

# Scripture InSight

Bible Society in Northern Ireland



**Scripture Reference:** Ecclesiastes 2:11-24

**Bible Translation:** King James Version

“Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.  
And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done.  
Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness.  
The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness: and I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all.  
Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise?  
Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity.  
For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? as the fool.

Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me.

And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity.

Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun.

For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil.

For what hath man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night. This is also vanity. There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.”

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## Reflections:

First of all, I have chosen the King James Version for two reasons: it is the version I grew up with, so while the KJV is far from the source document, I have an affinity with it; secondly, to celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, I recently bought the entire KJV on CD (60 discs, 46 for the Old Testament, 124 for the New) and am listening to it in the car!

Now, why this passage? Primarily because our Minister, Rev Mark Brown of Granshaw Presbyterian Church has been working the congregation through it in recent months, and as he points out, while the superficial reading can be quite depressing, suggesting there is no meaning or purpose to life, that is only if you do not put Jesus into the equation, at which point the relevance is revealed. Being a Christian is not about having it easy all the way; it is often about doubt, anxiety, and constant challenge. I find Ecclesiastes a very realistic Book. When I am in cynical, journalist mode, I am attracted by its superficial negativity, and always drawn back to the deeper purpose of life.



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