

Good things that won't last

1. Eccl 1:1–11 — Qoheleth: MythBuster



Restaurants vs cooking shows

1 Some difficulties of reading Ecclesiastes

a who is the writer?

- words of Qoheleth (1:1, 2, 12; 7:27; 12:8–10)
- a veiled identity

b wisdom literature

- no 'YHWH', and no salvation history
- a ground-up 'theological anthropology'
- 'contradictions' (yes, but...) *cf.* Prov 26:4–5
- not straightforward, but (very roughly!) four major movements
 - 1A. Reflection: all is ephemeral/unreliable 1:2–4:16
 - 1B. Ethics: coping with uncertainty 5:1–6:9
 - 2A. Reflection: all is elusive 6:10–8:17
 - 2B. Ethics: coping with risks and death 9:1–12:8

2 A way forward

a embrace it

b listen to the original message of Ecclesiastes

c reflect on how this message cuts across our culture

d dialogue with the New Testament

3 All is *hebel*, so there is no gain (1:2–11)

a all is *hebel* v 2

- vapour, fleeting, insubstantial, elusive, unpredictable, uncontrollable, futile

b how the world is

- creation gains nothing vv 5–7
- because there is nothing new vv 9–10; *cf.* Romans 8:20–21

c how humanity is in the world

- no lasting impact v 4
- because we can't control the world; *cf.* Luke 12:22–26; James 4:13–16

4 Busted!

a your toil gains nothing

b you are not in control