

# ECCLESIASTES

Author: Solomon Date: 935 B.C.

Ecclesiastes is a profound book of wisdom literature. It records an intense search for meaning and satisfaction in life on this earth. The meaning of the title of this book is translated “preacher” or “teacher” in English. King Solomon, to whom the book of Ecclesiastes is traditionally attributed uses what appears to be a pessimistic tone that would be in keeping with his spiritual state in the latter years of his life. Little is recorded of the last decade of his reign as king of Israel. He probably wrote this book during that period.

The complex theme of this book is: 1) Life is futile and everything is meaningless “under the sun” since it is impossible to discern any purpose in the ordering of events; 2) Nevertheless, life is to be enjoyed to the fullest, realizing that it is the gift of God; 3) True happiness cannot be found apart from God, therefore, the wise will live their lives in obedience to God, recognizing that God will eventually judge all people.

Solomon’s sermon is an analysis of life’s experiences and a critical essay about its meaning. He takes us on a mental journey through his life explaining how everything he tried, tested, or tasted was an exercise in futility.

When Solomon became king, he asked God for wisdom (2 Chronicles 1:7-12), and he became the wisest man in the world (1 Kings 4:29-34). He studied, taught, judged and wrote. Kings and leaders from other nations came to Jerusalem to learn from him. However, with all this practical insight on life, Solomon failed to heed his own advice and began a downward spiral. Near the end of his life, Solomon looked back with an attitude of humility and repentance. He took stock of the world as he had experienced it, hoping to spare his readers the bitterness of learning through personal experience that everything apart from God is empty and meaningless.

**Key verses:** “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens,” (3:1). “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind,” (12:13).

## OUTLINE

- I. Prologue (1:1-11)
- II. The Search for Meaning in Wisdom and in Pleasure (1:12 – 2:26)
- III. The Search for Meaning in Work (3:1 – 5:20)
- IV. The Search for Meaning in Wealth and Wisdom (6:1 - 7:29)
- V. The Search for Meaning in Authorities and Justice (8:1- 9:6)
- VI. Proverbs on Wisdom and Folly (9:7 - 11:6)
- VII. The Conclusion of the Search for Meaning (11:7 – 12:8)
- VIII. Epilogue 12:9-14

***Application: We each are created with a void in our lives that only God can fill. Many try to fill the void with everything “under the sun”—possessions, wealth, relationships, children, work, fame, accomplishments, knowledge, sex, and so forth, but cannot. Someday, we all will die, and we can’t take anything with us. True fulfillment is not found under the sun but in The Son. Through Jesus Christ will we find true satisfaction and meaning in life.***