

Vapor

Why would a flourishing civilization, advanced for its time, suddenly cease to exist, its inhabitants gone and its architecture abandoned? Conspiracy theorists offer all manner of offbeat explanations including alien abduction, but the causes were likely more mundane: natural disasters, climate change, invasions and economic irrelevance. Still, we don't know - and likely never will - exactly what happened to bring about the end of the Khmer Empire of Cambodia, the Minoan society of Crete or two ancient civilizations right here in the United States.

Ecclesiastes—speaker before an assembly—congregation, church

Solomon

Asked for wisdom—in addition was given riches & honor that no king would be his equal

Built the first temple in Jerusalem

Indescribably wealthy & lived in excessive luxury

700 wives & 300 concubines

Turned his heart away from God

After his death the kingdom was torn in two

Proverbs is the writing on a man in the prime of life and career

Ecclesiastes is the writing of an old man looking back on his life

Vanity—Havel—meaningless, VAPOR, mist, smoke

Under the sun—life on earth from birth to death

Ecclesiastes 1:1-14

Vanity of life vs. 1-8

Human labor—business, accomplishment

Human history is fingernail trimmings in comparison to the length of your arm of the age of the universe

Vanity of originality (being special) vs. 9-11

People long for originality, to do what's never been done

Nothing new under the sun

Everyone trying to be different ends up being a clone of someone else!

Vanity of pleasure—Eccles. 2:1-11

CEV—Have fun and enjoy yourself

Wine, women & song

Anything that money could buy, he had: houses, gardens, vineyards, fruit trees of every kind, servants, silver, gold, etc.

Whatever the eyes desired and the heart longed for

He said to himself, "I worked hard and I deserve this!"

As an old man looking back upon his life he concluded: Vanity of vanities! Meaningless!

What every person on the planet is tempted to long for and to pursue is found to be **VAPOR!**

IF I can just _____, then I will _____.

Idolatry

Wrong relationship with **VAPOR**.

Worshipping creation instead of the Creator!

Always leads to destruction.

Treasures in Heaven

1 Timothy 6:17-19

Matthew 6:19-21

Mark 12:29-31, 34

Discussion Guide

Primary Text: Ecclesiastes 1

Medieval Old Testament scholars called Ecclesiastes one of the Bible's most dangerous books. Though its trenchant observations on life revealed a fragile joy, its paragraphs also brimmed over with a cynicism and even despair that seemed out of place in the Bible's grand narrative. But if we allow this wise text to speak to us, it will help us, in the midst of the grittiness of everyday life, to see life as the gift from our Creator that it is. Death is the great leveler. Life is too often unfair. We cannot know what the future hold. And yet life offers itself as a gift from God. Life begs to be enjoyed for what it is, even given its contradictions.

The theme of vanity in the book of Ecclesiastes concerns one of life's fundamental tensions, between the enjoyment of earthly pleasures and accomplishments and the awareness of their inevitable loss and inability to give you lasting joy and fulfillment.

In Matthew 6, Jesus says it like this, "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal..."Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?"