NEW HEIGHTS

THIS LIFE UNDER THE SUN – A Study in Ecclesiastes

*WHY LIFE WILL NOT ADD UP – **Ch 1:1-18***

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October 11, 2026

Do you ever feel like life just does not add up?

- You do the right things, and things still go wrong.
- You work hard, and somebody else gets ahead.
- You make plans, and life changes them.
- You love people, and sometimes they hurt you.
- You save money, and something breaks.
- You reach the thing you thought would make you happy, only to discover that you're still looking for something else.

You can put so much effort into this life, only to discover that life does not add up to what you think it should.

This is exactly where the book of Ecclesiastes meets us. It doesn't pretend that life is easy, makes sense, or give shallow Christian answers to the complicated questions. Ecclesiastes asks an honest question: **"What do we really gain from all our effort?"**

> *The **words of the Preacher**, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.* ***Eccles 1:1***

Ekklesia - the gathered assembly.
Qoheleth - one who speaks to or addresses the gathered assembly.

The writer is gathering God's people together and saying, **"Let's talk honestly about life."** Let's talk about work. Let's talk about success. Let's talk about time. Let's talk about pleasure. Let's talk about wisdom. Let's talk about death.

Let's talk about the things we spend our lives chasing under the sun.

> ***Vanity of vanities**, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. **What does man gain by all the toil** at which he toils under the sun?* ***Eccles 1:3***

Hebel – Hebrew word for **breath, vapor, or mist**.

This life under the sun is **fleeting**.

You can build a career, make money, buy a house, raise a family, achieve a goal, receive the promotion, and check things off your list, and still have a feeling somewhere deep inside that says, **"Is this all there is to gain?**

> ***A generation goes**, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises, and **the sun goes down**, and hastens to the place where it rises. The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north; **around and around goes the wind**, and on its circuits the wind returns. **All streams run to the sea**, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again.* ***Eccles 1:4-7***

This life under the sun is like being on a **treadmill**.

> *All things are **full of weariness**; a man cannot utter it; the eye is **not satisfied** with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.* ***Eccles 1:8***

This life under the sun is **exhausting** and **never satisfies.**

> *What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and **there is nothing new under the sun**. Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already in the ages before us.* ***Eccles 1:9-10***

This life under the sun is **nothing new**.

> ***There is no remembrance of former things****, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after.* ***Eccles 1:11***

This life under the sun is eventually **forgotten**.

> *I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. And* ***I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven****. It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind.* ***What is crooked cannot be made straight****, and* ***what is lacking cannot be counted****. I said in my heart, "I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge." And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind.* ***For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.*** ***Eccles 1:12-18***

Greater understanding **does not give** us mastery over life.

THREE THINGS TO LEARN FROM ECCLESIASTES 1

1. Don't expect **achievement** to give you something **that lasts.** Start **investing in** what **outlasts you**.

(Matt 6:20)

Your career won't make you immortal. Your house won't make you immortal. Your bank account won't make you immortal. Your accomplishments won't make you immortal. You cannot work your way into permanence.

So, work hard. Build something meaningful. Pursue excellence. But don't ask your work to save you.

2. Don't expect **knowledge** to **make sense of life.** Start **trusting God** with what you **don't understand.**

(Prov 3:5-6)

You don't have to understand everything before you trust God. There will be things you never understand on this side of eternity. And that's okay.

Because **God never asked you to be sovereign.** That's His job. Your job isn't to know everything. Your job is to trust the One who does.

3. Don't expect **this life** to give you **what only eternity can**. Start **living in light of eternity.** (2 Cor 4:18)

The Gospel Hope

> *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing... For the creation was subjected to futility… in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory... For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved.* ***Romans 8:18-24***

So go back to the question: **"What do we really gain from all our effort?"**

You cannot control it all. You cannot understand it all. You cannot preserve it all. And you were never meant to. **Maybe the problem is that you've been asking your life to give you something it was never designed to give you.**

This life was never meant to be your savior; **Jesus is**!