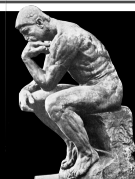


# Ecclesiastes The Wisdom of Meaning



## Theme: The Futility of All Human Endeavor

1:1  
1:2  
1:3-11

*Title:* The Words of the “Teacher” (Qoheleth - קֹהֵלֶת)

*Theme:* All Human Endeavor Is Empty (בְּתוֹם).

*Summary:* Support from Nature

- *Thesis:* There is no profit in human pursuits (1:3).
- *Proof:* The endless cycle of life and nature (1:4-11)
  - The endless succession of generations - (1:4)
  - The ceaseless rounds of nature - (1:5-7)
  - The repeated cycle of events - (1:8-11)

## The Futility of Human Achievement Demonstrated

1:12-2:17

*Personal Reflection on the Futility of Human Achievement*

- Futility seen by personal investigation of life (1:12-15)
- Futility seen by personal reflection on wisdom (1:16-17)
- Futility seen by personal experience of pleasure and projects (2:1-11)
- Futility seen by personal reflection on death (2:12-17)

## Personal Observations on the Futility of Human Effort

- Futility because you may not enjoy the fruit of your labor (2:18-26)
- Futility because you cannot change God’s inscrutable plans (3:1-15)
  - Thesis: Everything has its time - (3:1-8)
  - Conclusion: Toil is profitless - (3:9)
  - Reason: God’s design is inscrutable - (3:10-11)
  - Advice: Enjoy life as a gift from God - (3:12-13)
  - Purpose: So that you will fear God - (3:14-15)
- Futility because injustice is prevalent until God judges (3:16-4:3)
- Futility because of inappropriate motivations for work (4:4-16)
  1. Envy (4:4-6), 2. Greed (4:7-12), 3. Pride - (4:13-16)
- Futility because you may not enjoy the result of your labor (5:1-17)
  1. Rash Vows (5:1-7), 2. Corrupt Officials (5:8-9), 3. Covetousness - (5:10-17)
- Futility because only God enables you to enjoy life (5:18-6:9)

## The Limitation of Human Wisdom Presented

6:10-12  
6:11-8:17

*Thesis:* Everything Is Immutably and Inscrutably Foreordained

*Proof #1:* Mankind Will Never Understand the Purposes of God

- Man is unaware of the significance of adversity and prosperity (7:1-14)
- Man is unaware of the rarity of righteousness and wisdom (7:15-29)
- Man is unaware of the enigma of divine retribution (8:1-17)

## Proof #2: Mankind Will Never Understand His Own Future

- Man does not know if he will experience adversity or prosperity (9:1-10)
- Man does not know if his wisdom will be rewarded in this life (9:11-10:11)
- Man does not know the future so he must be wise with his words (10:12-20)
- Man does not know the future so he should work diligently (11:1-6)
- Man does not know the future so he should enjoy life (11:7-12:7)



- Enjoy life because death is certain. - (11:7-8)
- Enjoy life knowing God will judge. - (11:9-10)
- Live responsibly before old age and death come. - (12:1-7)

## Final Advice: Fear and Obey God in Light of Judgment

12:8  
12:9-10  
12:11-12  
12:13-14

*Theme Restated:* The Futility of Human Endeavor

The Words of the “Teacher” (Qoheleth - קֹהֵלֶת) are wise.

The Words of the “Wise” Are Valuable.

*Final Conclusion Presented:* Fear God and Obey His Commands (12:13)

- Thesis: Fear God and obey His commands. (12:13)
- Rationale: God will be the final judge of your life. (12:14)

1:1  
**Prologue**

1:11  
1:12  
**Empiricism**  
The Futility of Human Endeavor

6:9  
6:10  
**Reflection**  
The Limitations of Human Wisdom

12:7  
12:8  
**Epilogue**

**Fleeting**  
unsubstantial, illusive  
(111 verses = 3 x 37 in 1:1-6:9)

**Key Word: “Futility, Emptiness” (הֶבֶל)**  
vapor, mist, frustrating, meaningless, illusive  
(The numerical value of הֶבֶל is 37)

**Mysterious**  
enigmatic, perplexing  
(111 verses = 3 x 37 in 6:10-12:14)

The preacher (Qoheleth - קֹהֵלֶת) carefully choose wise words to describe his experiences and reflections on life, demonstrating the futility (הֶבֶל) of human endeavor in order to bring his readers to the conclusion that they should enjoy life, which is a gift from God, but above all else, they should remember that they must live life with the fear of the Lord, knowing that God will ultimately judge them for their actions.