by understanding, knowledge, and prudence; which seems to be right, since Solomon speaks of nothing afterwards, as vexation and grief to him, but wisdom and knowledge: and I would therefore read the clause in connection with the preceding, thus, "and the knowledge of things boasted of", vain glorious knowledge; "and prudence", or what may be called craftiness and cunning; or what the apostle calls "science falsely so called", 1Tim. 6:20; see Prov. 12:8.*⁶⁸⁴

Obviously, Gill presents a different point of view here.

Whatever those two words are, I believe that they focus in on the human viewpoint approach to life.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

The first word is difficult to clearly know; the second is not. As I pointed out in the Hebrew exegesis, the meaning of the first word is probably based upon the meaning of the second.

Ecclesiastes 1:17 [Therefore, I studiously investigated secular wisdom; as well as arrogant human viewpoint thinking, which is foolishness and folly; but to know all of this is chasing after the wind;...](#)

⁶⁷⁹ From [Bible tools](#) accessed June 18, 2018.

⁶⁸⁰ Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:17.

⁶⁸¹ Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:16–18.

⁶⁸² Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:17.

⁶⁸³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:17.

⁶⁸⁴ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:17.

To know madness and folly (Ecclesiastes 1:17) (various commentators)

Dunagan: "*madness and folly*"-Solomon then explored the world of the irrational. I think many of us tried this during some period in our life. We thought, "Maybe the real truth is found in contradictions or irrational statements. Maybe the truth isn't supposed to make any sense!"⁶⁸⁵

Kidner: *It is a deliberate flight from rationality, to get at some secret of life to which reason (or conventional thinking) may be blocking the way.....Here we are brought very near to our own times with their cult of the irrational in its various forms, from romanticism down to the addict's craving for strange states of consciousness; and down still further into the nihilism which cultivates the ugly, the obscene and the absurd.*⁶⁸⁶

J. Vernon McGee: "*To know madness and folly*" — it is interesting that wisdom and playing the fool are not very far apart. Many smart men in the history of the world have played the fool. Solomon is the notable example of that. King James of England, the one for whom our King James Version of the Bible is named, certainly was not capable of translating. He was called James the fool, because that's what he was, although he thought he was a very smart individual.

McGee continues: *Our nation has produced a generation that thinks it is very intelligent and very smart. Yet we cannot even solve the problems that are about us, much less the problems of the world. Solomon gave his heart to know wisdom and also to know madness and folly. He did both.*⁶⁸⁷

Barnes on the benefit of knowing madness and folly: *A knowledge of folly would help him to discern wisdom, and to exercise that chief function of practical wisdom - to avoid folly.*⁶⁸⁸

The problem with interpreting this is, we are not fully convinced of the word *madness*.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

David Guzik: *Solomon was internationally famous for his great wisdom. If the answers to seeming emptiness of life could be found by wisdom [apart from the revealed thinking of God], Solomon was the one find them...With the unique ability to make such a search, Solomon looked for the answers in wisdom — by which he meant human wisdom that excluded answers in the light of eternity.*

Guzik continues: *This is the wisdom of those who guide us to a better life in the here-and-now; how to live a healthier, happier, more prosperous life. This wisdom certainly has value, and many lives would be better for following it. Yet if it excludes a true appreciation of eternity and our responsibilities in the world to come, this wisdom has no true answer to the meaninglessness of life. It only shows us how to live our meaningless lives better.*⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁵ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:17.

⁶⁸⁶ Mark Dunagan, Commentary on selected text; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:17.

⁶⁸⁷ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt accessed June 21, 2018.

⁶⁸⁸ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:17.

⁶⁸⁹ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:12–15.

Ecclesiastes 1:17c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yâda' (יָדָעַ) [pronounced yaw-DAHG]	<i>to know, to perceive, to acquire knowledge, to become acquainted with, to know by experience, to have a knowledge of something; to see; to learn; to recognize [admit, acknowledge, confess]</i>	1 st person singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3045 BDB #393
she- (שֶׁ) [pronounced sheh]	<i>who, which, that</i>	relative particle	Strong's #7945 (from #834) BDB #979
gam (גַּם) [pronounced gahm]	<i>also, furthermore, in addition to, even, moreover</i>	adverb	Strong's #1571 BDB #168
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced zeh]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	masculine singular demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
hûw' (אוּהוּ) [pronounced hoo]	<i>he, it; him, himself as a demonstrative pronoun: that, this (one); same</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> , is implied	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
r ^e cuwth (תוֹעֵר) [pronounced reh-GOOTH]	<i>longing, striving; grasping after; chasing after; a vexation</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #7469 BDB #946
rûwach (רוּחַ) [pronounced ROO-ahkh]	<i>wind, breath, spirit, apparition</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #7307 BDB #924
NASB	"striving after the wind"		
NKJV	"grasping for the wind"		
NRSV, NJB	"chasing after wind"		
TEV	"chasing the wind"		

Dr. Bob Utley: *From Eccles. 1:14 it is obvious that "vanity"...and "wind"...are synonymous/parallel.*⁶⁹⁰

Translation: ...[and] to know this is [just like] chasing after wind;... But all of this human viewpoint knowledge was like chasing the wind. It is like trying to grab onto the wind. Obviously, this is futile; there is no profit in it.

A personal story: when I was in college, I eventually majored in mathematics. This was before I became a Christian and began to learn Bible doctrine. Because of the structure, design and beauty of mathematics, there were times when I believed that I could actually be on the pursuit of real truth. It all seemed as if it were leading somewhere. I will never regret that particular choice of majors, or the work which I engaged in in order to get a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics; but, this was human knowledge, human wisdom; and it was all chasing after the wind.

⁶⁹⁰ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:17.

Ecclesiastes 1:17–18 Therefore, I studiously investigated secular wisdom; as well as arrogant human viewpoint thinking, which is foolishness and folly; but to know all of this is chasing after the wind; for in the acquisition of knowledge, there is also an acquisition of frustration; and the man who increases his secular knowledge also increases his sorrow.

Solomon's conclusion at to what he had achieved (Eccles. 1:17) (commentators)

David Guzik: *Yet this kind of under-the-sun wisdom can't answer the vanity and meaninglessness of life...All man's work, accomplishment, and searching for wisdom seems to amount to nothing.*⁶⁹¹

Eaton: *All that is done under heaven shows that the total resources of a limited world-view are the object of study; the vertical aspect is not yet in view.*⁶⁹²

Guzik: *The repeated and intensified search for wisdom [apart from God's revelation] brought no ultimate meaning. The solution wasn't to think harder and search better; it was all grasping for the wind.*⁶⁹³

Keil and Delitzsch: *[Solomon] proves to himself that nothing showed itself to be real, i.e., firm and enduring, unimpeachable and imperishable.*⁶⁹⁴

Morgan G. Campbell explains the basis for Solomon's conclusions: *The discourse proceeded to state the grounds on which such conclusions have been reached. They are twofold. First, the actual experiences of the king; and, second, the widespread observation of other men and of matters in general. Commencing with his own experience, he states first the vanity of knowledge, of mirth, of wealth. As to knowledge, he had applied his heart to seek and search out all the works done under the sun, and had come to the conclusion that they were all vanity, and that knowledge of them was grief. Knowledge unilluminated by spiritual consciousness is utterly unsatisfactory.*⁶⁹⁵

Dr. Bob Utley: *This theme of sincere, dedicated, aggressive human effort (cf. Eccles. 1:13; Eccles. 1:17; Eccles. 8:9; Eccles. 8:16) is not enough to find wisdom or purpose in an ever-changing, yet always the same, physical creation.*⁶⁹⁶

Dr. Peter Pett: *But when he then applied himself to examine all that was to be known, whether it was wisdom, or what others thought was wisdom (but turned out to be madness and folly, frivolous knowledge), it was in vain. He had left nothing uninvestigated, however foolish it had seemed. But all his searching out of man's supposed knowledge, whether wise or foolish, had achieved nothing. He had come to the conclusion that the search for ultimate wisdom, for an ultimate reality, was the searching out of something that could not be comprehended or grasped. It was like searching for the wind.*⁶⁹⁷

Dunagan: *"I realized also"-at least Solomon was honest. The world is filled with people that never wake up and realize that their pursuit has failed and they have reached the end of the line. Some people stubbornly cling to things which have never really brought them any enjoyment. Solomon was honest enough to realize, "This isn't it"*⁶⁹⁸

Solomon's search for meaning, happiness, joy and contentment was ill-fated apart from the Word of God.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

⁶⁹¹ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:12–15 (slightly edited).

⁶⁹² David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:12–15.

⁶⁹³ David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:16–18.

⁶⁹⁴ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 1:17.

⁶⁹⁵ Morgan G Campbell, *Exposition on Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–18.

⁶⁹⁶ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright ©2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:17.

⁶⁹⁷ Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:16–18.

⁶⁹⁸ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:17.

Ecclesiastes 1:17–18 Therefore, I studiously investigated secular wisdom; as well as arrogant human viewpoint thinking, which is foolishness and folly; but to know all of this is chasing after the wind; for in the acquisition of knowledge, there is also an acquisition of frustration; and the man who increases his secular knowledge also increases his sorrow.

What Solomon has learned (Dr. Dan Hill)

1. The more he learned the more reason he had for grief and sorrow. Ignorance, is bliss. But knowledge can be a heavy burden.
(Remember, we speak as Solomon did, on the level of the secular not the spiritual).
2. The more he learned the clearer he could think, and the clearer he could think the more he saw madness and folly.
3. The more he learned the more clearly he saw how easily the things of life could go wrong.
4. The more he learned the more he saw that nothing is permanent.
5. The more he learned the more he learned how little he knew.
We often discover whole areas of thought to which we have not even given a single thought. We know nothing of these things and may never will.
6. The more he learned the more he realized that knowledge is limited.
7. The more he learned the more he saw his inability to control the future.
8. The more he learned the more he saw how easily we can make mistake after mistake.
More knowledge does not lead to more enlightenment! We live in a time of knowledge explosion, and yet mankind is still involved in evil, and murder, and genocide, and holocaust. One rather cynical critic of our times has stated: "Modern technology has only served to make us more efficient in our cruelty."

From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 11, 2018.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Everett: *In Eccles. 1:17 we see the two men of the book of Proverbs, which are always contrasted. We see the wise man and the fool. Throughout the book of Proverbs, these two characters are compared and evaluated, wisdom and folly, the wise and the fool. This verse testifies to the fact that the same author wrote both Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.*⁶⁹⁹

Although in most of the Bible, there is a clear delineation between knowledge and wisdom, that does not appear to be the case in this portion of Ecclesiastes. What follows in Eccles. 1:18 appears to be a pair of identical thoughts, one using the word *wisdom*, the other using the word *knowledge*.

Ecclesiastes 1:18a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	No Strong's # BDB #88
rôb (רַב) [pronounced roh ^b v]	<i>multitude, much, abundance, greatness; plenty</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #7230 BDB #913

⁶⁹⁹ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:17.

Ecclesiastes 1:18a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
châk ^e mâh (חָכְמָה) [pronounced <i>khawk^e-MAW</i>]	<i>wisdom [in all realms of life], doctrine in the soul; skill [in war]</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #2451 BDB #315
rôb (רַב) [pronounced <i>roh^bv</i>]	<i>multitude, much, abundance, greatness; plenty</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #7230 BDB #913
ka'âç (כַּאֲצַח) [pronounced <i>KAH-âhahs</i>]	<i>provoking, taunting, provoked anger, a taunting provocation, highly emotional state which has been provoked; frustration</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3708 BDB #495

Translation: ...for in much wisdom [is also] much frustration;... As Solomon learned more—and let me suggest that this was not strictly Bible doctrine, but all forms of knowledge available to him—that he became frustrated and emotional. Perhaps because this information was so subjective, in his view, and so contradictory.

In college, I was taking philosophy and psychology courses, and I had trouble investing myself in them, because they seemed so arbitrary and contradictory. I was young then and expected some real answers in those realms; and did not find any. This was, in part, what caused me to focus on mathematics.

Ecclesiastes 1:17–18 Therefore, I studiously investigated secular wisdom; as well as arrogant human viewpoint thinking, which is foolishness and folly; but to know all of this is chasing after the wind; for in the acquisition of knowledge, there is also an acquisition of frustration; and the man who increases his secular knowledge also increases his sorrow.

“In much wisdom is much frustration” (Ecclesiastes 1:18a) (many commentators)

J. Vernon McGee: *Joy and satisfaction do not increase in ratio to the increase of knowledge. Someone has said that when ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise. There is a certain amount of truth in that. In much wisdom there is much grief. The more we know, the more we increase our problems. Life has become more tedious, has produced more tensions, and all of our scientific gadgets about us are making life almost unbearable. A Christian friend said to me the other day, "I think I will lose my mind if I don't get away from these computers that are controlling life today. The machines that we think are so wonderful and practically worship are drowning us in pollution and driving us to madness." How accurate Solomon was in saying "in much wisdom is much grief," and Solomon did not live in the machine age. He did not see the industrial revolution, but he knew what he was talking about.*⁷⁰⁰

J. Vernon McGee spoke about computers?

Benson: *In much wisdom is much grief* — Or displeasure to a man within himself, and against his present condition.⁷⁰¹

Adam Clarke: *The more we know of ourselves the less satisfied shall we be with our own hearts; and the more we know of mankind the less willing shall we be to trust them, and the less shall we admire them.*⁷⁰²

⁷⁰⁰ From https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt accessed June 21, 2018.

⁷⁰¹ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:18.

⁷⁰² Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:18.

“In much wisdom is much frustration” (Ecclesiastes 1:18a) (many commentators)

Keil and Delitzsch: *The wise man gains an insight into the thousand-fold woes of the natural world, and of the world of human beings, and this reflects itself in him without his being able to change it; hence the more numerous the observed forms of evil, suffering, and discord, so much greater the sadness...and the heart-sorrow...which the inutility of knowledge occasions.*⁷⁰³

Dr. Bob Utley: *“in much wisdom there is much grief” This, like Eccles. 1:15, may be a well known proverb from the sages.*⁷⁰⁴

Trapp: *For in much wisdom is much grief.] And herein children and fools have the advantage; as they want wit, so they want woe; as little is given to them, so little is required of them...To know nothing is the bravest life, as the Greek proverb [goes]...But this must be taken with a grain of salt; and we must know, that heavenly wisdom has infinite pleasure; and so far as all other arts and sciences are subservient to it, and regulated by it, they afford to the mind an incredible delight and sweetness.*⁷⁰⁵

What would be frustrating is, despite Solomon’s brilliance, despite his ability to understand knowledge from many different disciplines, and despite his access to all things in the realm of human knowledge; the end result was empty. Solomon did not feel any better and he did not make the lives of those around him any better.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Hence, Dr. Bob Utley’s observation: *Biblical faith is not a human search, but a divine revelation. God wants His special creatures to know Him, but without faith and revelation, it is impossible (i.e., “striving after the wind”).*⁷⁰⁶

Ecclesiastes 1:18b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>	simple wāw conjunction	No Strong’s # BDB #251
yâçaph (יָצַף) [pronounced yaw-SAHPH]	<i>to add, to augment, to increase, to multiply; to add to do = to do again; to continue to</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong’s #3254 BDB #414
da’ath (דַּאֲת) [pronounced DAH-ğahth]	<i>knowledge, knowing; intelligence, understanding, wisdom</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong’s #1847 BDB #395
James Rickard: <i>DAATH, דַּאֲת...means, “knowledge, perception, skill, discernment, understanding.” This is GNOSIS doctrine turned into EPIGNOSIS doctrine in the right lobe of your soul.</i> ⁷⁰⁷			
yâçaph (יָצַף) [pronounced yaw-SAHPH]	<i>to add, to augment, to increase, to multiply; to add to do = to do again; to continue to</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong’s #3254 BDB #414

⁷⁰³ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Eccles. 1:18.

⁷⁰⁴ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:18.

⁷⁰⁵ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Eccles. 1:18 (slightly edited).

⁷⁰⁶ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:17.

⁷⁰⁷ From <http://gracedoctrine.org/proverbs-chapter-8-2/> accessed November 18, 2015.

Ecclesiastes 1:18b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
mak ^o ôb (מַכְאֵב) [pronounced mahk-OHB ^v]	<i>anguish, suffering, pain [affliction] [of soul]; sorrow</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4341 BDB #456
Also spelled mak ^o ôwb (מַכְאֵב) [pronounced mahk-OHB ^v].			



Translation: ...and the one [who] adds [secular sophistry and human viewpoint] knowledge [also] adds sorrow. With this pursuit of knowledge, Solomon also developed an anguish of soul. He became sorrowful at his increase of knowledge. Solomon's increase of human wisdom did not profit anyone or anything; even he was not any happier.

Ecclesiastes 1:18 (a graphic); from [Christian Quotes](#); accessed June 17, 2018.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *wisdom ... knowledge — not in general, for wisdom, etc., are most excellent in their place; but speculative knowledge of man's ways (Eccles. 1:13, Eccles. 1:17), which, the farther it goes, gives one the more pain to find how "crooked" and "wanting" they are (Eccles. 1:15; Eccles. 12:12).*⁷⁰⁸

I don't know if there is any dramatic difference between v. 18a and 18b, or if these are just parallel observations.

Ecclesiastes 1:17–18 Therefore, I studiously investigated secular wisdom; as well as arrogant human viewpoint thinking, which is foolishness and folly; but to know all of this is chasing after the wind; for in the acquisition of knowledge, there is also an acquisition of frustration; and the man who increases his secular knowledge also increases his sorrow.

The sorrow of human knowledge (Ecclesiastes 1:18b) (various commentators)

Clarke: *[I]ndependently of God, the principal objects of knowledge are natural and moral evils.*⁷⁰⁹

The Geneva Bible: *Wisdom and knowledge cannot be come by without great pain of body and mind: for when a man has attained the highest, yet is his mind never fully content: therefore in this world is no true happiness.*⁷¹⁰

⁷⁰⁸ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:18.

⁷⁰⁹ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:18.

⁷¹⁰ Geneva Bible Translation Notes; courtesy of e-sword; 1599; Eccles. 1:18.

The sorrow of human knowledge (Ecclesiastes 1:18b) (various commentators)

John Ker, D. D. (from *The Biblical Illustrator*): *Mere earthly knowledge is unsatisfactory in its nature. Take as an illustration of this the field of creation. The knowledge of facts and laws can employ man's reason, but it cannot ultimately satisfy it., and still less can it soothe his soul, or meet the longings of his spirit.. Law everywhere cannot, permanently satisfy man without a Lawgiver; order, without a primordial reason; forms of skill and beauty, without a great Thinker, from whom they are emanations.*

Ker continues: *Mere earthly knowledge is painful in its contents. For an illustration of this, we may go from creation to history, from space to time. Take away our hope in God, and history becomes a sea of tumbling billows, dark and shoreless; nations rising only to fall; great souls shooting across the horizon like dying meteors; and all the spiritual longings of the past written down but to tell us of the vanity of our own efforts. History would be a dreary study when it had lost all the higher ends it might serve as a school of training for immortal souls, and as the steps of a Divine Architect through the broken scaffolding and scattered stone-wreck upward to a finished structure.*⁷¹¹

The Cambridge Bible: *The words have passed into a proverb, and were, perhaps, proverbial when the Debater wrote them. The mere widening of the horizon, whether of ethical or of physical knowledge, brought no satisfaction. In the former case men became more conscious of their distance from the true ideal. They ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and the only result was that they knew that "they were naked" (Gen. 3:7). In the latter, the more they knew of the phenomena of nature or of human life the more they felt that the "most part of God's works were hid." Add to this the brain-weariness, the laborious days, the sleepless nights, the frustrated ambitions of the student, and we can understand the confession of the Debater. It has naturally been often echoed. So Cicero [said]... "Sickness seems to me to be the lot of the wise of heart"*⁷¹²

Dr. John Gill: *and he that increases knowledge increases sorrow: for, the more he knows, the more he would know, and is more eager after it, and puts himself to more pains and trouble to acquire it; and hereby becomes more and more sensible of his own ignorance; and of the difficulty of attaining the knowledge he would come at; and of the insufficiency of it to make him easy and happy: and besides, the more knowledge he has, the more envy it draws upon him from others, who set themselves to oppose him, and detract from his character; in short, this is the sum of all human knowledge and wisdom, attained to in the highest degree; instead of making men comfortable and happy, it is found to be mere vanity, to cause vexation and disquietude of mind, and to promote grief and sorrow.*⁷¹³

The NIV Study Bible: *Humanistic wisdom—wisdom without God—leads to grief and sorrow.*⁷¹⁴

Dunagan: *"Because"-this is one reason why intellectual stimulation, academic pursuits fail to bring lasting happiness. There is a small amount of truth in the statement that ignorance is bliss. The more Solomon learned, the greater his pain and grief. The more you learn about the world, the more injustices you will find. Even though he is a wise man, in fact more capable than all before him, he still stands completely helpless in the sight of so many of the problems among his own people. Mere bible knowledge can also greatly increase our pain when we realize that the vast majority of the people that we will meet are lost! (Matthew 7:13-14). Hence, happiness, meaning and purpose require something more than mere knowledge of the facts.*⁷¹⁵

⁷¹¹ *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:18.

⁷¹² *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:18.

⁷¹³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:18 (slightly edited).

⁷¹⁴ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 987 (footnote).

⁷¹⁵ Mark Dunagan, *Commentary on selected text*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:18.

The sorrow of human knowledge (Ecclesiastes 1:18b) (various commentators)

Matthew Henry: *[T]he more we know the more we see there is to be known, and consequently we perceive with greater clearness that our work is without end, and the more we see of our former mistakes and blunders, which occasions much grief. The more we see of men's different sentiments and opinions (and it is that which a great deal of our learning is conversant about) the more at a loss we are, it may be, which is in the right.*⁷¹⁶

Benson: *[This is] because he is often deceived with knowledge, falsely so called, and often mistakes error for truth, and is perplexed with manifold doubts, from which ignorant men are wholly free; because he has a clearer prospect into, and quicker sense of, his own ignorance, and infirmities, and disorders; and, withal, how vain and ineffectual all his knowledge is for the prevention or removal of these things. Furthermore, his knowledge is very imperfect and unsatisfying, yet increasing his thirst after more knowledge. Lastly, because his knowledge quickly fades and dies with him, and then leaves him in no better, and possibly in a much worse condition, than that of the meanest and most unlearned man in the world.*⁷¹⁷

Dr. Peter Pett: *Thus all his wisdom and increase in knowledge had simply left him flattened and even grief stricken. It appeared that wisdom only resulted in grief, and knowledge in sorrow, because what was being sought could not be found in that way. It was out of reach of intellectual ability. We are here reminded of Paul's words in 1Cor. 1:20, 'where is the wise, where is the scribe, where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?' The Preacher agrees with him. No solution was to be found in that way.*⁷¹⁸

T. C. Finlayson (from the Biblical Illustrator): *Ecclesiastes is here speaking simply of that knowledge of earthly things and human affairs which a man may acquire by intellectual study and observation. And what he says is that the amassing of mere earthly knowledge, as if this were the chief good, is a delusion—that such knowledge is full of disappointments and sorrows, and cannot really satisfy the soul of man. Now, it is indeed true that our minds have been so constituted that the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge, simply as knowledge, is naturally accompanied with pleasure. And to a young and eager student rejoicing in the wider views and the fresh discoveries which his increase of knowledge brings, it may sometimes seem as if a life spent in study and research would give him the fullest satisfaction. But he is apt to forget that a wider view of things is not always a more pleasant view. Knowledge often destroys illusions.*

T. C. Finlayson continues: *Knowledge often makes us more sensible of our ignorance, and more conscious of the limits of our powers. Knowledge often confronts us with problems which cause us perplexing and painful thought, and which had not previously come within the range of our vision. The most learned philosopher or the most brilliant student of natural science often finds that all his knowledge is utterly unavailing in the presence of some practical difficulty—something "crooked" which he cannot straighten, something "wanting" which he cannot supply. How often the very knowledge of a skilful physician gives him a sadder because deeper insight into the malady which he knows to be incurable! And how often we can see a tinge of melancholy in some of the world's greatest thinkers! This is indeed no argument for indorsing the words of the poet, "Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise": for even the knowledge which brings sorrow may have some advantages over the ignorance which preserves happiness. But it is an argument for the conclusion of Ecclesiastes, that the mere possession of earthly wisdom is not the supreme good of human life, and that the attempt to satisfy one's soul with such knowledge is a "feeding on wind!"*⁷¹⁹

Dr. Thomas Constable: *Greater wisdom had only brought him greater "grief" (mental anguish) and "pain" (emotional sorrow, Eccles. 1:18). The phrase "I perceived" and its synonyms occur frequently in Ecclesiastes (cf. Eccles. 1:13; Eccles. 2:1; Eccles. 2:3; Eccles. 2:14-15; Eccles. 3:17-18; Eccles. 3:22; Eccles. 7:25; Eccles. 8:9; Eccles. 8:16; Eccles. 9:1).*⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁶ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:12–18.

⁷¹⁷ Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:18 (edited).

⁷¹⁸ Dr. Peter Pett, *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:16–18.

⁷¹⁹ *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:18.

⁷²⁰ Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:16–18.

The sorrow of human knowledge (Ecclesiastes 1:18b) (various commentators)

T. Hughes from the Biblical Illustrator: *Knowledge alone, as an intellectual possession, not only satisfies not, but may even increase sorrow. The more persons know, the more dissatisfied they become with their own ignorance; so knowledge can never satisfy the craving of the intellect it feeds. But there is a moral emptiness felt in the heart and conscience which knowledge cannot satisfy. To know the good without enjoying it is an increase of sorrow; to see life without being able to avail ourselves of it is more distressing than if we had known nothing of it.*

Hughes continues: *[Furthermore, knowledge] cannot satisfy the moral conditions and relations of man's nature, which makes knowledge as a matter of intellectual apprehension, incomplete to supply all the need of man as a moral being.*

Hughes continues: *The knowledge of sin and evil as they are, without faith in God's order of grace and mercy, assuredly produces anything but happy emotions in our minds; and if our knowledge were more extensive, our sorrow would be enhanced accordingly. The knowledge of the laws and resources of the universe, without faith in God; of wants, sufferings, danger, and afflictions and death, without faith in the great Lord of life as a Friend and Father; the knowledge of sin without faith in a Saviour; the knowledge that we die to-night or to-morrow, without hope of a happier existence beyond—little of such knowledge gives pain, and if it were increased, our sorrow would also increase in the same ratio.*

Hughes continues: *The increase of knowledge viewed as an end in itself is also an increase of sorrow. A man knowing all relative to all matters of life and godliness, yet doing nothing, gets none the better, none the happier.⁷²¹*

College Press Bible Study: *Another reason why the task is grievous has to do with the accomplishment of the very thing he started out to do. He wanted to explore all that had been done on the earth. He wanted to increase his wisdom and knowledge. He states that he accomplished this task to the degree that he (1) magnified and increased his wisdom more than any who had ruled over Jerusalem before him, and (2) his mind had observed a wealth of wisdom and knowledge. It is grievous because he admits that the more he learns, the greater his pain and grief. The deeper one penetrates the true nature of man, and the more knowledge one has concerning the inequities of life's struggle, the more disappointed he is with what he learns. His grief is actually compounded when he discovers that although he is a wise man, in this case greater than any who have lived before him, that he is still helpless and unable to bring justice to his own affairs. In addition, he is unable to correct the anomalies in the affairs of those about him.⁷²²*

Joseph Sutcliffe: *He that increases knowledge increases sorrow. An attentive examination of false systems tends to becloud the understanding, and to induce a spirit of scepticism which it is difficult wholly to avoid, but which injures the peace and joy of early piety. The youthful mind is not able to follow the learned abettor of a system in the discrepancy of argument; and so doubts and sorrows follow him often to his grave. The grand seat of modern atheism in Europe, lies in the heart, the evil heart of unbelief. The characters of the men we know. They are seducers of women, lovers of wine, ambitious without bounds, and blasphemers of piety. "Oh my son, do not go into their assembly."⁷²³*

Whedon: *The philosopher finds disappointment in his philosophy, and the most successful student has painful reactions of mind and body. Never more than at this day, when many sceptical, if not atheistical, minds are giving intense study to science, was the word of Koheleth more true, so little satisfaction of heart do they find in their attainments. The depression and the longings of the soul finding thus no relief in wisdom and knowledge, Koheleth resorts to another experiment.⁷²⁴*

⁷²¹ *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:18.

⁷²² *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:13–18 (comment).

⁷²³ From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jsc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 21, 2018 (slightly edited).

⁷²⁴ *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:18.

The sorrow of human knowledge (Ecclesiastes 1:18b) (various commentators)

Wesley (who seems to draw from Benson and Matthew Poole): *Or, displeasure within himself, and against his present condition. Sorrow - Which he does many ways, because he gets his knowledge with hard and wearisome labour, both of mind and body, with the consumption of his spirits, and shortening of his life; because he is often deceived with knowledge falsely so called, and often mistakes error for truth, and is perplexed with manifold doubts, from which ignorant men are wholly free; because he has the clearer prospect into, and quicker sense of his own ignorance, and infirmities, and disorders, and withal how vain and ineffectual all his knowledge is for the prevention or removal of them; and because his knowledge is very imperfect and unsatisfying, yet increasing his thirst after more knowledge; lastly, because his knowledge quickly fades and dies with him, and then leaves him in no better, and possibly in a much worse condition than the meanest and most unlearned man in the world.*⁷²⁵

That other experiments are in Ecclesiastes 2.

Brian Bell Commentary: *Knowledge can increase sorrow, IF you leave out the God of Wisdom & the Wisdom of God.*⁷²⁶

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge suggests: Eccles. 2:15, Eccles. 7:16, Eccles. 12:12–13 Job. 28:28 1Cor. 3:18–20 James 3:13–17.⁷²⁷

Gary Everett illustrates this claim: *Today I saw a housemaid busy working at a local restaurant. She came into the restaurant to pick up dirty linen while laughing at someone's joke. I noted that she had little education, a little job, and thus, little concerns. Education and wealth bring burdens of responsibility. These burdens add grief and sorrow to life if a person does not know how to rest in the Lord (Eccles. 5:12).*⁷²⁸

Ecclesiastes 5:12 **Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep.**

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:17–18 **Therefore, I studiously investigated secular wisdom; as well as arrogant human viewpoint thinking, which is foolishness and folly; but to know all of this is chasing after the wind; for in the acquisition of knowledge, there is also an acquisition of frustration; and the man who increases his secular knowledge also increases his sorrow.**

Does wisdom produce happiness or sorrow? (Geisler & Howe)

ECCLESIASTES 1:18 —Is wisdom the source of happiness, or the means of sorrow?

PROBLEM: Solomon affirms here that “in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.” However, Proverbs asserts that “Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding” (Prov. 3:13). Does wisdom bring sorrow or happiness?

⁷²⁵ John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Eccles. 1:18 (notice that this is one very long run-on sentence) (slightly edited).

⁷²⁶ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/cbb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 25, 2018.

⁷²⁷ John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Eccles. 1:18.

⁷²⁸ Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:18.

Does wisdom produce happiness or sorrow? (Geisler & Howe)

SOLUTION: It all depends on the purpose for which wisdom or knowledge are sought. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon is seeking wisdom “under the sun” (cf. 1:3), that is, apart from God, as the source of happiness. This he rightly concludes is “vanity and grasping for the wind” (1:14). However, if wisdom is viewed as based in “the fear of the Lord” (Prov. 1:7), then it is the very means of obtaining true happiness. Indeed, Solomon came to this very conclusion in Ecclesiastes (see 8:12 ; 12:13). Also, the OT understanding of wisdom is not the accumulation of great amounts of knowledge. For Solomon, wisdom is first and foremost living a successful life of righteousness and peace in obedience to God. Knowledge alone does not bring wisdom. Indeed, the message of Ecclesiastes is that knowledge alone brings only sorrow. Wisdom is the accumulation of the right kind of knowledge coupled with a life that is in harmony with God’s commands and at peace with Him

From [When Critics Ask](#); accessed July 2, 2018.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:17–18 *Therefore, I studiously investigated secular wisdom; as well as arrogant human viewpoint thinking, which is foolishness and folly; but to know all of this is chasing after the wind; for in the acquisition of knowledge, there is also an acquisition of frustration; and the man who increases his secular knowledge also increases his sorrow.*

Quite obviously, any precocious young person will make this his life passage (at least, until he is out of school), as he abandons homework in favor of other pursuits.

Let’s make some sense of what Solomon is saying here. Solomon is not saying that it is wrong to learn, that it is bad to learn. He is not saying the ideal life is remaining as stupid as humanly possible in all academic pursuits. What he is saying is, in the pursuit for real truth, for the truth that satisfies one’s soul and spirit, that is not going to be found by heaping human knowledge upon human knowledge.

You cannot major in philosophy (or psychology)⁷²⁹ with the expectation that you will understand man, his foibles, his life in the world, and the seeming emptiness of man’s life. You might go to the best college with the best professors on this planet; but when you graduate with a handful of degrees, you are no closer to understanding man and his place on this earth than you were when you started.

Ecclesiastes 1:17–18 *Therefore, I studiously investigated secular wisdom; as well as arrogant human viewpoint thinking, which is foolishness and folly; but to know all of this is chasing after the wind; for in the acquisition of knowledge, there is also an acquisition of frustration; and the man who increases his secular knowledge also increases his sorrow.*

Solomon’s conclusions from his search for wisdom (various commentators)

John W. Ritenbaugh: *Verse 18 shows that his efforts were not only unsuccessful but left him somewhat frustrated. Why? He does not give an answer because he has none, and he has none because he is searching under the sun. The truth is that some extremely important facets of this mystery of the ages that Solomon is investigating must be revealed from above the sun.*

Ritenbaugh continues: *The conclusion to Ecclesiastes 1 should prove to us that wisdom and experience will not solve every problem in life. We must understand and live with the reality that God is not obligated to explain our problems to us. We are the sinners who chose, as Adam and Eve did, to accept Satan’s deceitful offer that, if they would listen to him and eat the fruit, their eyes would be opened. They indeed gained a great deal of experiential knowledge, but their experiences also alienated them from God. We cannot expect any different result.*

⁷²⁹ I pursued many courses in both of these fields, considering a major in them.

Solomon's conclusions from his search for wisdom (various commentators)

Ritenbaugh continues: *Life may seem monotonous and meaningless, but for those called by God, it need not be. Life now is a tremendous blessing. We must accept the reality, though, that we must live by faith in God's promises. Following His resurrection, Jesus says, "Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29). Jesus Christ is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (I Corinthians 1:24). In His mercy, He has miraculously broken into our lives to prepare us for His Kingdom. We must take up the challenges that He has presented, cease living our lives running in circles, and head straight for the Kingdom of God.*⁷³⁰

Pastor John Griffith:

1. *All this human viewpoint wisdom puts us in touch with more things to worry about, to fret about - more and more issues with no apparent solutions at hand.*
2. *Wisdom and intellectual pursuits apart from the wisdom that comes from the fear of God does not bring the resolution of the question, the thesis of vs:3, What advantage, What's left after I've gained all this wisdom?*
3. *If intellectualism was the major key to purpose and fulfillment in life, our campuses would be "Camelot's" of peace. People would flock to those campuses, finding there the fulfillment of their dreams.*
4. *If we remove Jesus Christ from the center of an intellectual pursuit we're headed for ultimate disaster. As we are going to learn from Solomon, the only way to find satisfaction is through a relationship with the Living God.*⁷³¹

Eaton: *So long as wisdom is restricted to the realm 'under the sun', it sees the throbbing tumult of creation, life scurrying round its ever-repetitive circuits, and nothing more.*⁷³²

College Press Bible Study: *Solomon's experiment was...to seek and explore by wisdom all that has been done under heaven. It was not successful if its objective was to bring him peace and satisfaction. His observations concerning it are (1) it is grievous, (2) it is an affliction, (3) it is vanity and striving after wind, (4) it increased my grief and my pain.*⁷³³

David Guzik: *The more he learned, the more he realized what he didn't know. The more he knew, the more he knew life's sorrows.*⁷³⁴

John Dummelow: *Sir Isaac Newton spoke of himself as a child picking up a few pebbles on the shore of the wide sea of knowledge. So the more the veil is lifted, the wider is seen to be the extent of that which is still unknown. Bodily and mental exhaustion, sleepless and futile endeavour.*⁷³⁵

Keith Krell (and Wayne Schmidt): *Perhaps this makes you feel empty. That's exactly what Solomon is seeking to accomplish. He wants you to feel an overwhelming sense of emptiness, for emptiness is designed to draw us to God. We must learn to value emptiness. As we acknowledge our sense of meaninglessness, we are motivated to search for more. We must learn to value emptiness for its positive potential. As an empty cup invites water or a vacant room invites entrance, so an empty heart can lead us to search for God-given ways to fill it.*

Krell continues: *The good news is that God has not left us "under the sun." If you have believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior, life is not "under the sun" but rather in the SON. He brings purpose, peace, and significance. He gives you the opportunity to live an abundant life (John 10:10).*⁷³⁶

⁷³⁰ From [Bible tools](#) accessed June 18, 2018.

⁷³¹ From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_05.html accessed June 16, 2018.

⁷³² *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:16–18.

⁷³³ *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:13–18 (comment).

⁷³⁴ *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:16–18.

⁷³⁵ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/dcb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 22, 2018.

⁷³⁶ From [Bible.org](#), accessed June 22, 2018.

Solomon's conclusions from his search for wisdom (various commentators)

John 10:10b [Jesus is speaking] **"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."**

Krell (with a quote from Barry C. Davis) continues: *Solomon's concern is what do humans have "left over" after life is over. What difference do the activities of this life have in the next life? Does anything last beyond the grave? Can we make certain (beyond the shadow of a doubt...beyond the shadow of death) that what we do in this life has some lasting value? This should be the key question of our lives (and of the lives of all other people). What can we do to guarantee a return on our life-investment? The answer that Solomon gives is to fear God and obey His commandments. When we do this, our fleeting lives begin to count for eternity. The disappointments that we experience in this life are bearable. When everything around us seems meaningless and monotonous, Christ—the Meaning in life, gives us meaning. When we are weary from the wearisome nature of life, Christ says, **"Come to Me all you who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest"** (Matt. 11:28).⁷³⁷*

Joseph Sutcliffe: *Solomon had a most illustrious father, equally distinguished by piety, wisdom, and conquest. Solomon was born with a large share of intellectual powers, as appears from his choice of wisdom. He also spent his whole life in researches of sacred knowledge, and was painfully made to know his own heart by a transition from wisdom to folly, and by obscuring his religious glory with strange women at a pagan shrine. Fraught with all these treasures, treasures which cost him much, he comes forward to instruct posterity concerning the insufficiency of earthly bliss, and to guide them by early piety to the fear of God, and to all holy obedience. This wise prince, and father of moral philosophy, pregnant with his subject, five times repeats the words of his text. **Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; vanity of vanities, all is vanity, and vexation of spirit.***

Sutcliffe continues: *I have been taught by my sire, that **the heavens and the earth shall wax old, and perish as a garment**. Psalm 102:25. So one generation passes away after another; the sun now shining in splendour hastes to hide behind the hill; the summer breezes wafting the fragrance of the south, recoil in the northern cold, nip the beautiful flowers, and cover the earth with snow. The majestic rivers lose their placid streams in the tumult of the troubled sea. Thus all nature is a routine of labour, vanity, and decay; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing. This is the introduction to his book; the sentiments he strikingly exemplifies in his own life. Favoured with all the advantages of a king, he gave up a part of each day to literary pursuits, and eclipsed the east in wisdom. And what resources of happiness did it open in his soul? Why truly resources of vexation, grief, and sorrow.*

Sutcliffe continues: *And have not the same sentiments been most tragically exemplified by the literati, who have figured away on the theatre of Europe for the last century? Born with gigantic powers of mind, they spent the whole of life in the acquisition of language and science; they acquired a superabundance of knowledge which operated as a chaos, from which their misguided heads and impure hearts could not deduce the plain principles of purity, happiness, and peace. They affected to grasp the world of science, while they remained completely ignorant of their own hearts. They obtruded themselves as preceptors of princes, and lawgivers to the people, while they knew not how to govern themselves. They despised marriage, the purest source of social bliss; they flattered the great, and imitated them in their crimes. They talked of the law of nature and of nations with passions unrestrained: for in fact, they acknowledged no law but the dogmas of their own school. Of virtue, they talk with a divine reverence; but the sequel proved it was merely to give circulation to their books, and the more effectually to corrupt the incautious public in principle and practice. Hence they were adored in literary fame; but on approaching them in the habits of domestic life, they were presently despised and hated. The sacred volume alone forms the grand barrier against the inundation of their principles. Against that book therefore they pointed all their artillery of satire and wit, for argument they had none; and against piety and holiness, somewhat disfigured by superstition, they discovered the enmity of their hearts.*

⁷³⁷ From Bible.org, accessed June 22, 2018.

Solomon's conclusions from his search for wisdom (various commentators)

Sutcliffe concludes: *Thus they were impoverished by pride, restless by dissipation, abandoned of patrons, and secretly pursued by the avenging hand of heaven. Thus Rousseau, impelled by misery, forsook France, and sought in Switzerland the innocent joys of early life; but wept while he sat on a rock and saw the happiness of the peasants. Thus all knowledge which does not lead the soul to a resemblance of God, realizes the closing maxim of this chapter: He that increases knowledge increases sorrow.*⁷³⁸

We might even take away from this a binary choice: following Solomon and his pursuit of human wisdom or following the Lord, Who dispenses divine wisdom.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ron Snider's translation of Ecclesiastes 1:16–18 I said to myself, "Behold, I have magnified and increased wisdom more than all who were over Jerusalem before me; and my mind has observed a wealth of wisdom and knowledge." So I set my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly; I realized that this also is striving after wind. Because in much wisdom there is much grief, and increasing knowledge results in increasing pain.

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:16–18 (Ron Snider)

1. This is the first of five times in the book of Ecclesiastes that younger Solomon will share his inner dialogue with the reader. Eccles. 2:1,15, 3:17,18
2. However, he does share the conclusions to which he came many times in this book; they are generally unsatisfying and depressing.
3. Verse 16 presents an introductory reflection about the nature of the task Solomon has undertaken; it also presents his credentials and qualifications for his task.
4. As Solomon reflects, it is apparent that he does not engage in any pseudo-humility; he provides an intellectually honest appraisal of his person and position.
5. The initial phrase in the Hebrew would literally be translated I spoke, I with my heart, which refers to a common method by which normal people attempt to think through, understand, draw conclusions, and resolve things in their minds.
6. The Qal infinitive construct of אָמַר ('amar) is used with a prefixed לְ (l), which essentially functions grammatically like our quotation marks.
7. The first thing Solomon does as he speaks to himself is to tell himself to pay attention to the very important considerations about his own qualifications.
8. The first assertion that Solomon had magnified and increased wisdom is a verbal hendiadys (using two words to express one idea), and simply means that he had become the wisest man in the history of Jerusalem. 1Kings 3:12, 10:23
9. Although this claim of unsurpassed wisdom might seem presumptuous on the surface, it is a completely accurate assessment of the situation; this illustrates the difference between legitimate confidence and unfounded arrogance.
10. This certainly would beg the question, "If the wisest man that ever lived has not found a satisfactory resolution to the exact nature of life and God's plan, who will be able to do so?"
11. Although the phrase all who were over Jerusalem before me has caused some to label this "an enigmatic expression", it simply means what it says.
12. Solomon had accumulated wisdom and understanding that surpassed those that had previously been in any position of authority in Jerusalem; it makes no difference if they functioned as kings, priests, governors, wise men, or prophets.
13. He could have limited the statement to kings of Israel if he had so desired; however, then one could argue that since only Saul and David were kings before Solomon that this statement would have been of little consequence.

⁷³⁸ From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/jsc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 21, 2018.

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:16–18 (Ron Snider)

14. He is simply making the point that no one in the history of Jerusalem could compete with Solomon in the magnitude of his wisdom.
15. This statement also presupposes that there was a long line of wisdom that had been associated with Jerusalem in the past.
16. He literally goes on to say that my heart has seen great wisdom and knowledge.
17. The use of **לֵב** (*lebh*—heart, mind) emphasizes the mental faculties of perception; further, it is clear that Solomon's use of **רָאָה** (*ra'ah*—seen, observed) emphasizes a critical consideration and not merely a passing observation.
18. His two distinct areas of expertise are great wisdom and knowledge, which many interpreters understand as another hendiadys, and has the nuance of full knowledge.
19. However, while the two terms are often used together, there is a distinction between them that should be recognized.
 - 1) Data is simply raw facts, whereas information is data that has been organized
 - 2) Next comes the issue of knowledge, which is information that we have understood.
 - 3) Wisdom is the ability to sort through knowledge and correctly apply it to the situation.
20. Wisdom is used in a broad variety of contexts and sometimes focused on matters of skill (Ex. 28:3, 31:3,6), the execution of battle tactics (Isa. 10:13), and government administration. Deut, 34:9; 2Sam 14:20
21. Here it would seem to convey the idea of using his human intelligence as a means of seeking to understand that nature and purpose of life.
22. The phrase I set my mind (lit. *I gave my heart*) is used again to denote the fact that Solomon devoted himself to his quest; he was absorbed with it.
23. While Solomon appeared to concentrate his efforts in verse 13 on overt things he could observe or study from history, he now concentrates on the internal qualities that form the basis for the events of this life.
24. The Hebrew verb **יָדָעַ** (*yadha'*—to know) has the nuances of figuring something out, recognizing something, knowing or understanding something.
25. When it is used with opposites, as it is in this context, it means to discern or distinguish one thing from the other. 2Sam. 19:35; Jonah 4:11
26. He contrasts wisdom with the terms madness and folly.
27. The first noun (**חֵלְלוּת**) (*choleluth*—madness) is an abstract plural that focuses on the irrational aspect of insanity.
28. While wisdom focuses on the rational thought processes, this term denotes the deviant mental processes that characterize one that is insane.
29. The second noun is derived from the verb **לָכַס** (*sakhal*), which means to act rashly or foolishly; rash behavior often reflects a lack of moral or spiritual sense. 1Sam. 13:13; 2Sam. 24:10
30. While some have wondered why Solomon would be interested in exploring these bad qualities, one should recognize that sometimes contraries are better understood by means of their opposites.
31. After Solomon had pursued his objectives for some time, he figured out that he had wasted his time; this is seen in the final phrase of verse 17, which reiterates the similar phrase in verse 14.
32. It was not that his pursuits had not yielded some results in terms of knowledge and wisdom; the practical matter is that the increase of knowledge results in some unpleasant side effects.
33. Verse 18, like verse 15, was likely a proverbial expression that dealt with the fact that learning and education come with some difficulty.
34. However, what was probably designed to encourage the student while he was enduring the pains of learning is used by Solomon to discourage the unbridled pursuit of wisdom and knowledge.
35. When one studies the issues of this life, he becomes aware of issues like injustice and oppression; further, one begins to see the absurdities of life that cannot effectively be explained or resolved.
36. Solomon admits that the process of learning is difficult enough, as one deals with the difficulties, failures, and trials that are necessary for learning.
37. However, he also acknowledges that the end result is far less satisfying than people would tend to think.
38. The root meaning of the verb **כָּעַס** (*ka'as*) is to vex, agitate, stir up, or provoke a person to a heated condition which in turn leads to specific actions.

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1:16–18 (Ron Snider)

39. As one studies the human condition, Solomon indicates that the end result will simply provoke the person to frustration.
40. The greater the awareness that human efforts cannot alleviate inequities, irregularities, and the deficiencies of life the more the frustration, mental anguish and sorrow a wise man has.
41. Solomon concludes this verse by stating that as one increases knowledge, he also increases pain.
42. The family of words that deals with pain has a physical component to them as well as the mental component of grief or anguish. Ex. 3:7
43. Most likely the mental aspect is emphasized here. Eccles. 2:23

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (this will open as a Word document on your computer); accessed June 16, 2018.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

[Beginning of Document](#)

[Verse Navigation](#)

[Introduction and Text](#)

[First Verse](#)

[Chapter Summary](#)

[Addendum](#)

www.kukis.org

[Exegetical Studies in Ecclesiastes](#)

A Set of Summary Doctrines and Commentary

When I study a chapter of the Bible, one of the questions which I nearly always have is, *why is this chapter in the Word of God?*

Why Ecclesiastes 1 is in the Word of God

1. Everyone thinks that there is some human viewpoint approach to finding satisfaction or happiness in life; and Solomon's search for this shows us that there is not. Solomon has every resource possible for him to search out happiness in a variety of ways: (1) by searching for it directly—reading, studying, talking to other wise people. The other ways that Solomon searches out happiness will be found in Eccles. 2.
2. Ecclesiastes requires a careful exegetical study; we need to cautiously divide the Word of God when studying this book. We learn not to take every pronouncement as solid divine truth.
3. In several ways, Ecclesiastes 1 is a brilliant treatise, antithetical to Genesis 1–2.
4. So many people have considered that life was futile, that they were going nowhere, and that all that they did seems to be a waste of time. Eccles. 1 begins to address those issues and thoughts.
5. Life seems to be frustrating, circular and meaningless; Eccles. 1 addresses that sort of thinking.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

When studying a chapter in the Bible, there are a number of topics which that study leads to.

What We Learn from Ecclesiastes 1

1. In order to understand Ecclesiastes and to make sense of it, we study the 5 kinds of wisdom.
2. We begin to see a whole different side of Solomon. Thus far, we have studied him in Kings and Proverbs, and he comes off much differently in this book.

What We Learn from Ecclesiastes 1

3. The book of Ecclesiastes can be quite confusing to some because much of it is human viewpoint. On the other hand, how many unbelievers have read this book, being caught up by its human viewpoint brilliance?
4. In some ways, from one point of view, it is clear that a life of production could be viewed as empty, lacking in meaning, and chasing after wind.
5. Because of the approach to life in Ecclesiastes, we needed to go back and reexamine our understanding of work and the work ethic. Solomon appears to pronounce all of his work as empty and chasing after the wind.
6. Due to the subject matter of this first chapter, we had a time to discuss the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution and consider those great documents in the light of the political landscape today.
7. This study led us to consider the doctrine of *the Dual Authorship of Scripture*.
8. This is an ideal book when dealing with the frustration of human existence today. This might be the very book to put into the hands of a person contemplating suicide.
9. The topics in this first chapter lead us to discuss the United States today, and our penchant for the use of mind-altering drugs, our pursuit of Eastern religions and humanism, and the rise in the rate of suicides.
10. One discussion that this chapter led us to was, who actually makes a difference in the world? Who was the most influential person in the 20th century? Who is the most well-known person in 2000 B.C.?
11. We discussed man's uniqueness in the world, among all the creatures of the earth; and his insatiable thirst for knowledge.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Many chapters of the Bible look forward to Jesus Christ in some way or another. A person or situation might foreshadow the Lord or His work on the cross (or His reign over Israel in the Millennium). The chapter may contain a prophecy about the Lord or it may, in some way, lead us toward the Lord (for instance, by means of genealogy).

Jesus Christ in Ecclesiastes 1

1. Jesus Christ created all the natural cycles to which Solomon refers in vv. 4–7. He created the earth (and restored it), mankind, the sun, the winds and the waters.
2. Jesus gives man the life, which Solomon speaks of, calling it *an unhappy business*. However, Solomon's approach is to a life apart from a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.
3. Solomon appears to have set aside the revealed knowledge of God and to pursue knowledge instead.
4. The book of Ecclesiastes in general appears to be about a man who wants to find knowledge, contentment and happiness apart from Christ Jesus.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Solomon's conclusions from Ecclesiastes 1 (Pastor John Griffith)

1. IF there is NOTHING but NOTHING under the sun then our only HOPE must be above it.
2. If after pursuing everything that is material or visible to satisfy his soul's longing and he didn't find it THEN it must INVISIBLE.
 - Rom 8:24-25 we hope (elpij) for what we do not see ; 1 Pet 1:8; Jn 20:29
 - So few have their priorities straight and are pursuing the invisible, a relationship with Jesus Christ, and

Solomon's conclusions from Ecclesiastes 1 (Pastor John Griffith)

are tuned into what's important.

3. The only light at the end of the tunnel is Jesus Christ and Christian way of life.
 - need to be cautious lest we through the many legitimate pursuits of life put Christ on the back burner
 - low priority in life and fall into the same soul despair that Solomon did.

From http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_05.html accessed June 16, 2018 (slightly edited).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Ecclesiastes 1:17–18 Therefore, I studiously investigated secular wisdom; as well as arrogant human viewpoint thinking, which is foolishness and folly; but to know all of this is chasing after the wind; for in the acquisition of knowledge, there is also an acquisition of frustration; and the man who increases his secular knowledge also increases his sorrow.

Solomon's conclusions from Ecclesiastes 1 (various commentators)

Dr. Bob Utley concludes: *The search for meaning and happiness cannot be accomplished without God (cf. Eccles. 2:23; Eccles. 12:12; 1Cor. 13:2). As a matter of fact, it becomes maddening!*⁷³⁹

Apart from God, man is an unhappy lot. From the Bible Illustrator: *When a friend wished a great English statesman a happy new year, "Happy!" he said; "it had need be happier than the last, for in that I never knew one happy day." When an English lawyer, whose life had seemed to be one long range of success, mounted the last step in his profession, he wrote, "I in a few weeks shall retire to dear Eneombe, as a shore resting-place between vexation and the grave." When one said to the great Rothschild, "You must be a happy man," he replied, "I sleep with pistols under my pillow."*⁷⁴⁰

Clarke: *[Solomon] found that...*

1. *He had gotten wisdom beyond all men;*
2. *Wealth and honors more than any other;*
3. *Practical wisdom more than all his predecessors;*
4. *Had tried pleasure and animal gratification, even to their extremes; yet after all this he had nothing but vexation of spirit.*

Clarke continues: *None of these four things, nor the whole of them conjoined, could afford him such a happiness as satisfies the soul. Why was all this? Because the soul was made for God, and in the possession of him alone can it find happiness.*⁷⁴¹

Even a cursory reading of Ecclesiastes 1 gives us the feeling of great frustration and sadness on the part of Solomon.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

A Summary of Ecclesiastes (from the Christian Community Bible)

All is meaningless! Meaningless (v. 2)! We are used to the ancient translation of this verse: "Vanity of vanities. All is vanity!" Actually, the first word of the book designates in Hebrew a wisp of straw. It is without

⁷³⁹ Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Eccles. 1:18.

⁷⁴⁰ *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:2.

⁷⁴¹ Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:16.

A Summary of Ecclesiastes (from the Christian Community Bible)

weight and flies away at the slightest breeze, like vanity, a nothing. It is also what escapes our grasp: it is a future that is uncertain and illusory, or something which does not satisfy our spirit, on which we can build nothing; it is “disconcerting,” it “has no sense.”

This expression is repeated in the book like a refrain, but with different meanings according to the context: that is why we have recourse to different translations.

There is nothing new under the sun (v. 9). The prophets had seen the world led by God toward a happy future. Other cultures, however, had the notion that the world only keeps on repeating the same events, with kingdoms, wars, success and failure. For them, nothing was happening which could give people the fulfillment of their desires.

With such convictions, a person might try to forget what is taking place in a world where all is illusion, but that is not the case of Ecclesiastes. Like every good Jew, he is firmly rooted in reality; he lives at a time that is without conflict and also without prophets or great hope. In such conditions, it is wisdom to ignore the illusions of activism.

Under the sun: these words will come back as a refrain: humans toil and pass as a shadow while the sun remains. The sun is like an image of God who endures and who alone does things “with a view to eternity” (3:14).

The wiser you are... (v. 18). The pioneers of science were sure that progress would free us from all evils. Our century has lost this assurance: development is not a road to easy life, one is slave to one’s own brain and one’s own knowledge, obliged to assume the consequences that become more formidable each day; although one does not know the way, one cannot stop.

The Christian Community Bible; from <http://www.bibleclaret.org/bibles/REDCCB2013/36Ecle.pdf> (Eccles. 1:1); accessed May 14, 2018.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1–2 (Bridgeway Bible Commentary)

Is there a purpose to life? (1:1-11)

At times life does not appear to have much meaning. People have to work to keep themselves alive, but in the end they lose everything they have worked for. Generation after generation passes, but the same things still happen (1:1-4). The sun rises and sets, then the next day the cycle is repeated. The wind blows and circles around, coming back to begin its course all over again. Rivers flow unceasingly into the sea, but the sea is never full and the rivers never dry up (5-7). Life is wearisome; nothing satisfies; history will go on repeating itself; past generations die and are forgotten, and the same will happen to future generations (8-11).

Lessons from experience (1:12-2:26)

Writing as Solomon, the author now looks back and describes the experiences of a truly wise and wealthy man who searched for a meaning to life. First he tried the study of wisdom, but it led only to misery and frustration. Some things could not be made to fit any sort of consistent pattern; others, which in theory may have solved some problems, in practice did not exist (12-15). His learning and experience enabled him to tell the difference between wisdom and folly, but they were unable to help him find a meaning to life. His greater wisdom only increased his frustration and bitterness (16-18).

Continuing his search, the great king turned to pleasures of various kinds, but they did not provide the answer (2:1-3). He used his knowledge and resources in extravagant building programs and agricultural projects, and his household had everything he needed for a life of luxury and pleasure (4-8). All his achievements brought him a certain amount of satisfaction. But as he looks back he confesses that they brought him no nearer to solving the mystery of life’s purpose (9-11).

Kings can build for themselves huge fortunes and accomplish impressive works, but even the wealthiest and most ambitious of kings found that all this did not bring satisfaction. What chance, then, does anyone else

Summary of Ecclesiastes 1–2 (Bridgeway Bible Commentary)

have? The frustrated searcher turned therefore to consider the subject of wisdom again (12). He reminded himself of the obvious truth that wisdom is better than folly (13), but he recalled also that the wise person dies the same as the fool, and both alike are soon forgotten (14-17).

Not only has wisdom no advantage over folly; diligence has no advantage over idleness. A person uses all his knowledge and skill in his work, spending long days labouring and sleepless nights worrying, but when he dies all that he has built up is left to someone else. Not only that, but the person who inherits all this did not work for it and may even foolishly waste it (18-23).

The writer now reaches one positive conclusion concerning the purpose of life. God intends people to enjoy the good things of life and to find enjoyment in their work. This is God's gift. Those who accept this gift please God. To them God gives the wisdom and ability to enjoy his gift. Those who do not accept this gracious gift from God, but who spend their energies trying to achieve happiness by their own wisdom and efforts, find that all they build up for themselves will be lost. In despair they cry out again that life is useless (24-26).

Don Fleming, *Bridgeway Bible Commentary*; ©1988, 1994, 2005; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–11.

Don Fleming, *Bridgeway Bible Commentary*; ©1988, 1994, 2005; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:12–2:26.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Addendum

The division of Ecclesiastes 1 and 2 was poorly drawn.

Everett's conclusions to Ecclesiastes 1 and looking ahead (Gary Everett)

Gary Everett: *In chapter 2 and the following chapters of Ecclesiastes, the Preacher continues to seek this answer, which will come in the final chapter. The Preacher will conclude by telling us that in this mortal life we are to fear God and keep his commandments, for that is all that God requires of us in this life in order to prepare us for our immortal lives (Eccles. 12:13-14).*⁷⁴²

Gary Everett: *The Preacher begins his book by acknowledging that God has predestined this world to mortality and vanity (Eccles. 1:1–11). He will base this conclusion upon his own personal experiences (Eccles. 1:12 to Eccles. 2:11) and upon his evaluation of society (Eccles. 2:12–26).*

Everett continues: *Solomon, in his old age, looks at the effects of his life on society. In chapter Eccles. 1:1–11, the Preacher expresses the uselessness of his efforts to make things different and better for others. In Eccles. 1:12 thru Eccles. 2:26 he gives examples of his vain efforts. Had he made things better for his nation, for the world around him? In despair, He saw everything the same. He felt that all of his labor and travail had not created the changes that he so desired. He concludes this book with the insight that his duty is not to change the world, but to fear and serve the Lord, for each man will give an account of his own life before God.*

Everett concludes: *Outline – Here is a proposed outline:*

Intro: The Preacher Concludes that This Life is Vanity — Eccles. 1:1–11

1. The Preacher Explains His Conclusion — Eccles. 1:12 to Eccles. 2:26.

Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Ecclesiastes 1:1–2:26.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

⁷⁴² Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–11.

It may be helpful to see this chapter as a contiguous whole:

A Complete Translation of Ecclesiastes 1

A Reasonably Literal Translation

A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase

Solomon introduces the book of Ecclesiastes

[These are] the Words of a Lecturer, the son of David, King in Jerusalem:

These are the Words of a Lecturer, who is the Son of David, the King in Jerusalem:

A breath of breaths, [this] lecturer proclaims—a breath of breaths—all [life is but] vapor.

Just inhale and exhale, proclaims this lecturer—as all life is but a vapor, of no more substance than the exhale of one’s breath.

The futility and circuitry of all life

What gain [is there] to the man in all of his toil which he toils under the sun?

What real gain is there to any man in all of his hard work which he must do each day under a hot sun?

[One] generation departs and [the next] generation comes in; and the earth remains forever.

As one generation goes by the wayside, the next generation rises up to take its place; and the earth just keeps on turning.

The sun rises and the sun sets [lit., *goes in*], and [he] hurries to his place, rising up there [again].

The sun rises and the sun sets; then it hurries back to its original place and rises up there once again.

[The wind] goes toward the south and turns around to the north, [this] wind going around [and] circling around [again]; and [finally] the wind returns along its circuit.

The wind goes toward the south, then turns around to the north; the wind is going around and circling about; and it eventually returns along its established route.

The rivers [and streams] all flow into the sea, and [yet] the sea [is] not filled. [Back] to the place where the rivers [and streams] are flowing, there they return to [begin to] flow [once again].

All the rivers and streams flow into the sea, and yet the sea is not filled up. Somehow, the water returns back to where the rivers and streams begin, and from there, their flowing begins again.

All words are wearisome; [so that] a man is unable to speak. The eye is not satisfied [just] to see and the ear is not satisfied [just] to hear.

All these words just wear a man down so that he is unable to speak. The eye is not satisfied with all that it sees; and, no matter what it hears, the ear is never really content.

What has been, will be [in the future]; and what has been done, it will be done [again, in the future]. [There is] no new [thing] under the sun. There [is] a thing that [one] will claim, “Look, Here is something [lit., *this*] new!” [But] it already has been in front of us all this time [lit., *forever*]. [There is] no remembrance of the former things or [lit., *and also*] of the latter things which will come to pass. [There] will not be to them [any] remembrance of that [which] comes later.

What has happened in the past, will happen again in the future; what has been done in the past will be done again in the future. There is no new thing under the sun. Someone will claim, “Look, this is a new thing!” However, it is not a new thing; it has been here before. We don’t remember what has happened in the past, and future generations will not remember us or what we have done.

The author seeks out human wisdom

I, the lecturer, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

I, the lecturer and author of this book, was also king over Israel in Jerusalem.

A Complete Translation of Ecclesiastes 1	
A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase
So I have given my heart to seek and to search out wisdom regarding all that has been done under [these] heavens; [and to study] this business of evil [that] God has given to the sons of man in order to humble/afflict him.	Therefore, I have given my life to seeking and searching out wisdom regarding all that has been done under these heavens; and to study this life of evil that God has given to the sons of man in order to both humble and afflict him.
I have seen all of the works which are done under the sun, and behold, [it is] all vapor [or, <i>breath, emptiness, vanity</i>] and chasing wind.	I have seen all the works of man which are done under the sun, and I have observed that man's life and works are empty and chasing after the wind.
The crooked cannot be made straight and what is lacking cannot be numbered.	The crooked cannot be made straight and what is lacking cannot be numbered.
I, even I, spoke with my heart, saying, "I, even I, have done great things and I have increased [in my] wisdom over all who were before me in Jerusalem."	I said to myself, "I have done great things and I have increased in my wisdom over all who went before me."
My heart has seen much [by way of] wisdom and knowledge. Therefore, I gave my heart to know wisdom, but [also] to know boastful foolishness and folly; [and] to know this is [just like] chasing after wind; for in much wisdom [is also] much frustration; and the one [who] adds [secular sophistry and human viewpoint] knowledge [also] adds sorrow.	My heart has learned much by way of wisdom and knowledge. Therefore, I studiously investigated secular wisdom; as well as arrogant human viewpoint thinking, which is foolishness and folly; but to know all of this is chasing after the wind; for in the acquisition of knowledge, there is also an acquisition of frustration; and the man who increases his secular knowledge also increases his sorrow.
Chapter Outline	Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

The following Psalms would be appropriately studied at this time: Psalm 19 39 62 104.

R. B. Thieme, Jr. covered this chapter in lesson #1 of his **Ecclesiastes series** (#514). This chapter may also be found in lesson #76 of the Teen series and lesson #40 of the 1969 Basic series.

