

VANITIES UNDER THE SUN

King David had a son who became the kingly preacher. He searched for knowledge and wisdom. What did he learn? “All is vanity” (Ecclesiastes 1:2). “What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun? . . . All things are full of labor; man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. . . . And there is nothing new under the sun. . . . And indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind” (1:3, 8, 9, 14). King Solomon truly did seek ambitiously for all the same things that men still seek today, but all his earthly pursuits ended with utter emptiness.

Solomon searched and pondered, and what he found were words of truth (Ecclesiastes 12:10). He learned that much in men’s lives is vain. What earthly gains a man may achieve are of little profit because such pursuits are not of any lasting value to the soul of man (6:3). The cyclical nature of things in the heavens and on the earth illustrates this. From the paths of the stars to weather patterns to the continual passing away of each generation of men (1:4-7), what is each man really accomplishing between the time of his birth and his death? Great laborious achievements, increasing satisfaction of wealth and distinguishing quests for knowledge all end with unsatisfied and unfulfilled hands because none of it can be taken with a man when he departs this life. Fleshly pleasures that produce happiness are just another endeavor of “grasping for the wind.” All men die leaving everything to another person, to another generation to repeat the *nothing-new-under-the-sun* cycle.

If all is vanity, is there any purpose to life beyond the immediate moment? What light does Solomon shed for man to help him deal with the injustices, inconsistencies and inequities which are everywhere? God has put eternity in man’s heart (Ecclesiastes 3:11), and without God there is truly no hope. The soul of man cannot be satisfied without fellowship with his Creator. The goodness of labor that supplies a man’s needs and enjoyment is from the hand of God (2:24). “It is good . . . to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it is his heritage” (5:18). God also desires a man to live joyfully with his wife (9:9). Yet, “God made man upright” (7:29). “. . . It will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. But it will not be well with the wicked” (8:12-13). The man who truly fears God learns important life lessons of the heart. He soberly applies the command to fear and obey Him because he knows “God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil” (12:13-14).