

Ecclesiastes

Part One: *meaningless!* April 7, 2024

Ecclesiastes comes from a Greek word that means “speaker before an assembly.” Jewish tradition asserts Solomon wrote Song of Solomon in his youth, Proverbs in his middle years, and Ecclesiastes towards the end of his life (935 BC). Many people believe Solomon is the main character in Ecclesiastes, but the book was authored by someone else. This unnamed compiler introduces us to Solomon at the beginning of the book and then summarizes what Solomon said at the end.

Why is Ecclesiastes in the Bible?

- Ecclesiastes teaches us that life is meaningless without God.

Ecclesiastes has three sections:

1st - In 1:1-11, Solomon states and supports his thesis.

These are the words of the Teacher, King David's son, who ruled in Jerusalem. "Everything is meaningless," says the Teacher, "completely meaningless!" (Eccl 1:1–2, NLT)

The word translated as *meaningless* is the Hebrew word *hevel*. *Hevel* literally means vapor or smoke, and Solomon uses *hevel* 38 times in Ecclesiastes as a metaphor to describe how life is temporary, puzzling, and without real value.

After he states his bleak thesis in Vs. 2, Solomon supports it in verses 3-11.

"What do people get for all their hard work under the sun? Generations come and generations go, but the earth never changes. The sun rises and the sun sets, then hurries around to rise again. The wind blows south, and then turns north. Around and around it goes, blowing in circles. Rivers run into the sea, but the sea is never full. Then the water returns again to the rivers and flows out again to the sea. Everything is wearisome beyond description. No matter how much we see, we are never satisfied. No matter how much we hear, we are not content. History merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new. Sometimes people say, "Here is something new!" But actually it is old; nothing is ever truly new. We don't remember what happened in the past, and in future generations, no one will remember what we are doing now." (Eccl 1:3-11, NLT)

After he states and supports his thesis...

2nd - In 1:12-6:12, Solomon describes “earthly things” that did not give life meaning.

Beginning in 1:12, Solomon tells us how he devoted himself to wisdom, pleasure, building, money, and possessions, but all these pursuits led to emptiness. The wisest, richest, and most powerful man in the world felt dumb, poor, and powerless.

After he describes things under the sun that did not fulfill him...

3rd – In chapters 7-12, Solomon gives suggestions for living.

The final section in Ecclesiastes resembles the Book of Proverbs as Solomon compares foolish and wise living.

What important truths do you learn in Ecclesiastes?

- For life to have meaning, you must love God.

Solomon was unhappy at the end of his life even though he was the wisest, richest, and most powerful King in Israel's history. *Why did Solomon feel empty after living a "full" life?* He loved wisdom, wealth, and women more than he loved God (Matthew 22:34-40).

- For life to have meaning, you must trust God.

Throughout Ecclesiastes, Solomon complains that life "under the sun" is filled with uncertainties, inequities, injustices, and loss. Solomon says life is unfair and everything (including life itself) is temporary. *Why did Solomon have a negative view of life?* He did not trust God with his life (Proverbs 3:5-6).

- For life to have meaning, you must obey God.

The compiler of the book concludes Ecclesiastes by telling us to fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

Homework

1. Read Ecclesiastes three times.

2. Watch: <https://youtu.be/lrsQ1tc-2wk?si=FBKWKWmlhU-w8EEG>

<https://youtu.be/VeUiuSK81-0?si=xFJ3OI5xZ5DQ2XGr>

https://youtu.be/mCrtxkeQE_8?si=eUMXZjttE-m8qmlu