

Ecclesiastes 1:1-18
For the week of April 16, 2023

Reflection

1. What were some of the takeaways, for you, from Sunday's sermon?

2. Were there questions, comments, concerns...?

The prologue (1:2–11) is the second wise man's introduction before the reader encounters the Preacher's speech. It essentially sets the mood for what follows, giving a foretaste of the conclusion that the Preacher reached in his exploration for meaning in this world. The tone is somber and expresses the conclusion that while there is a lot of activity in the world, it is tedious. To use a modern image, we are like rats on a wheel, running constantly but getting nowhere.¹

Observation (vs. 1-4)

3. What is the Preacher saying in these verses?

Interpretation

Note: The Hebrew word for vanity contains the meaning "mist, vapor, breath" and has also been translated "meaningless".

4. "Vanity of vanities" is a bookend statement by the Preacher in verse 1 as well as his conclusion in chapter 12 verse 8. How do you define this statement?

¹ August H. Konkel and Tremper Longman III, [*Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Vol 6: Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs*](#) (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2006), 264.

5. The phrase “under the sun” is used 28 times through the book of Ecclesiastes. What does it mean?

Application

6. Do you struggle with focusing on the things “under the sun”? Why or why not?

Observation (vs. 5-7)

7. Summarize the verses.

Interpretation

Note: The Hebrew verb “*sha’ap*” translated “hastens or hurries” means to ***pant with fatigue***.

8. As the Preacher uses nature as an example, what is the point he is trying to make?

Application

9. How do you rise above feelings of life being monotonous, meaningless, and/or repetitive?

Observation (vs. 8-11)

10. What is the preacher saying?

Interpretation

One commentary gives an alternative view of verse 8:

**All things are weary.
No one is able to speak,
the eye is not satisfied by seeing,
and the ear is not filled by hearing.²**

11. How do you interpret this?

12. Looking at verses 9-11, with all the technological, medical, and scientific advances, has much changed in the last 3,000 years? Why or why not?

Application

13. Do these verses show the need for the gospel in your life? Why or why not?

² Duane A. Garrett, [*Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*](#), vol. 14, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 287.

Observation (vs. 12-18)

14. Summarize these verses.

Interpretation

15. Why is the Preacher showing that pursuing wisdom brings about futility, anxiety, and sorrow in wisdom? Do you agree? Why or why not?

Application

16. When troubled, do you seek more to understand the circumstances or have faith in God's sovereignty? Why?