

VANITY VERSUS AN ABUNDANT LIFE IN CHRIST (ECCLESIASTES 1)

[Ecclesiastes 1:1 (Introduction)]

The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

[The words of the "qoheleth". Qoheleth actually means a collector or assembler, which can then mean one who gathers collections of wisdom, as would be the case here, or it can also mean the assembling of people, to then hear those said sayings of wisdom. The root of that word is "qahal" which is used for the assembly of God's people. Ecclesiology then means the study of the church, the body or congregation of God's people. That can mean for us, as we are in the time of the New Covenant that we have in Christ, what Jesus gave His disciples, and then to us, His "Great Commission, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20) That then can be summed in the Great Commandments of God, to love Him with all of our heart, soul, strength and mind and the loving our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:30-31). What complements Jesus' "Great Commission" and "Great Commandments", is what the Apostle Paul told Timothy that the "Holy Scriptures, [which] are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17) We can then glean from the wisdom of Solomon, as 1 Kings 4:32 says, that he is said to have "spoke[n] three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five". Solomon was the most direct son of David who became king in Jerusalem. It is therefore deduced that Solomon is the Preacher/Qoheleth who began by saying:]

[Ecclesiastes 1:2 (The Vanity of Life)]

"Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher [Qoheleth]; "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

[Vanity="hebel", emptiness, futile, meaningless.¹ We'll be looking further at what he meant by saying "all is vanity", in context that is. Yet stated up front, so no one gets discouraged, Solomon is speaking of the contrast between the having a temporal world-view of life versus having an eternal mindset. Obviously, if someone were to say, as you are eating an ice-cream cone, that it is all vanity, you would likely say something like, "yah, whatever, all I know is that it is tasty". And while it may seem disingenuous, meaning one is truly unaware or uninformed, and even naive, to say something like, "I'd rather have Jesus than a mountain of gold", since they have never experienced the having a vast amount of wealth, or a mountain

1 <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/1892.htm>

of gold, yet with the understanding that comes from the wisdom of God, you don't have to have experienced all of the evils and entrapments of this world to know of what was just read, "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher; "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Once again, when something is repeated in the Word, the Scriptures, it is meant for an added emphasis, for us to recognize the importance of what is being said, and IT IS a major theme in Ecclesiastes. While Solomon did indeed experience having a great amount of wealth, of which he is then saying "all is vanity", it is said that "One primary reason some scholars question the claim that Solomon is the Qoheleth is that other Old Testament passages detail Solomon's spiritual fall (**1 Kings 11:4-8**) but don't refer to a personal re-awakening...Th[is] book details the lessons and regrets of a man near the end of his life. Solomon might well have penned these words close to his own death. The struggles he experienced near the end of his reign might have triggered conviction, as well", as he was told (**1 Kings 11:9-13**) that His kingdom would be taken from him except for one tribe [out of twelve] that God would leave for his son to reign over.² Solomon is said to have "surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom" (**1 Kings 10:23**) and he also collected or assembled together "seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart [from God]. For it was so, when **Solomon was old**, that his wives turned his heart after other gods [that means that if he indeed repented he was older than old]; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David." (**1 Kings 11:3-4**) Hopefully, Solomon did indeed write the book of Ecclesiastes, as it speaks of one who has a heart of repentance towards God, as we can cheat and read at the end of the book to where Solomon says, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil". (**Eccl. 12:13-14**) Likewise with us, it is not too late, until it is too late. As God's Word tells us, through the Apostle Paul, "We then, as workers together with Him [Christ] also **plead with you** not to receive the **grace of God in vain**. For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (**2 Corinthians 6:1-2**) It can be said that Jesus is the "Qoheleth", who is gathering God's people to hear the Word of God, even now! And we are being pleaded with to not receive the grace of God in vain and that now is our time of salvation, RIGHT NOW! Each and every day we are to be living in our salvation then that is in Christ Jesus! Now, He is gathering His people together, now by the goodness of God He is calling us to repentance, to have a change of mind to turn to Him for the forgiveness of our sins against God, through Christ Jesus, and to begin a new life that is in Christ. Now, He is also calling us all to abide in Him, in Christ. As Jesus said, "**Abide** [meno: abide,

2 <https://www.gotquestions.org/Qoheleth-in-Ecclesiastes.html>

continue, dwell, remain] **in Me, and I in you.** As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide **in Me.** I am the Vine, you are the branches. He who abides **in Me, and I in him,** bears much fruit; **for without Me you can do nothing.** If anyone does not abide **in Me,** he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned." (**John 15:4-6**) Abiding in Christ, what does that mean? Jesus said, **"If you love Me, keep My commandments.** And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the **Spirit of truth,** whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. **I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you."** (**John 14:15-18**) Right after that, "Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered and said to him, **"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me."** (**John 14:22-24**) That is then what is called "Communion/Fellowship with Christ" (Greek koinonia: in fellowship, sharing, contribution, participation). **1 John 1:6-7** says, "If we say that we have fellowship [koinonia] with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship [koinonia] with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." The Apostle Peter tells us that to some, Jesus is a **"A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. They stumble, being disobedient to the word,** to which they also were appointed. But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you **out of darkness into His marvelous light;** who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy." (**1 Peter 2:8-10**)

The Apostle Peter also spoke to a crowd of people who were amazed at the healing of a lame man at the temple in Jerusalem, and said **"Repent therefore and be converted,** that your **sins may be blotted out,** so that **times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,** and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." (**Acts 3:12-21**) "Times of refreshing" is what Jesus meant when He said **"Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.** I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives

His life for the sheep." (John 10:7-11)] That is how we love God, as He first loved us! (1 John 4:19) We'll presume, Solomon continues:]

[Ecclesiastes 1:3-8 (The Vanity of Labor)]

What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun? One generation passes away, and another generation comes; but the earth abides forever. [Ie: Man dies but the earth continues. Undoubtedly Solomon knew that the earth as it is will not remain forever. As God said to Noah after the flood, "**While the earth remains**, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease." (Genesis 8:22)] The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it arose. The wind goes toward the south, and turns around to the north; the wind whirls about continually, and comes again on its circuit. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; to the place from which the rivers come, there they return again. All things are full of labor; man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

[While the wisdom that comes from God may be rare in the hearts and minds of man, it wasn't just Solomon who had wisdom in the those days. Agur (Ah-goor) the son of Jakeh (yaw-keh) tells us in **Proverbs 30:15-16** , "The leech has two daughters—Give and Give! There are three things that are never satisfied [aside from the leeches], four never say, "Enough!": The grave, the barren womb, the earth that is not satisfied with water—and the fire never says, "Enough!" While I am not intending to "ADD" to God's Word, I put as a side-note in my Bible that there are two more that could be added to that list of things that are never fully satisfied and always craves for more. 1. The lusts of the flesh (that is, the lusts of the carnal mind, what resides in the heart of man, which can include the lust for the flesh) 2. The pride of man. As the Apostle John tells us, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. [he's not referring to the love of God for the people of this world] If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the **lust** of the flesh, the **lust** of the eyes, and the **pride** of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And **the world is passing away**, and the lust of it; but **he who does the will of God abides forever**. (1 John 2:15-17) The pride of life. Solomon speaks on that:]

[Ecclesiastes 1:9-11 (The Vanity of Labor)]

That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which it may be said, "See, this is new"? It has already been in ancient times before us. There is no remembrance of former things, Nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come by those who will come after.

[The Apostle Paul tells us where all of this is heading. He said, "Then comes the end, when He [Christ] delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For **He must reign** till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that **God may be all in all.**" (1 **Corinthians 15:24-28**) To go along with that, Paul said in **Ephesians 1:22-23**, "And He [God] put all things under His [Christ Jesus'] feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills **All in all.**" Christ Jesus IS our All in all to bring us into the union of the Godhead of the Father, Son (Word) and Holy Spirit, that God may be All in all! Hopefully for us all, our perspective is what is written in **Revelation 12:11**, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their [carnal] lives to the death."]

[Ecclesiastes 1:12-13 (The Grief of Wisdom)]

I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised.

[Exercised, Hebrew root "anah", to be afflicted, chastened, tested. It is, as it can be said, that we are on this earth in this period of time, to be tried and tested, getting us ready for what God has in store for us for all of eternity. And also, for us to have a proper understanding that He alone is God and that we are His creation. The Apostle Paul once again, gives us a better understanding from **Romans 8**, saying, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the **glorious liberty of the children of God.** For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance." (**Romans 8:18-25**)]

[Ecclesiastes 1:14-18 (The Grief of Wisdom)]

I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed,

all is vanity and grasping for the wind. What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be numbered. I communed with my heart, saying, "Look, I have attained greatness, and have gained more wisdom than all who were before me in Jerusalem. My heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge." And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind. For in much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

[Christ Jesus Himself was described by Isaiah the prophet as a Man of sorrows. "He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him." (**Isaiah 53:3**) "For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (**1 Peter 2:20-25**)

To close, we want a knowledge and wisdom from God that is not in vain. In Paul's prayer in Ephesians, he said, "after I heard of your **faith in the Lord Jesus** and your **love for all the saints**, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: [Let this be a prayer for us as well] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the **knowledge of Him**, the eyes of your **understanding** being enlightened; that you may know what is the **hope** of His calling [joint-heirs, reign with Him-JESUS!], what are the riches of the glory of **His inheritance in the saints**, and what is the exceeding greatness of His **power toward us** who believe, according to the working of His **mighty power** which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And **He put all things under His feet**, and gave Him to be **head over all things to the church**, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills **All in all**." (**Eph. 1:15-23**) That we may know Him, put our trust in Him, and honor Him with our lives, in all that we say and do, in Christ Jesus we pray. AMEN. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (**1 Cor. 15:58**)]