

Eccl. 1
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A. 1:1, The Superscription

B. 1:2, Theme (repeated at close, 12:8)
All is vanity and empty.

1. Last time we saw that "vanity" literally means "wind, breath," then that which has no more substance than wind or breath. Used of idols in the prophets, but here in the sense of nothingness.
2. Vanity of vanities: superlative. Cf. Cant. 1:1 (Song of Songs); Rev. 19:16 (King of Kings; Lord of Lords). Everything is empty and unsubstantial, like the wind.

C. 1:3-11, The Cycles

1. 3, the Question: What advantage can man gain through his exertions?
 - a) "Profit," only in Eccl, but related words have the sense of "more," "to be better." "Advantage." We will see three advantages that men often seek, but that labor cannot convey, in this paragraph.
 - b) "Labor" (aMaL is not only physical, but also mental anguish, Ps. 25:18 (second word); Gen. 41:51; Num. 23:21 ("perverseness," the result of iniquity); Job 3:10. Not condemning honest toil, but what good is it to wrack yourself? The word for work, (aBoDaH, does not appear in Eccl.
 - c) "Under the Sun." 27x in Eccl, + 3x "under heaven" and 7x "upon earth." Unique to Eccl. in the Bible. Describes the sphere of man's life and work, as contrasted with God's abode (5:2). Good things do happen there, as well as evil (5:18*; 8:15 (2x); 9:9), but it is a restricted sphere.
 - d) Thus the thesis to be proved is that man gains no advantage through "killing himself" in this present life. We shall also have to say something about the nature of godly labor.
2. The cycles of nature, 4-7
Everything is caught up in a constant flux, where everything changes and yet in that very changing stays the same. How can man possibly think that he can change such a system by his own exertions? How can there possibly be any meaning in this endless droning of existence?
 - a) 4, the generations
 - b) 5, the sun
 - c) 6, the wind

- d) 7, the rivers. Last clause: not returning to their source, but always running in the same channels. These are NaXaL "wady", not NaHaR. The dry riverbed.
3. 1:8-11, The Consequences of these Cycles. Three things that people strive after, they cannot achieve. These are the candidates for "profit" that the carnal man seeks, but cannot attain.
- a) 1:8. There is **no comprehensive knowledge**. The effect on man: three negatives, corresponding to the three monkeys of the Emperor's stables in Japan (speak no evil, hear no evil, see no evil). Because everything is in ceaseless labor, it lies beyond man's mental powers. It doesn't hold still long enough for man to comprehend it.
- 1) He cannot describe it. Cf. the Encyclopaedia Britannica, yet we found things that are not in it.
 - 2) He cannot see all of it. My "museum frenzy."
 - 3) He cannot hear all about it. Thus the newsboy lies when he cries, "Read all about it."
 - 4) Cf. Acts 17:21; 2 Tim. 3:7 for examples of the frustrated search to which this leads.
- b) 1:9,10. There is **nothing new!**
Both what "is" (the world of nature) and what "is done" (the world of men's actions) continue unchanged.
- c) 1:11, There is **no certain fame**.
- 1) We have already forgotten those who went before. The most frustrating experience for a Ph.D. student is to spend six months or a year working on a topic, only to discover that it has already been covered. Cf. Dallas prof who went through this twice, and eventually quit his program.
 - 2) We will not be remembered in the future.
4. Then, what is the place of godly labor and ambition?
- a) Qohelet's advice: 9:10; 11:6.
 - b) The broader admonition against being a sluggard: Prov. 6:6-11; 30:24-28.
 - c) Motives:
 - 1) God's glory, not our own, Col. 3:17,23
 - 2) To support our needs and those of others, 1 Tim. 5:8; 2 Thes. 3:10; Acts 20:34,35
- D. 1:12-2:23, Qohelet's Search.
1. Summary:
 - a) 1:12-18. The principles of the search. "Thesis Proposal."
 - b) 2:1-23, The Three Areas of Inquiry
These correspond to the three things "that are in the world" (1 John 2:16, compare Gen. 3:6 and the temptations of our Lord).
 - 1) 2:1-11, Pleasure ("Lust of the Flesh")
 - 2) 2:12-17, Wisdom and folly ("Pride of Life")

- 3) 2:18-23, Labor (not searched out, but hated) ("Lust of the Eyes," producing wealth)
 - c) 2:24-3:22, The answer, in God's sovereignty.
2. 1:12-18. Principles of the search.
- a) 1:12, his qualifications. Solomon, holding unchallenged rule over the Levant, from Anatolia to Egypt and from the Med. to the Euphrates.
 - b) 1:13, the approach.
 - 1) Object of study: "all that is done under heaven."
 - 2) Method: "by wisdom." As we will see, includes experimental method as well as theory.
 - 3) Scope: DR\$ is depth; TWR is breadth. This is to be a comprehensive study.
 - 4) Motivation: This is the task God has given man.
 - c) 1:14-15, Preliminary result on the Object: Empty and Vain. The world is crooked and wanting (the result of the fall), and man cannot set it right.
 - d) 1:16-18, preliminary result on the Method: does not seem to solve the dilemma, but rather turns into a dilemma itself!
3. 2:1-11, Examining the Lust of the Flesh (Pleasure)