

Welcome To Sunday Night Bible Fellowship

Every word inspired.



Every word proclaimed.

“We proclaim Him, warning every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man mature in Christ.” Col 1:28

“What’s It All About Alfie?”

Eccl. 1:4-11

March 8, 2020



Ecc1 1:1-3

- 1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.
- 2 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity."
- 3 What advantage does man have in all his work Which he does under the sun?

Purpose:

The purpose of the book of
Ecclesiastes is to show
that life
"under the sun",
without God,
is pointless and meaningless.

I WANT
TO KNOW
THE MEANING
OF LIFE

HAVE YOU
TRIED
GOOGLING
IT?

What's the
Point?



1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

Author

“Qoheleth” a preacher, a teacher – one who calls and gathers people together.

“the son of David” – David had many sons.

6 sons were born when he was king in Hebron: Amnon, Daniel, Absalom, Adonijah, Shephatiah, and Ithream.

13 sons when he was king in Jerusalem - Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, Ibhar, Elishama, Eliphelet, Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet.

+++

“king in Jerusalem” – Solomon (born 990 BC, died 931 BC, Reigned as king 971 BC – 931 BC)

- No descendant of David other than Solomon ever achieved the scope of accomplishments or the breadth of experience that the writer describes in this Book.
- One who possessed everything the world could give, not only of material things, but of intellectual gifts also.

2 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity."

- Solomon starts with his conclusion first.
- **“Vanity”** – lbh – hebel – meaningless, worthless, useless, insignificant, empty, vanity, pointless, nothingness, zero, vapor (“It is all a bunch of hot air.”), void, futile, no purpose. Uses this word 5 times in this sentence and 22 times in this book.
- **“vanity of vanities”** – like the “holy of holies.” To repeat something in the singular and then move to the plural, therefore means that it’s ‘meaningless’ to the nth degree. There is nothing more meaningless. This is the top of all things meaningless, i.e. of all things meaningless, life is the most meaningless.

“Courageous, that's how you see me.
Successful, that's why you believe in me.
Happy, that's what you expect from me.
But, emptiness, that's what's inside of me.”

3 What advantage does man have in all his work Which he does under the sun?

יִתְרוֹן - yithrown – business term - advantage, gain, profit, is there anything at the bottom line.

עֲמָל - amal – work that is hard, difficult, painful, filled with worry.

“under the sun” (29 times) - this is from Solomon’s viewpoint as he has searched and experienced everything in the world - ground level, horizontal, limited to, and human.

“Under the sun” is the realm where vanity reigns.

This is not a pessimistic book but a realistic book. To learn the true meaning of life you must first view life apart from God in all its futility.

Solomon wants you to feel an overwhelming sense of emptiness,
for emptiness is designed to draw us to God.

We must learn to value emptiness.

As we acknowledge our sense of meaninglessness,
we are motivated to search for more.

We must learn to value emptiness for its positive potential.

Francis Schaeffer said that if he had an hour to
talk to someone about Jesus Christ.....
he'd spend the first 45 minutes
talking about how there are no answers.
He'd teach about the hopelessness of man.....
and only then would he share Christ as the answer.

Closed System



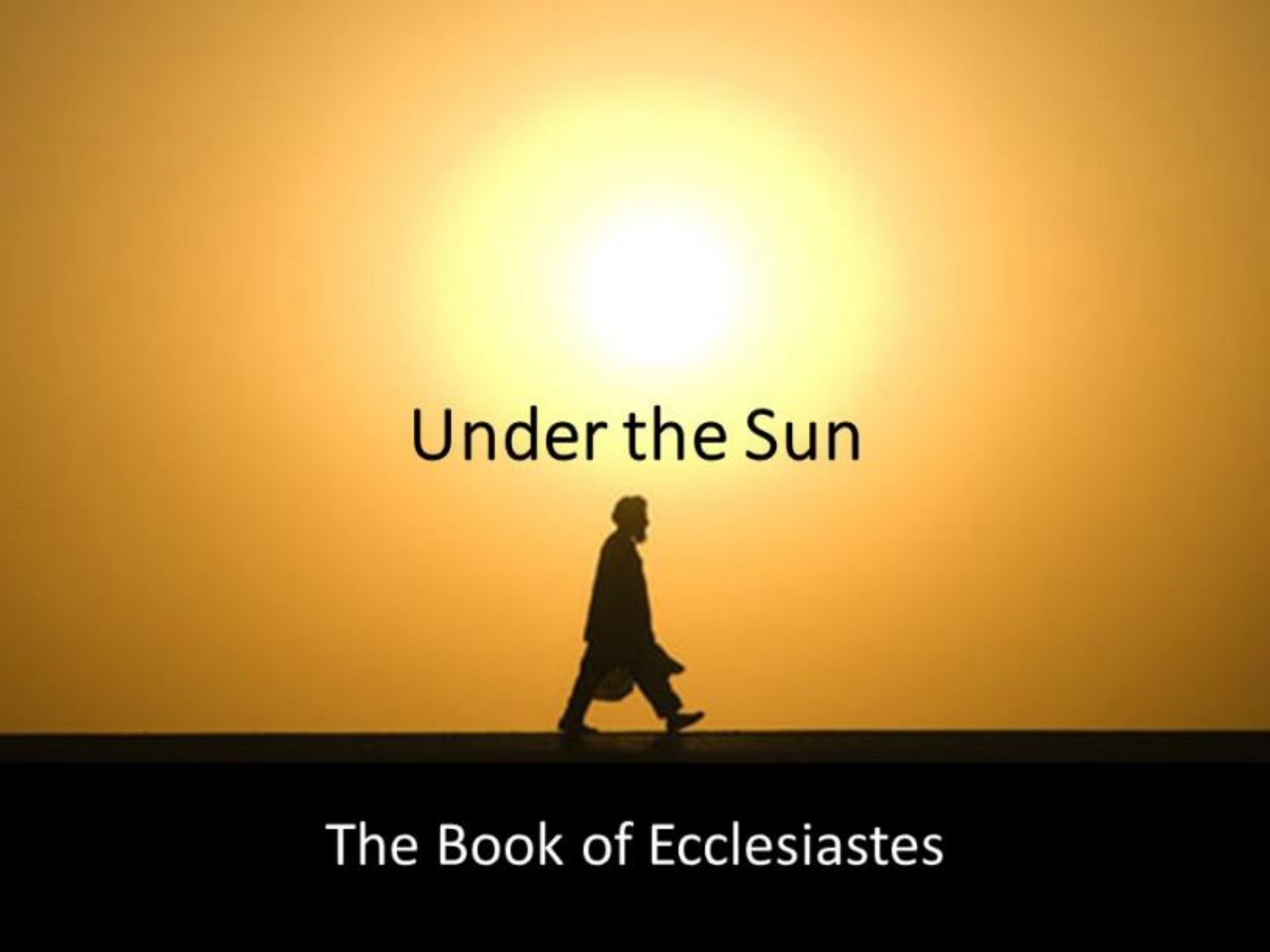
The Sun

The Earth

Mankind

Activities

No God

A silhouette of a man walking from left to right, carrying a bag, is positioned below the title. The background is a warm, golden-yellow gradient with a large, bright sun in the upper center.

Under the Sun

The Book of Ecclesiastes

“A few years ago, scientists at John Hopkins University surveyed nearly 8,000 college students at forty-eight universities and asked what they considered “very important” to them. What do you think these college students said? Make a lot of money? Get married? Get a job? Buy a home? Only 16 percent answered “making a lot of money.” But a whopping 75 percent said that their first goal was “finding a purpose and meaning to my life.”

LIFE'S MEANING AND PURPOSE

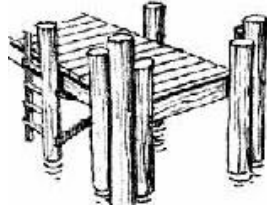
Where is academia?

Where are the philosophers?

Where are the politicians?

Unbeliever

MEANING AND PURPOSE IN
A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD



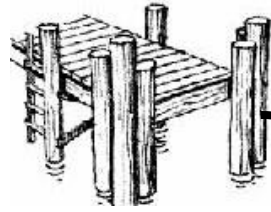
**BOOK OF
ECCLESIASTES**
“Abandon”

World



Believer

STABILITY WITH GOD



**BOOK OF
ECCLESIASTES
"Remember"**

World



Ecc1 1:4-11

4 A generation goes and a generation comes, But the earth remains forever.

5 Also, the sun rises and the sun sets; And hastening to its place it rises there again.

6 Blowing toward the south, Then turning toward the north, The wind continues swirling along; And on its circular courses the wind returns.

7 All the rivers flow into the sea, Yet the sea is not full. To the place where the rivers flow, There they flow again.

8 All things are wearisome;

Man is not able to tell it.

The eye is not satisfied with seeing,

Nor is the ear filled with hearing.

9 That which has been is that which will be,

And that which has been done is that which will be done.

So there is nothing new under the sun.

4 A generation goes and a generation comes, But the earth remains forever.

Solomon now uses 4 illustrations to prove his point.

1. The cycle of life and death. (4)
2. The cycle of sunrise and sunset. (5)
3. The cycle of the wind. (6)
4. The cycle of evaporation and precipitation. (7)

4 A generation goes and a generation comes, But the earth remains forever.

1. The cycle of life and death.

Here is the cycle -

- You are born into this world.
- You live your life.
- And then you die.
- Birth announcements are on one page and obituaries are on the next.
- Generations pass as if in a parade.
- The main furniture in this world seems to be cradles and coffins.
- “Life is just one long conveyor belt of dead bodies.”
- On an average day - 360,000 births, 151,600 deaths
- You’re born in one hospital and you die in another hospital.....and in between you try to stay out of any hospitals.



“But the earth remains forever”

- Generation after generation live on this earth and then they are gone but the earth and the ground still remain.
- We’ve carved the faces of our Presidents on mountains at Mt. Rushmore: Jefferson, Lincoln, Roosevelt, Washington. But where are those great men today? The rock remains, but the men are gone.
- We will pass off the scene eventually, and many people will be born on the very day we die.
- Listen to Ray Pritchard.
 - *Ancestry.com - when those people die, they will be forgotten entirely. That is why Solomon says life is so meaningless.

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2. The cycle of sunrise and sunset.

- The sun is on a monotonous cycle of rising, setting, and then racing back to the place from which it rises.
- The verb translated “hastening” means “to pant.” The sun is like a runner endlessly making his way around a racetrack.
- The sun goes across the sky and it can’t wait to get back again. It doesn’t rest. It doesn’t sleep. It doesn’t stop. It just keeps going.
- As each generation comes and goes, so also each day comes and goes with a regular and monotonous passing.
- People see sunrises and they see sunsets and then people disappear, but then comes a new generation of people to see more sunrises and more sunsets.

Sunrise Sunset

Fiddler on the Roof

Is this the little girl I carried?
Is this the little boy at play?

I don't remember growing older
When did they?

When did she get to be a beauty?
When did he get to be so tall?

Wasn't it yesterday
When they were small?

Sunrise, sunset
Sunrise, sunset
Swiftly flow the days
Seedlings turn overnight to sunflowers
Blossoming even as we gaze

Sunrise, sunset
Sunrise, sunset
Swiftly fly the years
One season following another
Laden with happiness and tears

What words of wisdom can I give them?
How can I help to ease their way?

Now they must learn from one another
Day by day

They look so natural together

Just like two newlyweds...

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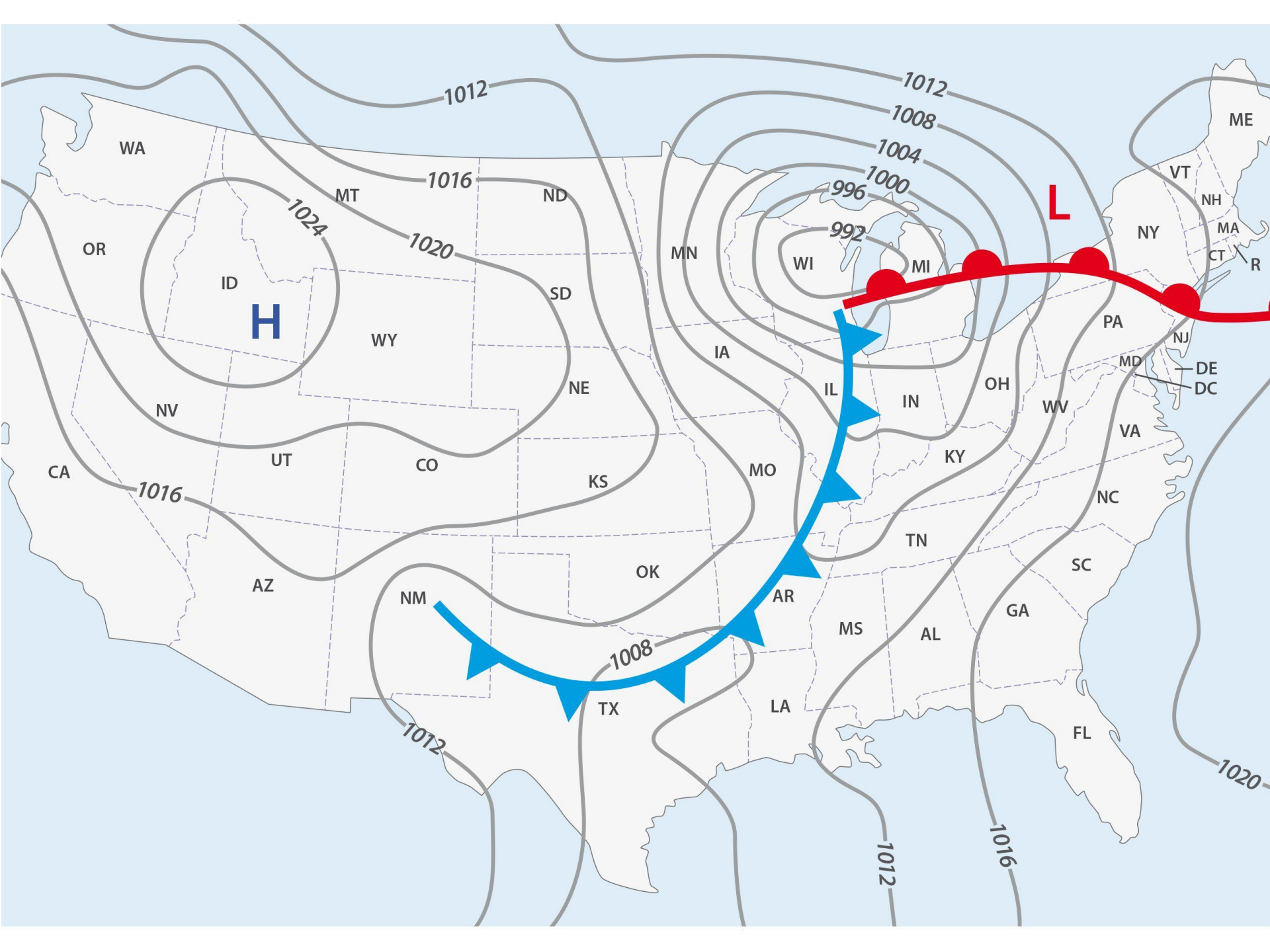
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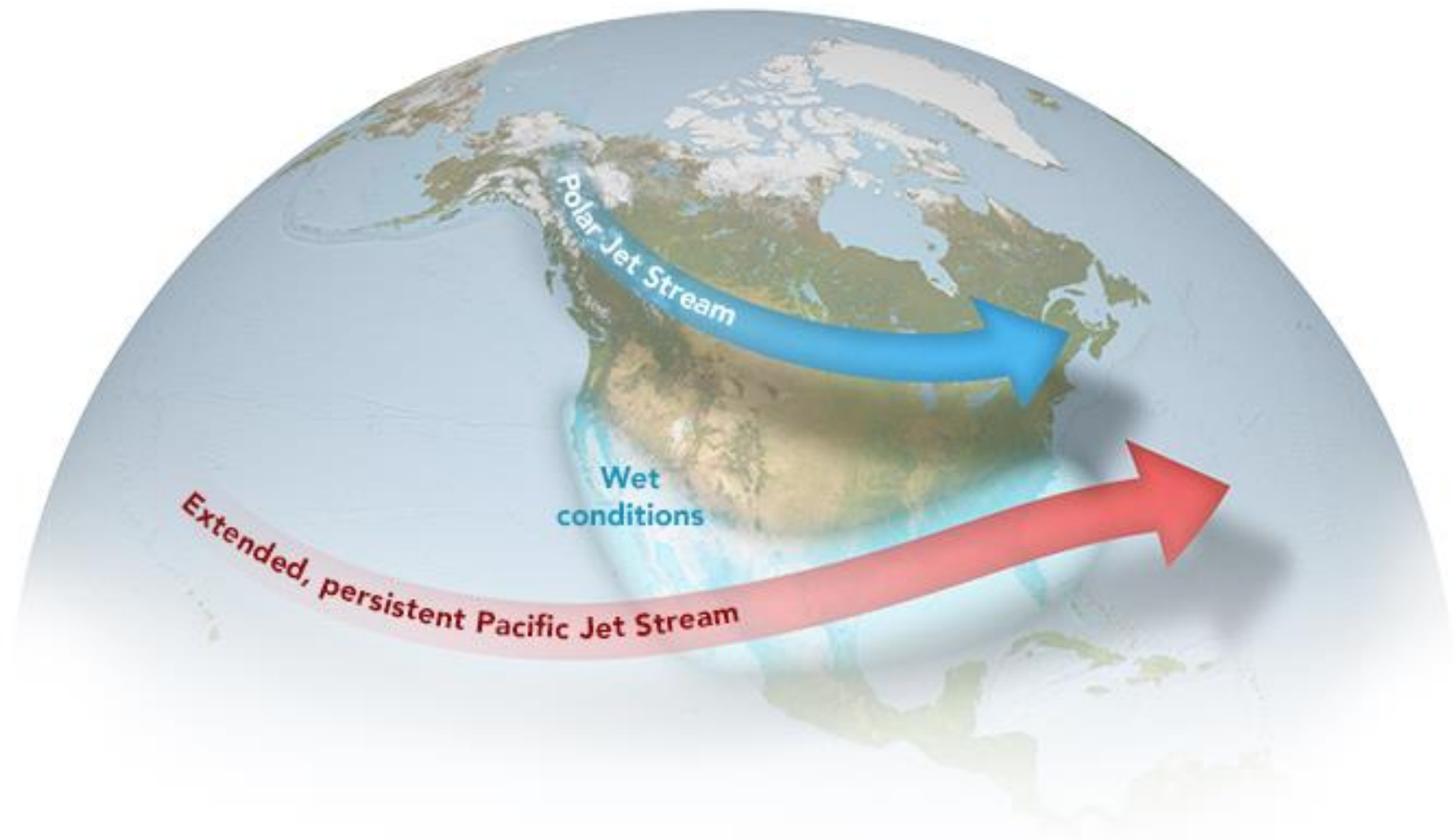
***6 Blowing toward the south, Then turning toward the north,
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courses the wind returns.***

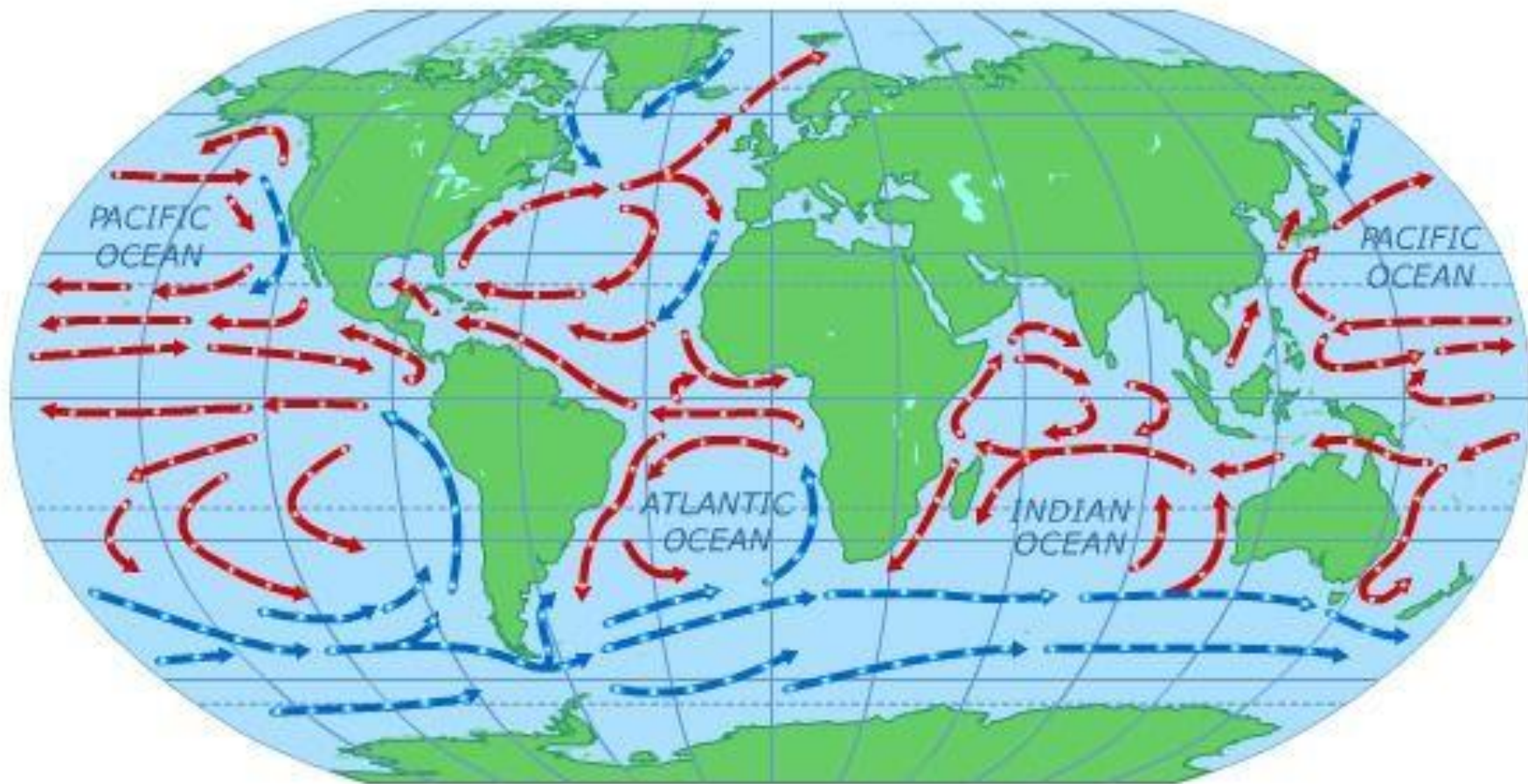
3. The cycle of the wind.

- As the movement of the sun is on an east-west course, now the wind is described as moving north and south.
- The repetition in “going round and round” heightens the sense of monotony and purposelessness.
- In effect it is just going in circles. It stays on its course just like the sun. Notice the five verbs here; “blowing, turning, swirling, returning’. All participles to tell us it’s just one big circle.

What’s the Point?







Ocean Currents:

- Warm currents
- Cool currents

Global Winds:



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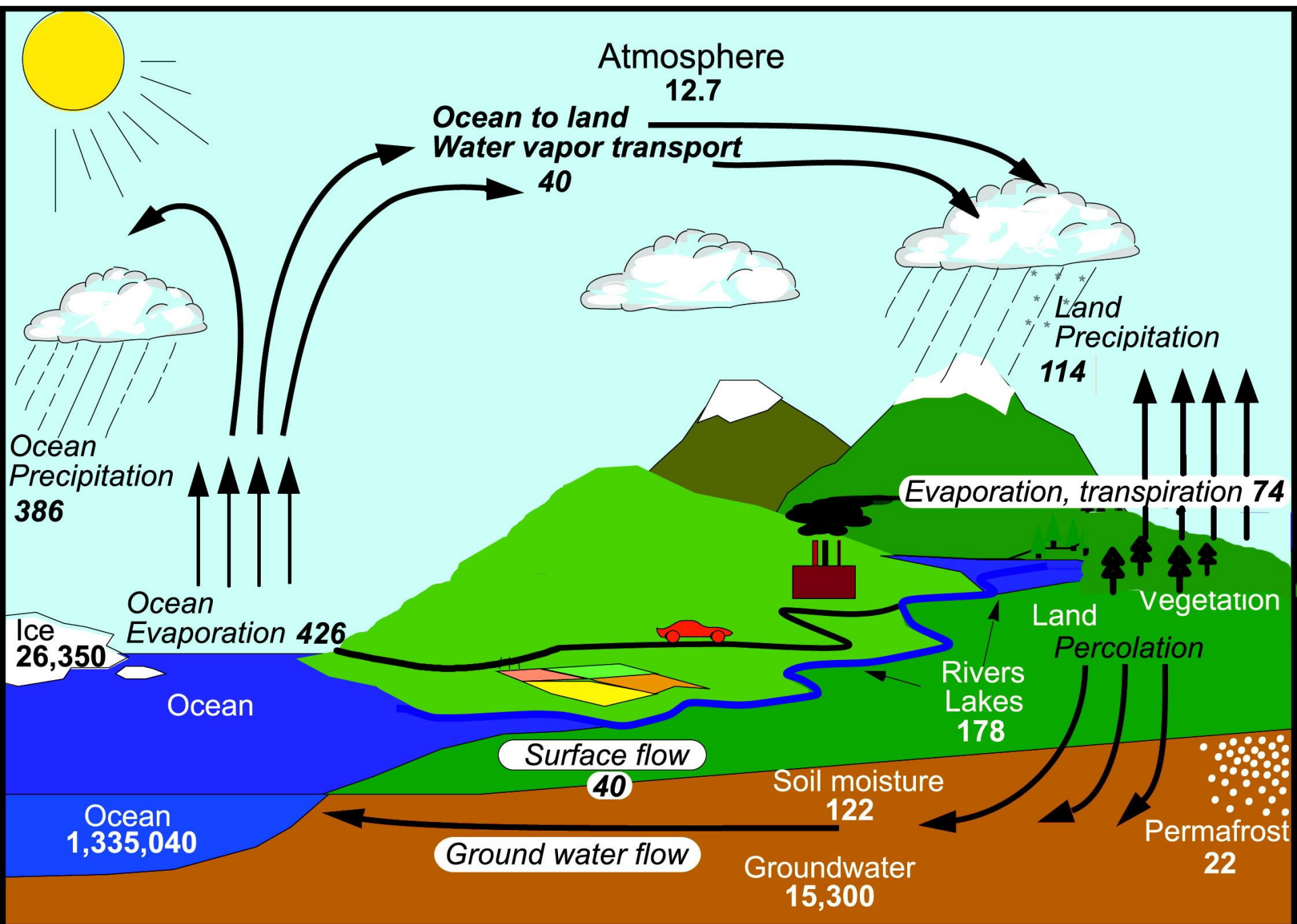
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4. The cycle of evaporation and precipitation.

- This is the Hydrological Cycle.



Units: Thousand cubic km for storage, and *thousand cubic km/yr* for exchanges *1990s

7 All the rivers flow into the sea, Yet the sea is not full. To the place where the rivers flow, There they flow again.

4. The cycle of evaporation and precipitation.

- This is the Hydrological Cycle.
- Again, what is accomplished?

7 Observations:

1. The universe, this world, and nature is indifferent to our presence.
It was here before we came, and it will be here, unchanged, after we have gone.
2. However, the universe, like us, is trapped in a cycle of monotonous and meaningless motion. It is forever moving, but it accomplishes nothing. Life is a great circle - a "weary go-round"
3. A sense of loneliness and abandonment pervades what Solomon is saying. Life on this pebble in this ginourmous universe is meaningless.
4. All the efforts of men have not changed one aspect of the way generations come and go, the sun rises and sets, the way the wind blows, or the way rivers fill and flow. The way the world operates is so repetitious it is highly predictable.

5. Grandchildren and great grandchildren see the same sun rise and set each day. A thousand years later, gentle winds and violent storms blow without any change from all the works of men in all those years.
6. Generation after generation builds bridges and rides boats on the same rivers, but the rivers never cease to flow or change their channels.
7. Solomon had spent his life running a government, developing a land, and constructing buildings and cities, but none of those works had succeeded in making any basic changes in the way the world runs. It made him realize that if all his efforts had failed to make any real difference in the world, no one else could either.

Therefore, all of the works of men are empty efforts, going nowhere.

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8 All things are wearisome;

- Generations/Sun/Wind/Waters.

- **“Beneath the Cross of Jesus”**

1 Beneath the cross of Jesus

I fain would take my stand,
the shadow of a mighty Rock
within a **weary** land;

- **“A Shelter in the Time of Storm”**

Refrain:

Oh, Jesus is a Rock in a **weary** land,

A **weary** land, a **weary** land;

Oh, Jesus is a Rock in a **weary** land,

A Shelter in the time of storm.

Man is not able to tell it.

- Why?
- Can't he see the futility in all of this monotonous, wearisome activity?
- Here is the reason . . .

The eye is not satisfied with seeing,

Nor is the ear filled with hearing.

- Man is preoccupied by the seeing and hearing the next “new” thing to present itself.
- These 2 senses are the most powerful of the five. (touch, taste, smell)
- Man is always on a quest, a never ending search for the next thing that will satisfy, to fill the void of the last thing that did not.
- And so he is waiting for . . .

“New and Improved”
“The latest version”
“The latest upgrade”
“More glitz”
“More glamour”
“Latest fashion”
“More features”
“More technology”
“Better sound”
“Bigger screen”
“More speakers”
“Brighter image”
“Deeper base”
“Better color”
“More pixels”
“Latest model”
“More coverage”
“Clearer sound”
“Better view”
“More square footage”

The eye and the ear
never tire because
human desire is never
satisfied; it is a
consequence of the
restlessness that is
built into life.

“Man’s heart is restless
until it finds its rest in
thee” - Augustine

Who capitalizes on this?

- Television
- Newspapers
- Radio
- Internet
- Tabloids
- Magazines
- Soap Operas
- Reality shows
- Sports
- Electronics
- Paris
- London
- Movies
- Automotive
- Real Estate

We're impacted by two universal laws:

1. The law of unfulfilled expectations. (short term)

When you finally get what you've always wanted, you find out what? It didn't give you what you thought it was going to give you. You expected more. You got less. You were unrealistic in your expectations.

2. The law of diminishing returns. (long term)

We may enjoy something but over time the return lessens and sometimes we even get sick of that which we once delighted in. It begins to bore us. It cannot satisfy us the way it once did. So we search for something greater, something that will give us more “kick”, more “bang for the buck.”

*****Ultimate meaning is not found in progress; it's not found in invention; it's not found in new accomplishment. it is not found in the next thing because the next thing never turns out to be so new after all.***

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- The second we long to see or hear something new, nothing new ever really shows up.
- Life is a rehash of what has been before; it is the old played over and over again.
- “The more things change, the more they stay the same.”
- “What goes around, comes around.”
- “If it’s new it’s not true; & if it’s true it’s not new.” - Harry Ironside
- It’s been well said that the ancients have stolen all of our best ideas.
- We often mistake movement with progress. We think we are making progress but in reality we are driving around a cul-de-sac and wondering why the neighborhoods all look the same.
- Everything and everyone in life will ultimately disappoint us.

There are three basic reasons for this:

1. There is no satisfaction under the sun.
2. There is nothing new under the sun.
3. No one is remembered under the sun.

10 Is there anything of which one might say,
"See this, it is new"?
Already it has existed for ages
Which were before us.

11 There is no remembrance of earlier things;
And also of the later things which will occur,
There will be for them no remembrance
Among those who will come later still.

10 Is there anything of which one might say,

"See this, it is new"?

- “Something new” to man brings hope. A promise for happiness and fulfillment.
- But it is a lie. Here is why.

Already it has existed for ages

Which were before us.

- If it appears that something “new” happens from time to time, it is only because our memories are short.
- The arrangement of molecules changes, man does not – it all comes from _____. Technology changes, but human nature and human activity remain the same.
- Nothing happens now which has not happened a hundred times before through past ages. It has all happened again and again in the ages that preceded us. Man by searching never really finds out anything new. Life is just endless repetition.

The world is one big marching band of futility, declaring to mankind what it cannot deliver - a better, brighter tomorrow – so here come the trumpets of progress, the trombones of hope, the clarinets of promise, the flutes of invention, the drums of purpose, the saxophones of meaning, but in the very last row bringing up the rear, it is the tubas of vanity that declare the reality that none of what is being played matters, but no one is listening to them.