

The Feast of Tabernacles “Vanity” Paradox!

Ever since my first Feast of Tabernacles (at age 15) in Ottawa in 1976 ... I noticed (*over an 8 day festival!*) that there would be one day among the *abundance & fun* ... where I feel *different* - quieter, introspective ...

It reminds me of the Carpenter’s song “Rainy days & Mondays” - we have a lyric saying ...

What I’ve got they used to call “the blues” ...

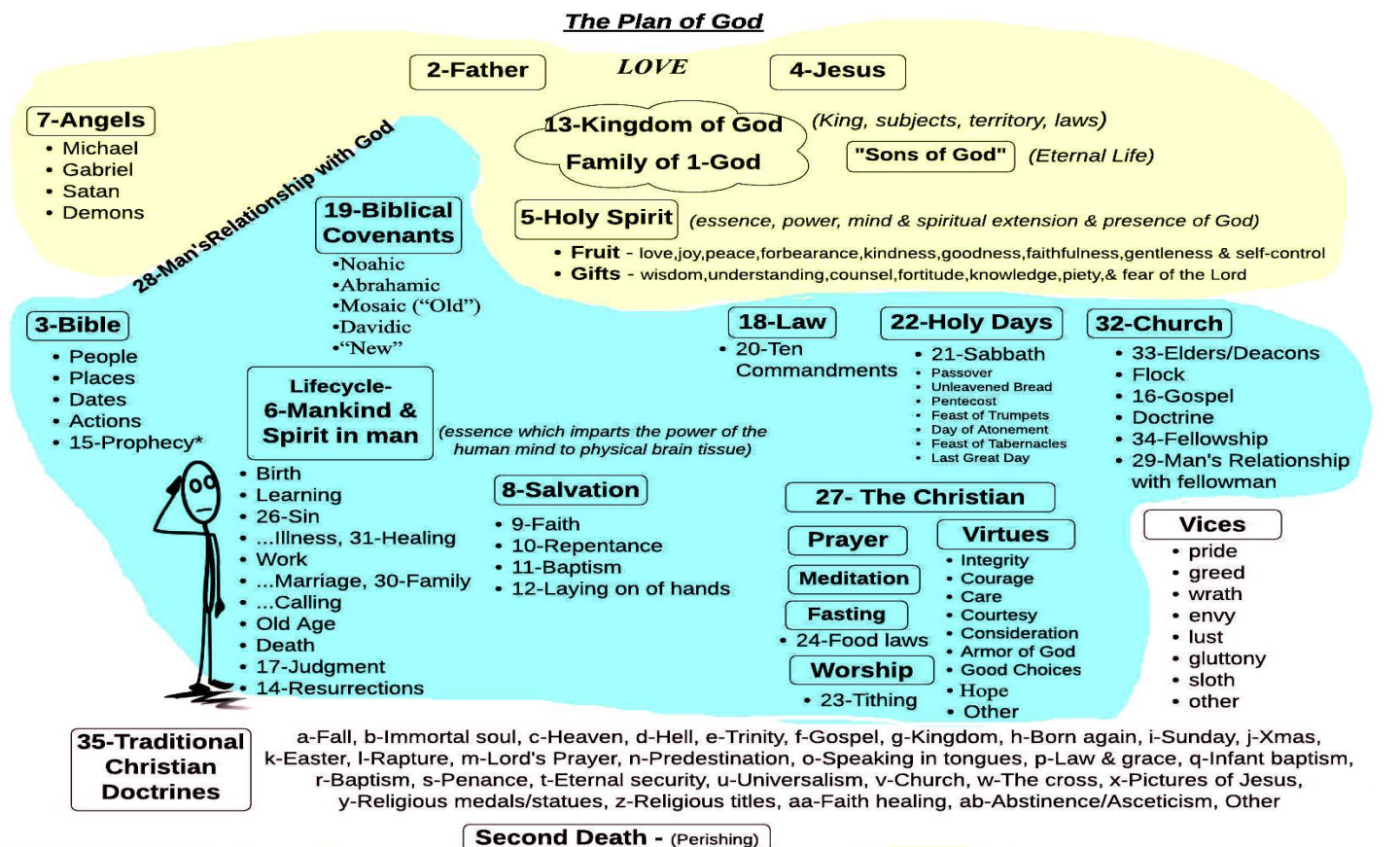
Nothing is really wrong ... Feeling like I don’t belong...

It reminded me of a weird time in Public school -- perhaps grade 8 or grade 9 when the Ontario curriculum apparently was wanting young teens to experience “nothingness” (as in emptiness or unfulfillment) !?! ... loneliness ... alienation ... lack of belonging ... melancholy

In today’s message, we’ll explore the Feast Paradox (where we experience great “**highs**” & in some cases low “**lows**”)... in scriptural terms ... “Vanity of Vanities, ALL is Vanity (Ecc 1:2) We’ll see ...

- What society was trying to have young teens explore
- The Tabernacles connection - Why the Jews read Ecclesiastes during Tabernacles?!?
- The scriptural list of **what things are “vanity”** ... temporary ... breath?
- How Jesus & the apostles echo lessons linking Ecclesiastes, Tabernacles & the Kingdom

Sneak peek - Everything *earthly* is fleeting, yet life has meaning when lived in reverence before God



Time: (Past - History - Creation, 25-Hebrew Calendar ... **Present** -(World events) ... (Future - 15-Prophecy*) ... **Eternity** ...)

Farewell

Written by a grade 12 student from Regina who committed suicide a few weeks later.

He always wanted to explain things.
But no one cared so he drew.
Sometimes he would draw and it wasn't anything.
He wanted to carve it in stone or write it in the sky.
He would be out on the grass and look up in the sky.
And it would be only him and the sky and things inside him
that needed saying.
And it was after that he drew the picture.
It was a beautiful picture. He kept it under his pillow and
would let no one see it.
And he would look at it every night and think about it.
And when it was dark, and his eyes were closed, he could
still see it.
And it was all of him.
And he loved it.
When he started school he brought it with him.
Not to show anyone, but just to have it with him like a friend.
It was funny about school.
He sat at a square brown desk like all the other desks.
In a square brown room like all the other rooms.
And it was tight and close.
And stiff.
He hated to hold the pencil and chalk,
With his arm stiff and his feet flat on the floor.
Stiff.
With the teacher watching and watching.
The teacher came and spoke to him.
She told him to wear a tie like all the other boys.
He said he didn't like them.
And she said it didn't matter!

After that they drew.
And he drew all yellow and it was the way he felt about
morning.

And it was beautiful.
The teacher came and smiled at him.
'What's this?' she said. 'Why didn't you draw something like
Ken's drawing?'

Isn't it beautiful?
After that his mother bought him a tie.
And he always drew airplanes and rocket ships like every-
one else.

And he threw the old picture away.
And when he lay alone looking at the sky, it was big and
blue and all of everything.

But he wasn't anymore.

He was square inside

And brown.

And his hands were stiff.

And he was like everyone else.

And the things inside him that needed saying didn't need
it anymore.

It was crushed.

Stiff.

Like everything else.



Horrible Lessons from the Ontario Curriculum on “nothingness”

- The void or absence of intrinsic meaning in the universe.
- A condition where humans confront the fact that life has no preordained purpose.
- Leading to feelings of emptiness, absurdity, or alienation.
- But also offering freedom to create one’s own meaning.
- nothingness was not simply non-existence, but the conscious awareness of the absence of meaning

Clearly, the early 1970’s were a time of experimentation in the Education system where they might *ask* questions but *not* provide answers!?!

The Tabernacles connection - Why the Jews read Ecclesiastes during Tabernacles?!?

Jewish Tradition of the Five Megillot

- Ecclesiastes is one of the **Five Megillot (Scrolls)** read at special festivals:
 - Song of Songs → Passover
 - Ruth → Shavuot (Pentecost)
 - Lamentations → Tisha B’Av (morning temples)
 - Ecclesiastes → Sukkot (Tabernacles)
 - Esther → Purim
- Each scroll matches the season and spiritual theme of its feast. For Sukkot, Ecclesiastes’ message about life’s fleeting nature fits the **temporary booths & harvest reflections**.



The Feast of Tabernacles highlights life’s temporariness

- During Sukkot, Jews dwell in **booths (sukkot)** — fragile, temporary shelters — to remember Israel’s wandering in the wilderness (Lev. 23:42–43).
- Ecclesiastes emphasizes that **life itself is fragile, fleeting, and “vanity” without God**
- The frail sukkah physically illustrates the same truth Ecclesiastes teaches spiritually: **everything under the sun is temporary.**

It balances joy with sober reflection

- Sukkot is the most **joyful feast** (Deut. 16:14–15). It celebrates harvest abundance and God’s provision.
- Reading Ecclesiastes tempers that joy with humility: prosperity, pleasure, and riches are fleeting unless centered on God.

This balance keeps rejoicing from slipping into self-indulgence or forgetting God.

The Harvest Connection

- Sukkot is also a **harvest festival**, thanking God for crops.
- Ecclesiastes reflects on **the fruit of human labor** — how it can be enjoyed, yet ultimately proves meaningless if disconnected from God (Eccl. 2:24–26; 3:13).

The Message of Finality and Judgment

- Ecclesiastes 12:13 ends: *“Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all”*
- This conclusion resonates with Sukkot’s theme of **completion**: it’s the final festival of the year cycle, symbolizing God’s coming kingdom and final judgment.

Scriptural list of *what things are “vanity” ... temporary ... breath?*

1. Idols & False Gods

- Idols are repeatedly called **vanity, worthless, empty**.
 - “For the customs of the peoples are futile [vanity]; for one cuts a tree from the forest...” (Jer. 10:3, 8, 15; 16:19; 18:15)
 - “They have provoked Me to anger by their idols [vanities]” (Deut. 32:21; Jon 2:8)

2. Human Toil & Labor (without God)

- All striving “under the sun” is vanity.
 - “What profit has a man from all his labor...? Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” (Eccl. 1:2–3; 2:11, 18–23).

3. Wisdom, Knowledge, & Learning (as an end in itself)

- Earthly wisdom brings grief; wise and fool both perish. (Eccl. 1:17–18; 2:15–16).
 - **Ecc 1:17-18** And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind. For in much wisdom is much grief, And he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.



4. Pleasure, Wealth, & Materialism

- Laughter, mirth, possessions, riches without enjoyment—all are vanity (Eccl. 2:1–10; 5:10–16; 6:1–9).
 - **Ecc 2:1-2** I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure"; but surely, this also was vanity. I said of laughter—"Madness!"; and of mirth, "What does it accomplish?"

5. Injustice & Oppression

- Oppression, envy-driven toil, loneliness of life. (Eccl. 4:1–8).
 - **Ecc 4:1-2** Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun: And look! The tears of the oppressed, But they have no comforter— On the side of their oppressors there is power, But they have no comforter. Therefore I praised the dead who were already dead, More than the living who are still alive.

6. Life & Death

- Death overtakes all; long life without joy is vanity (Ecc 2:14–16; 3:19–20; 6:3–6; 9:11–12)
 - **Ecc 3:19-20** For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity. All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust.



7. Achievements, Fame, & Reputation

- Success, popularity, and remembrance fade quickly. (Eccl. 4:13–16; 9:5).
 - **Ecc 4:16** There was no end of all the people over whom he was made king; Yet those who come afterward will not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and grasping for the wind.

8. Religious Formalism & Hypocrisy

- Empty sacrifices, insincere vows, false worship. (Eccl. 5:1–7; Isa. 1:13; Matt. 15:9).
 - **Isa 1:13** Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies— I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting.

9. False Words & Empty Talk

- Vain talk, flattery, boasting, idle speech. (Job 35:16; Ps. 12:2; Eph. 5:6).
 - **Eph 5:6** Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

10. Trusting in Man or Earthly Power

- Trust in self, princes, riches, or armies is vanity. (Ps. 60:11; 62:9; 108:12; Isa. 30:7).
 - Psa 62:9 Surely men of low degree are a vapor, Men of high degree are a lie; If they are weighed on the scales, They are altogether lighter than vapor.

11. The Pursuit of Sin

- Evil ways and rebellion are called vanity. (Jer. 2:5; Rom. 1:21).
 - Rom 1:21-22 ... although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became **futile** (*KJV - vain*) in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools

Ecclesiastes repeatedly calls these pursuits “vanity” because they are **temporary, unsatisfying, or incomplete without God.**

5 Christian Themes connecting Ecclesiastes & Tabernacles to Christ & the Kingdom.

1. Temporary Booths → Temporary Earthly Life

- **Tabernacles:** Israel lived in **booths** (Lev. 23:42–43), fragile shelters reminding them of dependence on God.
- **Ecclesiastes:** Life “under the sun” is vapor, vanity — brief & uncertain (Eccl. 1:2; 12:8).
- **Jesus’ teaching:** “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy... but lay up treasures in heaven.” (Matt. 6:19–20).
- **Theme:** Our bodies and possessions are temporary “tents” (2 Cor. 5:1–4). Only in Christ do we gain permanence.

2. Harvest of Crops → Harvest of Nations

- **Tabernacles:** A great **harvest festival**, rejoicing in ingathering.
- **Ecclesiastes:** The “fruit of labor” is fleeting, but “the gift of God is... to enjoy the good of all his labor” (Eccl. 3:13).
- **Christ’s teaching:** He spoke of **spiritual harvest** of souls (Mat 9:37–38; John 4:35–36)
Mat 9:37-38 Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest
- **Theme:** Tabernacles points to the **harvest of the nations** in God’s kingdom (Zech. 14:16–19; Rev. 14:14–16).



3. Water Pouring Ritual → Living Water in Christ

- In Jesus’ time, during Tabernacles, priests performed the **water-pouring ceremony** at the Temple. On the last day of the feast, Jesus cried out: If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me & drink... out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. (John 7:37–39).
- **Theme:** Ecclesiastes says life is vanity “under the sun,” but Jesus offers the **Spirit** as true refreshment — **eternal meaning, not vanity**.

4. Joy (with soberness) → Fulfilled Joy in Christ

- **Tabernacles:** Commanded to be “**altogether joyful**” (Deut. 16:15).
- **Ecclesiastes:** Joy and pleasure are fleeting unless received as God’s gift (Eccl. 3:12–13).
- **Jesus:** “These things I have spoken to you, that **My joy** may remain in you, and that **your joy** may be full.” (John 15:11).
- **Theme:** Christ transforms fragile, fleeting joy into **eternal joy** in His kingdom.

5. The Conclusion of Ecclesiastes → The Goal of Tabernacles

- “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. For God will bring every work into judgment.” (Eccl. 12:13–14).
- Tabernacles (& Last Great Day) are the **final feasts** in God’s calendar (Lev. 23) — foreshadowing the **consummation of God’s plan**.
- Revelation connects **Tabernacles imagery** to **eternity**:
“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them...” (Rev. 21:3).
- **Theme:** Ecclesiastes’ conclusion finds its fulfillment when Christ reigns, judgment is executed, and God dwells permanently with His people — no more “vanity”.

God's solutions to overcome feelings of nothingness, alienation, & a lack of meaning in life.

1. Purpose Found in God

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

- God **intentionally designs** a future filled with **hope and purpose**.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all.

- Meaning in life is summed up as **knowing and obeying God**.

2. Restoration from Alienation

Ephesians 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

- Christ **removes alienation** and restores closeness to God.

Colossians 1:21–22 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death...

- Reconciliation comes **through Christ's sacrifice**.

3. Life in Christ Brings Fullness

John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

- Jesus gives a **full and meaningful life**.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

- A **fresh identity and renewed life** is given in Christ.

4. God Gives Meaning and Direction

Proverbs 3:5–6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, & lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

- When we trust God, He gives us **guidance and purpose**.

Psalms 16:11 You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

- True meaning is found in **God's presence & direction**.



5. Hope and Healing for the Downcast

Psalms 34:18 The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.

- God draws near to the **emotionally wounded**.

Isaiah 61:1–3 ...To give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness...

- A prophetic promise of **emotional healing and renewed purpose** through the Messiah.

6. God's Love Gives Us Identity and Worth

Romans 8:38–39 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life... shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- No matter how empty life may feel, **God's love never abandons.**

1 John 3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!

- We are given **identity and belonging** in God's family.



7. Strength to Endure and Rebuild

Isaiah 40:31 But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles...

- God renews strength when we feel **weak & empty.**

Philippians 4:13

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

- We are **empowered by Christ** to overcome despair.

Closing Thought ...

As humans ... 8 solid days of joy & rejoicing *may be too much!*

The "**vanity**" of Ecclesiastes drives us to the **hope of the Kingdom**, where the Feast of Tabernacles is fulfilled in **God dwelling forever with His people (Rev. 21:3–4)**.

In the Church ... & eventually in the Family of God ... there are No more feelings of emptiness, absurdity, or alienation!



1Peter 5:4 & when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.