

**Series: “Chasing the Wind”, Lesson #2**

**EXPLORING WORLDLY WISDOM**

The Book of Ecclesiastes gets a bad rap from people who have never studied it. I believe you will have a new appreciation for Ecclesiastes after we study the nine lessons entitled, “**CHASING THE WIND.**”

For example, the word “vanity”(hebel) is mentioned 38 times and the phrase, “under the sun,” is used 29 times and people think that the book is negative and pessimistic. However, a reference to God is made 49 times which surprises people.

God is mentioned in the verse from which our lesson title was taken: “And I set my mind **to seek and explore by wisdom** concerning all that has been done under heaven. It is a grievous task which God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with.” (1:13)

Solomon used a special phrase three times to emphasize his exploration of worldly wisdom.

1:13 – I set my mind (nathan) (kal pf of leb or heart) – to seek and explore worldly wisdom.

1:16 – My mind has observed (raah) (kal pf of leb) – a wealth of wisdom and knowledge.

1:17 – I set my mind (nathan) (kal impf of leb) – to know wisdom and to know madness and folly.

The purpose of Ecclesiastes is to show that “worldly values, goals and ambitions” are meaningless apart from God. “He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.” (3:11)

We have divided our lesson text (1:12-18) into two repetitive parts with homiletical outlines.

**First part** (I set my mind) (1:13)

1:12-13a	The Chase	Pursuit of worldly wisdom
1:13b-14	The Conclusion	Principle of vanity
1:15	The Challenge	Proverb of pain

**Second part** (I set my mind) (1:16-17)

1:16-17a	The Chase	Pursuit of worldly wisdom
1:17b	The Conclusion	Principle of vanity
1:18	The Challenge	Proverb of pain

**This lesson will study five aspects of the futility of EXPLORING WORDLY WISDOM.**

**1. Solomon’s wisdom was compared to two famous centers of worldly wisdom of the ancient world and it surpassed them both.**

“Solomon’s wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt.” (1 Kings 4:30)

Job was also a member of the fraternity of the sons of the East (Magi) wise men of the east (Matt.2) – “He was the greatest man among all the sons of the East.” (Job 1:3)

Why did Job and Solomon's wisdom surpass the greatest of worldly wisdom of their generation? "Now **God** gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore." (1 Kings 4:29)

**WHAT ABOUT YOU?** "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to you." (James 1:5)

## 2. **What separated Solomon's wisdom from the others was that it was a gift from God.**

(1 Kings 3:5-14) "Behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you." (3:12)

Job asks the question, "Where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?" (Job 29:12, 20)

Then Job gave this answer: "God understands its way; and He knows its place." (29:23) "And to man He said, 'Behold, **the fear (reverence) of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.**'" (Job 29:28)

"It is He who made the earth by His power, Who established the world by His wisdom, and by His understanding He stretched out the heavens." (Jer.51:15)

## 3. **The Hebrew word for wisdom is (chakemah).**

**This wisdom is intellectual knowledge that results in practical living as prescribed by the word of God (Prov.1: 1-7).**

"The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom; and with all your acquiring, get understanding. Prize her, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her. She will place on your head a garland of grace; she will present you with a crown of beauty." (Prov.4:7-9)

Chakemah not only knows what results from origins but the truth of the origins themselves (Isa.46: 9-10; Eccl.3: 11).

"Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser, teach a righteous man, and he will increase his learning. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Proverbs 9:9-10)

## 4. **Worldly wisdom is meaningless (vanity / hebel) in the life of a Believer. (1 Cor.1: 18-31; 2:9-16; 3:18-23; 2 Tim.3: 15).**

It leads to **cosmos diabolicus** thinking (Matt.1-11; 16:21-23; Phil.3: 18-19). The wisdom of God is contrasted to the wisdom of the world in 1 Cor.1: 18-31. "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." (1 Cor.1: 21)

## 5. **God has provided a grace system for believers to learn spiritual truth. (1 Cor.2:4-16; 2 Cor.5:7; Eph.5:15-17; Col.1:9-10; 2 Pet.3:18)**

"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (1 Cor.1:25)

- **Wisdom from above is spiritual and practical** (James 3:13-18).
- **Worldly wisdom is "CHASING THE WIND."** "This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic." (James 3:15)