

- Last week we continued our study in Proverbs. We looked at Proverbs 10-22 Wisdom from the King." Chapter 10 was written in special form as a "diptych" which contrasts wisdom and the lack of wisdom. Many of the Proverbs were studies on contrast, and we noted the parallel between Solomon's findings and Christ's own guidance that it was more blessed to give than to receive. Different Proverbs seem to have different themes, but all are studies in contrast: 12 about process, 13 about hard work, 14 about humility, 15 about our speech etc.
- Now we are going to start into the book of Ecclesiastes. This is also a book written by Solomon ([Ecclesiastes 1:1](#)) toward the end of his life to express all the things that the King has seen and lived through, and what is important in life.
- Solomon uses the word "vanity" a lot in this chapter. Dictionary.com has a lot of definitions for the word "vanity." It's clear from the Hebrew and the context that he is using the term in the context of #4. noun, plural vanities. 1. excessive pride in one's appearance, qualities, abilities, achievements, etc.; character or quality of being vain; conceit: *Failure to be elected was a great blow to his vanity.* 2. an instance or display of this quality or feeling. 3. something about which one is vain or excessively proud: *His good looks are his greatest vanity.* 4. lack of real value; hollowness; worthlessness: *the vanity of a selfish life.* 5. something worthless, trivial, or pointless. 6. vanity case. 7. dressing table.
- Solomon starts by writing a summary of the book when he writes "vanity of vanities, all is vanity." He means anything we might strive for on this earth is ultimately worthless. ([Ecclesiastes 1:2](#))
- Solomon remarks that people will ultimately gain nothing but the earth will endure. In doing so, Solomon comments on the water cycle and wind circuits. Long before science proved those things, Solomon somehow perceived them. Those who say that the Bible is not a science book could do with a careful reading of [Ecclesiastes 1:3-7](#).
- Solomon remarks that nothing is new even when people are fascinated by what they think is novel - it has all been done before, and says that there is no end to trying to satisfy our eyes and ears anyway. ([Ecclesiastes 1:8-11](#))
- Solomon closes the introduction by saying he spent his whole life becoming wise and reaching the height of what we call wisdom. But he admits all this is folly because he says "what is crooked cannot be made straight" and "he who increases knowledge increases sorrow." ([Ecclesiastes 1:12-18](#)). The former saying is probably referring to mistakes in the past which we have made (we often call it "water under the bridge"). The last statement means the more you know, the more you become aware of how bad things really are here on earth.
- Solomon will point out in his summary to the book that because all is vanity here, we can only set our sights on things above. Paul echoes this sentiment often. In expounding on life and the problems in it, he concludes that all things will work out if we trust God. ([Romans 8:28](#)).

- In the second chapter, Solomon begins by listing all the things he tried to satisfy himself. He mentions lots of things like vineyards, gardens, parks, orchards, pools, slaves, herds/flocks, houses, silver, gold, singers, and concubines. He says he had more than anyone, ever. But in the end, none of it satisfied him. (Ecclesiastes 2:1-10) No matter how much of anything we get, someone will always have more. Have you ever wanted something and thought your life would be happy if you had that thing and you finally obtained it? What happened then?
- Christ will essentially say the same thing when he urges us not to put our faith in things here on earth “where moth and rust corrupt and where thieves steal” but to put our treasure in heaven. (Matthew 6:19-20)
- Next Solomon tries something that is not material – wisdom. He accumulated wisdom but ultimately found that unsatisfying as well. (Ecclesiastes 2:11-17)
- Solomon was obtaining wisdom from the wrong source – earthly wisdom, not spiritual wisdom. James explains the difference (James 3:13-18)
- Solomon concludes the second chapter by explaining that others can come along and enjoy what one has worked so hard to produce (no doubt others were enjoying his parks and eating the fruit from his trees, for example), and that God alone will bless whom He chooses to bless, one can’t make it happen. (Ecclesiastes 2:18-26)
- Solomon opens the third chapter of Ecclesiastes by noting that there are appropriate times for just about all types of activity, even opposites. (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8)
- Solomon then talks about God’s nature and how we are eternal like Him but even though we can’t hope to understand God, we should strive to seek Him and enjoy His gifts on this earth. (Ecclesiastes 3:9-15)
- Solomon concludes by noting that all things are returning to the dust from which we all created, and that God is testing us in the meantime to ensure we have the right perspective on our lives. (Ecclesiastes 3:16-22)

Questions:

1. Who wrote Ecclesiastes and what is the book’s main point?
2. What does Solomon mean when he uses term “vanity?”
3. What is vanity according to Solomon?
4. Are there concepts in the Bible which were later proven by science?
5. What is really new?
6. Can we ever really be satisfied, why or why not?
7. What does Solomon mean when he says: “what is crooked cannot be made straight?”
8. What is the logical conclusion if we cannot trust things on this earth?
9. Name a few of the things Solomon tried to satisfy himself on this earth.
10. What is the first non-material thing Solomon tries to satisfy himself? Does it?
11. What is the difference in earthly wisdom and spiritual wisdom?
12. Are there appropriate times for even things we consider negative like war?
13. What does God want us to do on this earth?