

Ecclesiastes - Chapter 1

Introduction (1:1 - 1:2)

The book begins, as discussed in our introduction, with a statement of the author, Solomon.

The topic is introduced in verse 2. Vanity of vanities. This phrase introduces the book here, and closes the book (except for the conclusion) in Ecc 12:8.

- Is a vanity of vanities different from a vanity?
- Do many in the world live a life of vanity?
- Are we at risk of being influenced in the world to pursue a life of vanity?
- All is vanity (v2), does anything earthly have real value

What Profit? (1:3-1:11)

The question in verse 3 can be asked in many forms. Here it is phrased “what profit?”. Today we often hear variations, “What is my purpose?”, “What is the meaning of life”. Even people who don’t believe in God find it difficult to deny that there must be a purpose behind it all. Solomon takes these verses to consider it from an “under the sun” approach.

- What profit does any earthly thing have compared to the eternal? (Matt 16:26)

He discusses activity/movement, using several examples, but showing that for all that is done, from an earthly viewpoint nothing is really accomplished. The sun completes its cycle, only to do it all again. Powerful winds can blow, but only to blow again. Water falls and runs to the sea, only to fall again. Our lives can seem like that, a daily repetitive cycle.

- Can life seem full of toil and trouble (v8)?
- We rush to see and hear, but is it ever enough (v8)?
- Is there ever really anything new (v9,10)?
- Of all that we accomplish, is anything remembered for long (v11)?

He has described the problem faced by looking at life from an “under the sun” approach. Lots of toil, but nothing really accomplished. When examined closely, life (under the sun) would be depressingly pointless.

Investigate the Matter (1:12-13)

- What qualified Solomon to answer this problem (did he have time, did he have resources) (v12)?
- How seriously did he investigate the issue (v13)?
- What approach did he use (v13)

Is Knowledge and Wisdom the Answer? (v14-18)

- What does he mean by comparing these things to grasping the wind (v14)?
- Is it possible to grasp the wind (v14)?
- Can we finish a task of straightening crooked things (v15)?
- Is it possible to make up for all that is lacking (v15)?
- How did Solomon’s wisdom compare to everyone else (v16)?
- How can knowledge and wisdom bring us sorrow (v18)?