

01-02-11b Ecclesiastes

Let's resume our study now in Ecclesiastes chapter 1. We've refreshed our minds about the subject matter and the approach that Solomon takes to that subject in Ecclesiastes chapter 1, particularly this introductory section in verses 3 through 11, which really defines the limits. We've talked about God defining the limits of a human life. Well, Solomon has established the limits of what his investigation is going to be.

What is the nature of this book? What is he talking about? He is talking about the impermanence of anything man does in this life. Where is the permanence? Where is the Yitron, the prophet, the thing that you take away after the sun has set? And to reinforce this, not only do we have vocabulary clues, which we have discussed at some length, we've seen the word Hahal, the verb which means to travel or to walk or go. We've seen the going out and coming in, the verb Bo, used of the generations that go out and come in.

We have Hahal and Bo. And then the sun rises. We have a word for rise.

And then going in or going down is Bo. And then it hastens to the place where it arose. The wind is going forth.

And you have Hahal used for that. The rivers that run into the sea or flowing to the sea, to the place from which they issue forth or go forth. There they return again.

And you have Hahal used twice there. All of these things are referring back to the human generations that are introduced in verse 4. One generation goes out. Another generation comes in.

There are, in addition to vocabulary clues, there are also structural clues here. And I mentioned a few lessons ago that our major structural device that we find so often in Hebrew Scriptures is present here as well. There is a chiastic structure to verses 3 through 11.

And I want to quickly diagram that for you here. And you may want to draw this out on paper. We don't have to write out the entire verse.

We'll just put the main points. But I'm going to come over from my left margin and leave a little bit of gap to draw the brackets. I'm going to make a note here about verse 3. Verse 3, What is the profit? What profit is there to a man from all his labor, which he labors under the sun? And we had that doubling of labor and laboring here.

I'm just going to put labor slash laboring. It's the repetition of the Hebrew verb amal. And then we had under the sun, which defines the limits of time, limits of human life, to which the rising and setting of the sun refers.

In verse 4, we have generations. I'll just abbreviate that G-E-N-S. Generations.

They go forth and they go in. The earth, the earth endures l'olam, L apostrophe O-L-A-M. The prefix there, the L, is the Hebrew preposition that means to or unto.

Prefixed to a verb form, it often creates a preposition, just as the word to does in English. So we have l'olam, to the ages, unto the ages. The earth endures unto the ages in verse 4. Verse 5, we have the sun.

The sun rises. The sun goes in. You can see the correspondence back to verse 4 for going in.

And then it pants or hastens to rise again. Then in verse 6, literally it says, going forth to the south and turning to the north, the wind turns. That's the wind.

It turns about, it blows, and it returns back to the source from where it came forth. Then in verse 7, we have the rivers. The rivers go forth.

Halak once again. But the sea is not filled. I want to include that.

The sea is not filled. To the place it came forth, the streams return to come forth again. Then in verse 8, we have all words.

And you can put in parentheses things. It can be translated either way. I prefer words because of the verb here.

All words are toilsome. Man is not able to speak. The eye is not satisfied to see.

And the ear is not filled to hear. Then in verse 9, He says, What has been is what will be. Now, you need to pay attention here because as you list these phrases in verse 9, they need to go one under another.

So the first line in verse 9, What has been is what will be. Below that, What has been done, Hebrew verb asah, is what will be done. Then start a new line for the third phrase.

There is no new thing, or there is nothing new, under the sun. Then in verse 10, Is there, and this is the translation I want to correct for you. Literally, if you translate this out of Hebrew, it says, Is there a word which can be spoken? Is there a word which can be spoken? Quote, Look, this is new.

I put an exclamation mark after that. Is there a word which can be spoken? Look, this is new. And you can see the blurry line between word and thing.

Can you say something? Look, this is new. Is there a word? This is literally what it says. Is there a word which can be spoken? Look, this is new.

It has already been, and literally this says, It has been numerous, or numerously. It's an adverb, but it's hard to render into English if you look at different translations. You'll see this rendered

different ways.

It has been numerously, and then literally you have la'olam again here. It's la'olamim. So this would be unto the ages which were before us.

So literal translation of verse 10, Is there a word which can be spoken? Look, this is new. It has been numerously. It has been many times.

Whatever somebody points to and says, Look, this is new. It has existed many times in the ages which were before us or looking back unto the ages which were before us. Verse 11, There is no remembrance of former things.

Let me give you my polished, refined translation. There is no remembrance of first things. Verse 11, There is no remembrance of first things.

This is first or former. I like first because the word here is from Rosh. That word occurs in the first verse of the Bible, first phrase of the Bible.

In the beginning, Ba-reshit. Well, the Ba means in. Resh, the R-S-H there, that's from Rosh.

That means head, at the head, at the beginning, at the first. There is no remembrance of first things. That's what it literally says.

Or of after things, latter things. There is no remembrance of first things or of after things, which will be. The after things which will be.

There is no remembrance of first things or of after things, which will be. For them, there is no remembrance among those who will be after. Sounds kind of awkward.

For them, these things, there will be no remembrance among those who will be after. And if it looks kind of strange in English, that's exactly how strange it looks in Hebrew. And there's so much going on between the words here because we're talking about the first things and the after things.

They're not going to be remembered. There will be no remembrance of them among the people who are going to be after. So the things are going to be after and the people are going to be after.

This whole situation is going to occur again in the future. New people, new things. Those things already exist now and they're not going to know it.

We're existing now with things. There were people that existed in the past with things, those hundred years ago people we spoke of in the first lesson this morning. And we don't have any remembrance of their things.

We've got our things now. If there was going to be a hundred years from now, those people

wouldn't remember our things, much less the things that were at the first. Okay? Well, I've left some space out here to the side because there is an amazing structure that Solomon has used to communicate these.

Not only has he used the vocabulary, but take a look at the correspondence of these verses. If you take a look at verse 5, we'll kind of start here in the middle. Remember where the sun rises and goes in and pants and rises again? Well, if you go down to verse 9, we have another reference to the sun.

There is nothing new under the sun. So, just as a starting place, draw yourself a bracket and leave yourself some room on both sides of it for verse 5 down to the third phrase of verse 9 because we have a repeating of vocabulary there. The sun is rising and going in, panting and rising again, but there is nothing new under the sun down here.

Well, let's go outside that to verse 4. Generations go forth and generations come in, but the earth endures unto the ages. Well, you'll notice that right down here in verse 10, whatever people say this is new, it has been numerously *laolamim*, *olam*, unto the ages. So, verse 10 has a bracket that comes out and comes outside our first bracket and goes up to verse 4. The earth endures unto the ages.

These things have been numerously unto the ages. If you come inside that 5-9c bracket and look at verse 6, you have the wind that goes forth to the south and turns again to the north. And if you come down to the second phrase of verse 9, what has been done is what will be done.

We talked about the wind. You can't see the wind. You just see its effects.

It makes clothes flap. It makes things move. It blows down trees.

It ripples the water. It's the effects. And so, if you take verse 6, all of this blowing and going that the wind does comes down to the middle phrase of verse 9. What has been done is what will be done.

The wind turns its circuit, goes back to where it started, and blows again. When you come to verse 7, the rivers go forth, but the sea is not filled. Well, this comes down to 9a.

What has been is what will be. We talked about the rivers with their constant flowing. We had the three different aspects of human life in these three different metaphors.

The sun emphasizes the beginning and the ending, the rising and the setting. The wind emphasizes what is accomplished during that time. The rivers flowing from the mountains down to the sea emphasize the duration.

It's a durative process. Wind kind of comes and goes, but the streams basically are flowing all the time, so the duration of life in between its beginning and end is what's emphasized by the rivers.

And you can see this tremendous correspondence because here the river is going forth, but the sea is not filled.

Where it came forth, it returns to come forth again. What has been is what will be. That water is going to go back up and it's going to come down again.

And some other life that follows a path down to the sea. The wind that has its effect, it goes forth, it turns and comes forth and blows again. The wind, it's its effect, the driving force, the effort that it puts out, the movement, the kinetic energy.

What has been done is what will be done. And outside of that, the sun rising, going in, panting to rise again. There is nothing new under the sun.

Outside of that, verse 4, the generations go forth and go in, but the earth endures unto the ages. Verse 10, is there something which can be spoken? Look, this is new. It has been numerously unto the ages which were before us.

And so you can see, and this is a rough approximation, the ideas in verse 4 about the generations going out and coming in are parallel to everything you have in verse 10. Is there something to be spoken and say, this is new? It has been numerously, just like the generations, numerous generations going forth and coming in, the earth enduring forever. Outside of that, look at verse 3. What profit is there from all the labor that a man labors unto the sun? Where is that going to come down to? It's going to come down to verse 11.

3 to 11. There is no remembrance of first things or last things. For them there will be no remembrance.

And you remember in verse 3, we had the repetition of the verb amal. What profit is there to a man from his labor which he labors, from his effort which he efforts, if you will, his amal that he amals under the sun? Well, you have remembrance repeated twice in verse 11. There is no remembrance.

No remembrance. So labor, laboring. No remembrance.

No remembrance. There are many vocabulary ties that I could show you in the midst of this from the Hebrew. But you remember that one of the great things about achaism is not only does it help us in the same way that a distic or a two-line parable, two lines out of a poem parallel each other and each one completes and illustrates and amplifies the other.

Well, these are sort of two-line ideas that are separated in brackets. And so each of those performs the same function that a two-line thing would in Proverbs, for example. But also in achaism like this, you have something at the center that is the highlight.

It's the emphatic point. Whatever you find at the center, at the crisscross point of achaism or in

the center of all of these brackets, that is the highlight. That's the main point.

What do we have in the middle of this one? All words, all debris are toilsome, yegeah. And this word has the idea of trouble. We talked about Amal up here having the idea of the effort and the exhausting nature of the work.

It's the effort that is involved up at the top there. But here in the middle, all words, all things, whatever you want to talk about, you express things in words. So devar is an excellent choice here.

All things, all words, whatever you want to talk about, it's toilsome. And this word for toil or toilsomeness, yegeah, emphasizes not the effort involved but the pain and suffering, the sorrow. Toil in the sense of the negative aspects of it.

I'd like to take just a little bit of a look at this because we have other passages of Scripture that give us a different view of the toil that takes place under the sun. Look, for example, at Psalm 89. Psalm 89.

We're going to look specifically at verse 47. Psalm 89.47. That's where we had the futility idea. But we also have a contrasting idea.

Instead of futility or instead of the labor involved, turn a few pages over to Psalm 104 in verse 23. Here the psalmist is talking about God's work in creation. In verse 19, he appoints the moon for seasons.

The sun knows it's going down. Psalm 104.20, you make darkness and it is night in which all the beasts of the forest creep about. The young lions roar after their prey and seek their food from God.

This is the nocturnal predators he's talking about. Then in verse 22 of Psalm 104, when the sun rises, they gather together and lie down in their dens. Man goes out to his work and to his labor until the evening.

Well, both of these words for work and labor are positive words. You have the second one there, labor, is from ebed, which is the same root from which we get the idea of servant. The word servant is ebed, E-B-E-D.

And so this is your service and your work. And there's a positive tone in this scripture. Look at Psalm 90 in verse 10.

The days of our lives are 70 years, and if by reason of strength they are 80 years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow. Well, here's your yegeia. Here is your toil.

It is soon cut off and we fly away. Who knows the power of your anger? So in the center of this

chiasm where it's toilsome, not able to speak, seeing doesn't satisfy, hearing doesn't fill, there's no answer. Well, no answer to what? What is it that can't be spoken? What is it that can't be perceived by the sight? What is it that can't be heard with the ear? Because that's the emphatic point.

When you hear about Ecclesiastes chapter 1, you look at this section, people always talk about futility. They talk about, well, it's just an endless cycle. But that's not really what's in view.

What's in view is that there is no permanence. There's nothing that lasts as a result of it. You can't even... What are you going to speak that hasn't already been spoken? Are you going to build a monument? Are you going to start a society? Are you going to write a book? Are you going to build a pyramid? It doesn't matter what you do.

Probably one of the most permanent things on the surface of the planet are the great pyramids that were built back before the time of Abraham. The pyramids were existing in Joseph's day and had been for hundreds of years. And we look at those and we think, well, there's something that lasted.

Well, can you or anybody you know name who built the pyramids? Who was the architect? Who were the builders? How were they built? They had a big special trying to figure out how they were built. Nobody knows how it was done. Who was buried in them? What sarcophagus is found at the center of the Great Pyramid or any of the other pyramids? What was the purpose of the Sphinx? Why did they build that? Who does that commemorate? Even though they piled up these rocks and they've weathered for thousands of years, what do we really know about them? People are still scratching their heads and getting all mystical over them because nobody really knows.

The monument has lost its meaning. Even if you can name the pharaoh, look it up in a book and find the sarcophagus that might have been found in a particular tomb that has lasted all these years, well, what were his accomplishments? What was he known for? What kind of man was he? Did he produce anything that in God's eyes is permanent and lasting? If he was an Egyptian pharaoh, you'd tend to suspect that probably not. He was probably a godless pagan, civilized savage.

So, anything you speak is just a toilsome exercise in futility. You can look wherever you want under the sun. You're not going to find the answer.

You can listen to whatever you choose to listen to. You can go and get L. Ron Hubbard's Dianetics. You can get any of the cults, any of the religions, Scientology.

Scientology is big among Hollywood stars now, but it doesn't hold their marriages together, does it? You've got Tom Cruise and his wife of 11 years splitting up. And not that that's the measure of a religion. There are plenty of believers who split up as well.

But anything you listen to, anything you look at, anything you try to talk about in this world, you're not going to find the answer to the question, where is the permanence? That's the point. And you see it right there in the center. We've been given it in a couple of different ways.

How could it be more clear? Solomon has used vocabulary to link these things together and talk about human existence. He's used structure to point out and underscore and emphasize. Why is he doing all this? Because we're getting into advanced thinking.

This is the pinnacle of wisdom in the Old Testament age that Solomon possesses. And so he's going to do his best to try to communicate it on many levels to get it across. There's a lot more we could say about these vocabulary words that are used here.

I want to focus though on the result because as you come back to Ecclesiastes chapter 1 and look at verse 11, it is the wrap up or the answer to what we had in verse 3. What is the permanent result from all the labor in which he toils? There is no remembrance of first things. Nor any remembrance of last things among those who will come last. There's no remembrance.

So labor and labor, no remembrance, no remembrance. It doesn't last. Well, that is the introductory.

This is the preface, if you will. You open a book up. You see who the author is.

You see what the title is. You turn a few pages and you find the preface. This is where the author introduces the scope and nature of his work.

And this is what Solomon has done in verses 3 through 11. So hopefully now with the extensive digging that we have done in this section, we understand what the ground is. We're not trying to see whether everything is futile, everything is vain and empty.

We're trying to figure out how you redeem the time. What is it that produces something eternal and permanent that goes beyond the limits that have been set in the rising and setting of the sun? So then in verse 12 he continues. He says, I, Kohelet, 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 under heaven is very similar to under the sun. If the sun is in the heavens, that's where its track goes. This burdensome task God has given to the sons of men by which they may be exercised, by which they may be tested.

Well, he's going to seek and explore. He doesn't just say, I sought and explored. He says, I set my heart, I set my mind to this.

This became my goal. Because he's got tools and he's got resources like no one has ever had. If there's anyone that can pierce the envelope and answer this question, it's going to be Solomon.

So he says, this became my purpose to seek and search out. And what is the main avenue? It's wisdom. He's going to use wisdom to seek out the answer to this question.

In verse 13, the word for wisdom is Chakma. C-H-A-C-H-M-A-H. Chakma.

Chakma is a word that we've encountered in the past. It's used in Proverbs for wisdom from the word of God. And in this particular case, we have to ask ourselves the question, is he saying that he's going to seek this out by what he knows of God's word? Is this the wisdom that was taught him by David, his father, the wisdom that cries out in the streets in Proverbs? All that is done under heaven, this burdensome task, God has given to the sons of man by which they may be exercised.

But what does the context of verse 13 tell us? This is one of the few places in Ecclesiastes where he does mention God outright and view life as something that has been assigned to man by God. So what does the context suggest for this first use of Chakma, wisdom? This would be biblical wisdom. This would be spiritual wisdom.

This is the nature of the wisdom that Solomon asked for when God told him, ask for what you will and I'll grant it to you. He said, I want wisdom to rule this people for God's glory. So it is not only practical wisdom but also spiritual wisdom.

So he set his heart to use everything that he knows not only in the physical realm but also in the spiritual realm to investigate this burdensome task that God has given to the sons of men by which they may be exercised. He goes on to say in verse 14, I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and indeed all is havel and grasping or chasing the wind. Well, all the works that are done under the sun.

We already now, based on our introductory studies, we have a pretty good idea of how to take some of these phrases. We know what under the sun means. It's talking about the earthly lifespan of individual humans.

Works that are done under the sun, we know that this is talking about human efforts. It's talking about what takes place while the stream is running down to the sea, while the wind is blowing, while the sun is shining. So these are physical works.

These are tasks. It doesn't say that they're illegitimate. It doesn't say that they're a waste of time.

Is it futile to wash the dishes today because you washed them yesterday and you're going to have to wash them again tomorrow? Is it futile to dress yourself because you dressed yourself yesterday and you're going to have to dress yourself tomorrow? It's not a matter of futility or vanity. It's a matter of impermanence. The washing of things that you did yesterday and the day before didn't last.

Things got soiled and it has to be done again. It doesn't mean that it's not worth doing, but is there a lasting value? Wouldn't it be great if you could cut your grass once and not ever have to cut it again? I once had, and I need again, but I once had what I consider to be the best haircut I've ever had in my life and got out of the chair, looked in the mirror, and I thought, you know, this haircut is perfect. If my hair would just stop growing and stay this way for the rest of my life, I would be content.

But of course, it didn't last, and in the case of my hair, it doesn't take very long. I needed another haircut. I need one now.

Things don't last, but it doesn't mean that there was no point in getting that haircut. It wasn't vain or futile to get the haircut. It was needed and will be needed again.

So I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and indeed, all is temporary. All is short-term. It's here and it's gone.

And grasping for the wind or chasing the wind. We know that this phrase is another one that is going to recur in Ecclesiastes as a refrain from time to time. We're going to see this too is, in the English, vanity and a chasing or grasping for the wind.

Well, let's think about the concept. There's nothing remarkable in the phrase itself, chasing or grasping. This is pursuing.

The root meaning of the Hebrew verb here is to pursue. When you're chasing someone, what do you want to do? You want to grab them. So all of those ideas, chasing after in order to seize, to pursue something.

Well, what is the consequence of pursuing the wind? We've already seen the wind mentioned, and the nature of the wind that is in view in this passage is its constantly moving nature, the things that it impels. It flaps clothing, it moves water, it blows leaves, it can make a sound. But it turns around and goes back.

So has anyone ever chased the wind and caught it and seized and laid hold of it? Well, the very nature of the wind, it's insubstantial. It doesn't stay in your hand if you grab it. The act of applause and clapping is driving the air from between your hands.

It's as though you tried to grab it and it didn't stay. And as the last of the air escapes from between your hands, you have a vibration that's sent through the remaining air, and that's what a clap is. So why would human effort be compared to pursuing the wind? Well, suppose you try to pursue the wind, and it's not difficult to imagine a situation when you're little or you have little kids around and you find dandelions in the yard or dandelions in the field, and you pull those little white ones up that are all puffy and you hold it close to your mouth and you blow it, and you see the little parachutes all scatter in the wind.

Well, or you blow a bubble. You get your soap bubbles and blow a bubble, and it's floating in the air, and you see little kids especially chase those. Well, how long does that last? You do it when you're two or three years old, and this has almost become a symbol.

You see commercials where they show a mother and a little child, and the sun is shining, and it's kind of a fuzzy picture, and you see them blowing bubbles or blowing dandelions, and they're smiling, and it's a picture of innocence and youth. Why do we have that picture? Because that kind of thing doesn't last. You don't do that after you get to be four or five and you realize that you can't catch the little seeds, you can't catch the bubble, and if you do catch the bubble, it disappears as soon as you touch it.

And so after that, you're content to blow them and watch them float away, see how long they last. But you stop chasing them very early. It's one of the first things you try and then quit as a child because there's no payoff.

There's nothing permanent that you get from chasing the wind or chasing something that's floating in the wind. I used to come home after church when I was a little boy out in California, and my dad very often would stop at the store and either get us balsa airplanes that you could put together and they had rubber bands. On a good day, when we were flush and had an extra nickel, we could get the ones with the wind-up propeller, or he would get us a kite, and that's back when you had paper kites with sort of like balsa sticks in there or cheap pine sticks.

We'd put them together after lunch and fly them in the backyard and roll out a big, long thing of string. Things being what they are, the laws of entropy taking place, sooner or later the string would break. And the wind typically blew in a direction where those kites would separate and go 3 or 4 blocks.

It seemed to me to be north. I don't know what direction it actually was, but it was toward the place where there were no houses and there was a big, open, empty lot. It's all been developed now, but we would have to roll in what string we had left and go up the street and go past the street and past the street and past the street and then get up into what we called the ravines, which was this bulldozed area where nothing grew, there were no houses, and then look all through these ditches and uneven ground trying to find our kite because the wind had blown it away.

Well, after that happened a few times, and we knew that we could probably get another kite the next week, we got tired of running all the way up there and chasing the kite and just get a spare kite, get the reserve kite, go fly a plane, do something different. So what does it mean when it says, All is Havel, it's vapor and chasing the wind? When you get finished with all of this labor, what do you have in your hand? Can you hold a vapor? They used to have that song, Wendy, How Can You, I think it was that one, or Georgie Girl, one of those songs from back in the 60s where it says, how can you... Oh, no, I know what it was, it was Sound of Music. What are you

going to do about Maria? How can you hold a moonbeam in your hand? And one of those other songs that Wendy has, Stormy Lies and Flashes and all that, but part of it says, how can you hold the wind in your hand? You can't, that's the bottom line, you can't.

When all is done, your hand is still going to be empty after all that effort. And he amplifies this in verse 15. What is crooked cannot be made straight.

This is one of the things that has always existed. Somebody's going to point to something and say, look, this is new. We found a way to make the crooked straight.

And this goes on all around us today. We have people saying, we have got a therapy. We have got a medication.

We have got a system. We've got a step plan. We've got a new book.

We've got a tape series. We've got a ministry. We've got an idea that's new.

And it's going to make the crooked straight. It's going to fix this problem in your soul or in someone else's soul. It is going to fill in that which is lacking.

We have found a way to fill in the lack in your soul. Is your marriage getting old and stale? We were at the book fair and in the nonfiction section, I never saw so many, here's how to fill in the lack in your life. Things about your physical relationships, your social relationships, your marital relationships, your parent-child relationships.

Solomon says, look, I have seen all the works that are done under the sun. I've thought about the things that have gone before, the things that are and the things that will be. And if I look at what's going on now, I've seen everything before and I've seen everything that's coming.

This is Solomon's whole point in this chiasm. I've already seen it. If I look at it with wisdom, everything that I see in front of me, you can't tell me, well, you know, in the future they're going to fix that.

Or, you know, a thousand years ago, they knew how to fix that. You see people, especially on Channel 13, PBS, they love to go out into aboriginal, uncharted jungles and find these primitive people and they say, you know, these people have got it figured out. This is what we've lost.

They've got this innocence. They don't have a word for crime and they don't have a jail. Well, they're sitting there eating grubs.

Of course they can't even think high enough to commit a crime. But they look at this as an ideal and as a state to which we need to return. They say, you know, back in the ancient days, this is what they did thousands of years ago.

It's unchanged. We need to study this and learn from it because we can solve our modern

problems by going back to the past. Solomon says, look, you look around you.

What you see today is the same thing they had in the past and it's the same thing they're going to have in the future. Now he's saying, I've looked at it all. I've looked at everything that exists right now and that covers all of the past and all of the future.

So when Solomon looked at his day, he saw our day. Don't listen to people that tell you, oh, the teens today, we have to cut them some slack because they've got pressures like they've never been before. You go tell Anne Frank that teenagers today have got troubles that she didn't have.

You go tell Joseph when he's in prison in Egypt, when he's been sold into slavery into a caravan, doesn't know where he's going, that teens today have more problems than he had. You can look at any generation and what Solomon says is true. Don't buy this idea that, well, teens today, we've got to treat them differently because they've got pressures.

They said that 20, 30 years ago when we were all under the big threat of nuclear holocaust, oh, teens today, they're so worried about nuclear destruction. Well, now nobody's worried about nuclear destruction, but the teen suicide rate hasn't gone down. What is it? Well, it's not environment and this is no new thing.

Teens ought to be held just as accountable now as anybody has ever been held accountable. There's no excuse. There's nothing new under the sun.

There are crooked things and you can look around and you're never going to find, you're never going to see, you're never going to hear the thing that is going to straighten the crooked under the sun. When you look at lack, you see hunger. Jesus said, the poor you have with you always.

You can shovel rice. You can shovel food and supplies and what is lacking cannot be numbered. It has already happened in the past.

It is going to continue to happen in the future as long as you live under the sun. Human solutions, people are all the time going to come up and say, look, we found something new. We finally got the answer.

Now it's genetic engineering. We're going to change your chromosomes and fix your diseases. Your diet, we're going to fix your diet and you're going to live longer.

Well, they fix hardening of the arteries and now cancer gets us. They solve polio and a lot of the other diseases and new things cut us down. We're not seeing anything new in terms of the human condition and the human struggle.

It's the same as it has always been and always will be under the sun and that's what Solomon says. So then in verse 16, I communed with my heart saying, look, I have attained greatness. I have gained more wisdom than all who were before me in Jerusalem.

My heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge. So I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is pursuing the wind.

Well, this is where we're going to have to stop this morning as he goes in verse 18 to say, in much wisdom is much grief and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow. Is he talking about knowledge of the word of God? Is he talking about human wisdom? What is it that Solomon tried and had more of than anybody and ended up in the same place as anybody? My heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge and I found that in much wisdom is grief. He who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

What is it that he knew? What is it that he applied his wisdom to that caused this sorrow? That's the question for our next lesson. But in conclusion this morning, the thing that we know is and know from the beginning in our retrospective view of Ecclesiastes is great because we have an inkling of where this is going. We know that there is a truth that is outside the rising and setting of the sun.

We know that there is a way to redeem the time and we want to be careful not to be ensnared, not to be so caught up in the cyclical blowing of the wind and flowing of the river, rising and setting of the sun that we miss our opportunity to seize and lay hold of that which is permanent. We can grasp far more than the wind. We can lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven.

Well, we'll resume our study at this point next time but let's close here in a word of prayer.