

The start and finish of Ecclesiastes  
show it to be from God.

*1.1 the words of the preacher – 12.13  
fear God and keep His  
commandments*

Ecc 1:2 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher,  
vanity of vanities; all is vanity. 3 What profit hath  
a man of all his labour which he taketh under the  
sun? KJV

Solomon's point is that all is futile under the Sun.  
One should therefore put all one's efforts towards  
that which is above the Sun – eternal in its nature.

Ecc 12:13 The conclusion, when all has been  
heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments,  
because this applies to every person. 14 For God  
will bring every act to judgment, everything which  
is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

Ecc 1:3 What advantage does man  
have in all his work Which he does  
under the sun?

There are clear advantages in this  
life but do these have meaning  
beyond this life?

## Futility in nature!

Ecc 1:4 A generation goes and a generation comes, But the earth remains forever. 5 Also, the sun rises and the sun sets; And hastening to its place it rises there again. 6 Blowing toward the south, Then turning toward the north, The wind continues swirling along; And on its circular courses the wind returns. 7 All the rivers flow into the sea, Yet the sea is not full. To the place where the rivers flow, There they flow again.

**1:4** A generation comes and a generation goes,  
but the earth remains the same through the ages.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The term עולם 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: It is used in this sense of  
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,

Ecc 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.

## Futility from secular accomplishment

Ecc 1:12 I, the Preacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. 13 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. 14 I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind. 15 What is crooked cannot be straightened and what is lacking cannot be counted.

# Ozymandias

I met a traveller from an antique land Who said: `Two  
vast and trunkless legs of stone Stand in the desert.  
Near them, on the sand, Half sunk, a shattered visage  
lies, whose frown, And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold  
command, Tell that its sculptor well those passions  
read ...

And on the pedestal these words appear --

"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.' - Percy  
Bysshe Shelley



## The Futility of Secular Wisdom

Ecc 1.16 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." 17 And I set my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly; I realized that this also is striving after wind. 18 Because in much wisdom there is much grief, and increasing knowledge results in increasing pain.

1Ki 3:11 God said to him, "Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice, 12 behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you. 13 "I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days. 14 "If you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days."

2Ch 9:22-23 So King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom.

23 And all the kings of the earth were seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart.

Ecc 1:18 Because in much wisdom there is much  
grief, and increasing knowledge results in  
increasing pain. NAS

1:18 For with  
great wisdom comes great frustration; whoever  
increases his knowledge merely increases his  
heartache. NET

# Futility of Self-indulgent pleasure

Ecc 2:1 I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself." And behold, it too was futility. 2 I said of laughter [partying NET], "It is madness," and of pleasure, "What does it accomplish?" 3 I explored with my mind how to stimulate my body with wine while my mind was guiding me wisely, and how to take hold of folly [the effects of behaving foolishly], until I could see what good there is for the sons of men to do under heaven the few years of their lives.

Solomon does not lose control  
during the process of drinking.

## Futility of materialism

Ecc 2:4 I enlarged my works: I built houses for myself, I planted vineyards for myself; 5 I made gardens and parks for myself and I planted in them all kinds of fruit trees; 6 I made ponds of water for myself from which to irrigate a forest of growing trees. 7 I bought male and female slaves and I had homeborn slaves. Also I possessed flocks and herds larger than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. 8 Also, I collected for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I provided for myself male and female singers and the pleasures of men--many concubines.

9 Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood by me. 10 All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor. 11 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.



Wisdom vs. folly (foolish  
behavior and ideas. – NET)

Ecc 2:12 So I turned to consider wisdom, madness and folly; for what will the man do who will come after the king except what has already been done? 13

And I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. 14 The wise man's eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I know that one fate befalls them both. 15 Then I said to myself, "As is the fate of the fool, it will also befall me. Why then have I been extremely wise?" So I said to myself,

"This too is vanity." 16 For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man as with the fool, inasmuch as in the coming days all will be forgotten. And how the wise man and the fool alike die!

Futility of being a workaholic!

Ecc 2:18 Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me. (19) And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun. This too is vanity. (20) Therefore I completely despaired of all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun. (21) When there is a man who has labored with wisdom, knowledge and skill, then he gives his legacy to one who has not labored with them. This too is vanity and a great evil.

Painful days – restless nights!

Ecc 2:22 For what does a man get  
in all his labor and in his striving  
with which he labors under the  
sun? (23) Because all his days his  
task is painful and grievous; even at  
night his mind does not rest. This  
too is vanity.

Enjoy work – though it accomplishes nothing lasting

Ecc 2:24 There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God.  
(25) For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?

Ecc 2.25 I also perceived that this  
ability to find enjoyment<sup>110</sup> comes  
from God.<sup>111</sup>

Without the peace God gives, we  
are unable to enjoy life on this  
earth because there is no comfort  
in our death.

Ecc 2.26 For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This too is vanity and striving after wind.