

# Ecclesiastes 1:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

## Analysis

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The Preacher observes: 'All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.' The Hebrew 'yegeaim' (יָגַעַיִם, full of labour/wearisome) describes exhausting toil that never satisfies. Human language cannot fully express this weariness—'man cannot utter it' (lo-yukhal ish ledabber, לֹא-יִיכָל אִישׁ לְדַבֵּר). The parallel phrases about eye and ear emphasize perpetual dissatisfaction: no amount of seeing satisfies visual appetite; no amount of hearing satiates auditory desire. This verse diagnoses the human condition: restless craving never satisfied by created things. Augustine famously prayed, 'Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.' Only the Creator satisfies the insatiable human soul created for Him.

## Historical Context

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Ancient peoples experienced this restlessness despite less stimulation than modern life provides. The eye and ear seeking satisfaction anticipated modern consumer culture's endless appetite for novelty and entertainment. Yet Ecclesiastes exposes the futility: accumulating experiences doesn't produce satisfaction. Jesus offered alternative: 'whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst' (John 4:13-14). Early church fathers contrasted worldly pleasures that increase desire with divine grace that satisfies. The Reformers emphasized that finite goods cannot satisfy infinite desires—only the infinite God suffices. Modern readers see

this verse diagnosing social media, streaming services, constant connectivity—endless consumption without satisfaction.

## Related Passages

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**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

**Psalms 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

## Study Questions

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1. What evidence do you see that your 'eye is not satisfied with seeing'—constantly seeking new experiences, content, or possessions without lasting satisfaction?
2. How does this verse explain why accumulating experiences and knowledge often increases rather than decreases inner restlessness?

## Interlinear Text

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כָּל	הַדָּבָר יָם	יָגַע יָם	לֹא	יֹכֵל	אִישׁ	לֵדַבֵּר	לֹא
H3605	All things	are full of labour	H3808	cannot	man	utter	H3808
	H1697	H3023		H3201	H376	H1696	
תִּשְׂבֹּעַ	עַיִן	לֹרְאֹת	וְלֹא	תִמָּלֵא	אֵזְנוֹ	מִשְׁמָע:	
is not satisfied	it the eye	with seeing	H3808	filled	nor the ear	with hearing	
H7646	H5869	H7200		H4390	H241	H8085	

## Additional Cross-References

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**Proverbs 27:20** (Parallel theme): Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.

**Matthew 11:28** (Parallel theme): Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

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