



Ecclesiastes

Jesus Christ, End of All Living

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The Book of Ecclesiastes

The Hebrew title of Ecclesiastes is *Qohelet* – rendered as “the preacher” in some translations. The word refers to “the one who assembles.” (*assembles the people or compiles proverbs?*)

The title Ecclesiastes, in our English translations comes from the Greek translation of the word *Qohelet* in the Septuagint. The Greek word is related to the word *ekklesia*, meaning “assembly/congregation/church.”

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F-L-I-G-H-T

F – Ecclesiastes 1:1 attributes the book to “*the son of David, king in Jerusalem.*” The best candidate for this description is David’s son, Solomon. Though some contest Solomon’s authorship, thinking Ecclesiastes was written during the postexilic period after Solomon’s time, the internal evidence in the book points to him. The book also corresponds to his life as king and role as a writer.

The book of Ecclesiastes was most likely written toward the end of Solomon’s reign, around 940 BC, as he looked back to reflect on the meaning of life and warn readers about wrong choices.

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F-L-I-G-H-T

L – One of the big questions of life – if not the biggest – is “Why am I here?” Solomon, in all his wisdom, asked that as well. He wrote the book of Ecclesiastes as a journal of his search for life’s meaning and purpose. Here you’ll find his reflections on experience, honest and open about both the ups and downs.

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F-L-I-G-H-T

I – Solomon’s Search (1-4)

Solomon’s Sayings (5-10)

Solomon’s Solution (11-12)

F-L-I-G-H-T

G – Even though you won’t see specific references to the Messiah in Ecclesiastes, you’ll see redemption’s necessity in bold relief. Solomon was weary with the pursuit of meaning. He spoke of the fatiguing vanity of life “*under the sun*” (a phrase that recurs 29 times in the book). Life under the sun, according to Solomon, was toilsome, difficult, and meaningless. That’s the natural result of focusing on the horizontal (the world around you with all of its challenges, mysteries, and philosophies) and not on the vertical – that is, God and his Word and his ways.

F-L-I-G-H-T

G – But that’s the dark before the dawn, and it provides the needed contrast to “life under the Son”! We need to bring God into the equation to have the right perspective of Jesus Christ. Without him, life is vanity – empty and futile. With him, life is full of purpose. Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). As Solomon discovered, all the riches and power in the world can’t bring true satisfaction. Medical science can add years to your life, but only Jesus can add life to your years.

F-L-I-G-H-T

H – The book of Ecclesiastes is an illuminating commentary on the life of King Solomon. Solomon started off as a mighty king (ca. 970 BC), bringing the nation of Israel to its wealthiest and strongest point. However, made content and complacent by his fame and fortune, Solomon began to disobey God by pursuing the empty things described in Ecclesiastes. It was probably toward the end of his life that he realized he had chased after the wrong things, that he should have spent his time getting to know God more, growing in God’s wisdom even into his latter years.

F - L - I - G - H - T

T - Fear God. Fear refers to reverential awe that produces loving and humble submission to a holy God. Because he is your loving Father, you won't want to disappoint him.

Obey God. Obedience follows fear. Enthusiasm is a lot easier than obedience. You might get worked up about Jesus in a worship experience, but unless you keep his commandments, you're missing the point.

Prepare to give an account. One day you will stand before God and give an account for your life. Life is a God-given opportunity; life without God is empty, and death without God is a calamity.

"Vanity"

The most prominent theme of Ecclesiastes is "vanity" (Heb. *hevel*). This term occurs 38 times in the book. The literal sense of *hevel* is "vapor" or "breath." In its abstract uses in Ecclesiastes it refers to "anything that is superficial, ephemeral, insubstantial, incomprehensible, enigmatic, inconsistent, or contradictory."

First Observation of Life

- The vanity of human wisdom (1:1-2:26)
- Basic theme: vanity of all merely human effort and experience (1:1-3)
- Demonstration of the theme (1:4-2:26)

Second Observation of Life

- Coming to terms with the laws which govern life (3:1-5:20)
- The prudent attitude in view of the facts of life and death (3:1-22)
- The disappointments of earthly life (4:1-16)
- Futility of the self-seeking life (5:1-20)

Third Observation of Life

- No satisfaction in earthly goods and treasures (6:1-8:17)
- Inadequacy of attainments esteemed by the world (6:1-12)
- Counsels of prudence in this sin-corrupted world (7:1-29)
- Coming to terms with an imperfect world (8:1-17)

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Fourth Observation of Life

- God will deal with the injustices of this life (9:1-12:8)
- Death inevitable to all; make the best use of this life (9:1-18)
- The uncertainties of life and the baneful effects of folly (10:1-20)
- How best to invest a life (11:1-12:8)

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Conclusion

- Life in the light of eternity (12:9-14)
- Solomon's purpose was to teach people wisely about life (12:9-10)
- These incisive admonitions are of more practical value than all literature (12:11-12)
- Put God's will first, for his judgment is final (12:13-14)

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Understanding of Nature

- **Verse 1:6** This verse indicates a remarkable understanding of the global circulation of the atmosphere. That there are definite global "circuits" of the winds of the world is a fact now known to modern meteorologists, but could not have been known to the ancients.
- **Verse 1:7** This verse outlines the remarkable hydrologic cycle.

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