

Ecclesiastes

Part Three: *observations pt1*

April 21, 2024

Last Sunday, we began the second section of Ecclesiastes, where Solomon uses his personal experience to give proof that everything in life is meaningless. Last week, we learned from Solomon that you cannot find meaning through knowledge, pleasure, building, collecting, and work. Why? Everyone dies and leaves behind everything they built, collected, and worked for. Today, we are going to look at Chapters 3 & 4, where Solomon begins using observation to prove everything in life is meaningless.

In Chapters 3 & 4, Solomon gives personal observations to argue that everything we do on earth is meaningless.

1st - Solomon observed that every activity on earth happens at the proper time and for the proper duration.

“For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest. A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build up. A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance. A time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones. A time to embrace and a time to turn away. A time to search and a time to quit searching. A time to keep and a time to throw away. A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be quiet and a time to speak. A time to love and a time to hate. A time for war and a time for peace.” (Ecclesiastes 3:1–8, NLT)

2nd - Solomon observed that God is in control of everything that happens on earth. 3:9-11

“What do people really get for all their hard work? I have seen the burden God has placed on us all. Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God’s work from beginning to end.” (Ecclesiastes 3:9–11, NLT)

In verse 9, Solomon asks the same question he asked at the beginning of Ecclesiastes (1:3). *“What do people get for all their hard work?”* Obviously, Solomon wants us to answer, *“Nothing! It is all meaningless!”* Then, Solomon states...

- Life on earth is a burden (tough task) from God.
- God has made everything beautiful (appropriate; proper) in its time.
- God has put eternity in the human heart.
- We cannot see God’s grand plan.

After making some observations, Solomon made his second conclusion in Ecclesiastes.

“So I concluded there is nothing better than to be happy and enjoy ourselves as long as we can. And people should eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of their labor, for these are gifts from God. And I know that whatever God does is final. Nothing can be added to it or taken from it. God’s purpose is that people should fear him. What is happening now has happened before, and what will happen in the future has happened before, because God makes the same things happen over and over again.” (Ecclesiastes 3:12–15, NLT)

3rd - Solomon observed there is injustice on earth. 3:16-22

Solomon observed that injustice was present on earth – even in the courts - the place of justice. He then told himself that God would judge everyone for their deeds in His time. Then he thought, *“God uses injustice to show people they are going to die – just like animals.”*

4th - Solomon observed there is oppression on earth. 4:1-3

Solomon also observed that oppression was present on earth. The oppressors had great power, and their victims were helpless. So, he concluded that the dead were better off than the living.

5th – Solomon observed the futility of work. 4:4-16

First, Solomon states that working to get your neighbor's stuff is meaningless or without real value. He then tells us that lazy people ruin their lives, as do people who work too much.

“Then I observed that most people are motivated to success because they envy their neighbors. But this, too, is meaningless—like chasing the wind. “Fools fold their idle hands, leading them to ruin.” And yet, “Better to have one handful with quietness than two handfuls with hard work and chasing the wind.” (Ecclesiastes 4:4–6, NLT)

Solomon goes on to say it is senseless for a single man to give up pleasure for hard work.

“I observed yet another example of something meaningless under the sun. This is the case of a man who is all alone, without a child or a brother, yet who works hard to gain as much wealth as he can. But then he asks himself, “Who am I working for? Why am I giving up so much pleasure now?” It is all so meaningless and depressing. Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.” (Ecclesiastes 4:7–12, NLT)

After sharing some of his God-given wisdom with us, Solomon says it is better to be a poor and wise youth than a rich and foolish king.

“It is better to be a poor but wise youth than an old and foolish king who refuses all advice. Such a youth could rise from poverty and succeed. He might even become king, though he has been in prison. But then everyone rushes to the side of yet another youth who replaces him. Endless crowds stand around him, but then another generation grows up and rejects him, too. So it is all meaningless—like chasing the wind.” (Eccl 4:13–16, NLT)

What should you take away from Ecclesiastes Chapters 3 & 4?

1. Life is a gift – not a burden from God.
2. God is great and good and perfectly controls all things on earth.
3. God wants you to walk by faith, believing He loves you and wants what is best for you.