

# ECCLESIASTES

## INTRODUCTION

written and compiled by Gary Kukis

**Ecclesiastes**  
**Introduction:1–12**

**The Pursuit of Happiness and Wisdom Apart from God**

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall be have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God.” (John 3:16–18). “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!” (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10).

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These exegetical studies are *not* designed for you to read each and every word. For instance, the Hebrew exegesis is put into greyish tables, so that if you want to skip over them, that is fine. If you question a translation,

you can always refer back to the appropriate Hebrew tables to sort it all out. The intent is to make this particular study the most complete and most accurate examination of Ecclesiastes Introduction which is available in writing. The idea is to make every phrase, verse and passage understandable and to make correct application of all that is studied.

Besides teaching you the doctrinal principles related to this chapter, this commentary is also to help bring this narrative to life, so that you can understand the various characters, their motivations, and the choices that they make. Ideally, you will be able to visualize the peoples, their temporal and spiritual leaders, and their armies as they move across the landscape of the Land of Promise. I hope to provide not only an accurate exegesis of the chapter in view, but to also quote many of the great insights that past commentators have offered us.

Although much of this chapter is based upon narrative from the book of Kings, I will make every attempt possible to provide enough historical information and theological context so that you will have a sufficient background to understand what is going on.

### **Preface:**

This should be the most extensive introduction Ecclesiastes available, where you will be given a thorough preview of what is to come. It is my opinion that, with an introduction this lengthy, it is better to skim through it before reading the exegesis of Ecclesiastes; and then come back at the end of your study of Ecclesiastes and read it again, but more carefully.

### **Quotations:**

J. Vernon McGee: *Man has tried to be happy without God; it is being tried every day by millions of people. This book shows the absurdity of the attempt.*<sup>1</sup>

J. Vernon McGee: *God showed Job, a righteous man, that he was a sinner in God's sight. In Ecclesiastes God showed Solomon, the wisest man, that he was a fool in God's sight.*<sup>2</sup>

S. Cox: *[T]he "son of David" grew mournful or bitter as he looked at the strong ancient heavens and the stable, bountiful earth and thought of the weariness and brevity of human life.*<sup>3</sup>

Brian Bell: *We need not grumble because Roses have thorns, but rejoice that thorns have Roses.*<sup>4</sup>

### **Outline of Chapter Introduction:**

#### **Preface Introduction**

v. 1–  
v.  
v.  
v.  
v.

<sup>1</sup> From [https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt) accessed June 18, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> From [https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt) accessed June 18, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> *The Sermon Bible Commentary*; ©1888-1893; in the Public Domain; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll, M.A., LL.D., from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–11.

<sup>4</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/cbb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 25, 2018.

## Chapter Summary Addendum

### Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines:

Preface      **Quotations**

#### Introductory Remarks to the Book of Ecclesiastes

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 Remarks      **Brief Descriptions of Ecclesiastes** (by Various Commentators)  
 Remarks      **Brief Introductions to the book of Ecclesiastes** (various commentators)  
 Remarks      **Brief, but insightful observations of Ecclesiastes** (various commentators)  
 Remarks      **The Principals of the Book of Ecclesiastes**  
 Remarks      **The Places of Ecclesiastes**  
 Remarks      **By the Numbers**

#### The Title Ecclesiastes

Title      **The Name of the Book of Ecclesiastes** (Ron Snider)

#### Authorship of the Book of Ecclesiastes

Authorship      **General discussion of the authorship of Ecclesiastes** (various commentators)  
 Authorship      **Solomon is not the author** (various commentators)  
 Authorship      **A phony author pretends to be Solomon**  
 Authorship      **Solomon is the author of Ecclesiastes** (various commentators)  
 Authorship      **The Authorship of Ecclesiastes** (by Dr. Peter Pett)  
 Authorship      **Authorship and Date of Ecclesiastes** (Ron Snider)  
 Authorship      **Harmony between Ecclesiastes and other information about Solomon**  
 Authorship      **Biographical material on Solomon** (various commentators)  
 Authorship      **Short Profiles of Solomon** (various commentators)  
 Authorship      **Profile of Solomon** (by Rick Snider)  
 Authorship      **Background of Solomon, the Author of Ecclesiastes** (John Griffith)

#### The date that Ecclesiastes was written

Date      **The Authorship and Date of Ecclesiastes** (James Burton Coffman)  
 Date      **The date of the book of Ecclesiastes** (various commentators)

#### Formal Introduction to the Book of Ecclesiastes

Introduction      **The Prequel to Ecclesiastes**  
 Introduction      **McGee's Introduction to Ecclesiastes** (J. Vernon McGee)  
 Introduction      **Introducing the Book of Ecclesiastes** (Dr. Dan Hill)  
 Introduction      **An Introduction to Ecclesiastes 1–2** (Gary Everett)  
 Introduction      **An Introduction to Ecclesiastes** (by Ray Stedman)

## Wisdom in the Book of Ecclesiastes

Wisdom	<b>Categories of the Wisdom of Solomon</b>
Wisdom	<b>The Book of Ecclesiastes is the Pursuit of Human Wisdom</b>
Wisdom	<b>The Fundamental Flaws of Secular Wisdom</b> (Dr. Dan Hill)

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Summary	<b>Summaries of Ecclesiastes</b> (Various Commentators)
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Summary	
Summary	

## Outlines/Organization/Overviews of the Book of Ecclesiastes

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Outlines	<b>Coffman's Outline of Ecclesiastes</b> (James Burton Coffman)
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Outlines	<b>McGee's Outline of Ecclesiastes</b> (J. Vernon McGee)
Outlines	<b>Outline and Organization</b> (from the Open Bible)
Outlines	<b>Carroll's outline of Ecclesiastes</b> (B. H. Carroll)
Outlines	<b>Garrett's Outline of Ecclesiastes</b> (Duane Garrett)
Outlines	<b>929 Chapters outlines Ecclesiastes</b>
Outlines	<b>Reamers' Outline of Ecclesiastes</b> (Arend Reamers—Sutcliffe Bible Commentary)

## Interpreting Ecclesiastes

Interpretation	<b>Fundamental Questions About Ecclesiastes</b>
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## Themes and Key Ideas in the Book of Ecclesiastes

Themes	<b>Themes and Key Ideas of Ecclesiastes</b> (the Open Bible)
Themes	<b>Overall Theme of Ecclesiastes</b> (John W. Ritenbaugh)
Themes	<b>Vanity/All is Vanity</b> (various commentators)
Themes	<b>Under the Sun</b> (various commentators)

## Purpose for the Book of Ecclesiastes

Purpose	<b>Methodology and purpose</b> (Rick Snider)
Purpose	<b>Solomon's Purpose for Writing Ecclesiastes</b> (various commentators)

## God/Deity in the Book of Ecclesiastes

God/Deity [God in Ecclesiastes](#) (various commentators)  
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### Miscellaneous Topics in the Book of Ecclesiastes

Miscellaneous [The Mistakes of Solomon](#) (Dr. Dan Hill)  
 Miscellaneous [Ecclesiastes is a discussion between two men—or souls](#) (The Bible Illustrator)  
 Miscellaneous  
 Miscellaneous

### Canonicity Questions Concerning the Book of Ecclesiastes

Canonicity [Why some have rejected the canonicity of Ecclesiastes](#) (Aaron Sturgill)  
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 Canonicity [How could such a skeptical book as Ecclesiastes be canonical?](#) (Archer)  
 Canonicity

### Concluding remarks on the Book of Ecclesiastes

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 Conclusions [Conclusions in the Book of Ecclesiastes](#) (commentators/discussion)  
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 Conclusions  
 Conclusions

Most of these can be removed:

Introduction [Changes—additions and subtractions](#)

Summary [A Set of Summary Doctrines and Commentary](#)  
 Summary [Why Ecclesiastes Introduction is in the Word of God](#)  
 Summary [What We Learn from Ecclesiastes Introduction](#)  
 Summary [Jesus Christ in Ecclesiastes Introduction](#)  
 Summary [Arno Gaebelein Summarizes Ecclesiastes Introduction](#)  
 Summary [Edersheim Summarizes Ecclesiastes Introduction](#)  
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Addendum [Josephus' History of this Time Period](#)  
 Addendum [A Complete Translation of Ecclesiastes Introduction](#)  
 Addendum [Word Cloud from Ecclesiastes \(NASB\)](#)  
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<b>First Verse</b>	<b>Chapter Summary</b>	<b>Addendum</b>
<a href="http://www.kukis.org">www.kukis.org</a>		<b>Exegetical Studies in Ecclesiastes</b>

Doctrines Covered or Alluded To			

Chapters of the Bible Alluded To or Appropriately Exegeted with this Chapter			

Many who read and study this chapter are 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> generation students of R. B. Thieme, Jr., so that much of this vocabulary is second nature. One of Bob’s contributions to theology is a fresh vocabulary along with a number of concepts which are theologically new or reworked, yet still orthodox. Therefore, if you are unfamiliar with his work, the definitions below will help you to fully understand all that is being said. Also included are various technical terms from Christian theology along with a few new terms and concepts which I have developed.

Sometimes the terms in the exegesis of this chapter are simply alluded to, without any in-depth explanation of them. Sometimes, these terms are explained in detail and illustrated. A collection of all these terms is found here: ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). Often, the terms below are linked to complete doctrines.

Definition of Terms	
<b>Divine Viewpoint</b>	Divine viewpoint is how God thinks. This is very different than how man thinks. <a href="#">The Lord says, "My thoughts are not like yours. Your ways are not like mine. Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts are higher than your thoughts."</a> (Isa. 55:8–9; ERV) See <b>Human Viewpoint Versus Divine Viewpoint Thinking</b> ( <a href="#">HTML</a> ) ( <a href="#">PDF</a> ) ( <a href="#">WPD</a> ).
<b>Human Viewpoint</b>	Man’s thinking apart from Bible doctrine. See <b>Human Viewpoint versus Divine Viewpoint</b> ( <a href="#">HTML</a> ) ( <a href="#">PDF</a> ) ( <a href="#">WPD</a> ).
<b>Rebound (Restoration to fellowship with God)</b>	In the New Testament, this is naming your sins to God, so that you are both restored to temporal fellowship with God and are then filled with the Spirit of God. In the Old Testament, naming your sins to God would result in a restoration of fellowship and, in some cases, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit once again (the Holy Spirit was not given to all Old Testament believers). The <b>Doctrine of Rebound</b> ( <a href="#">HTML</a> ) ( <a href="#">PDF</a> ).

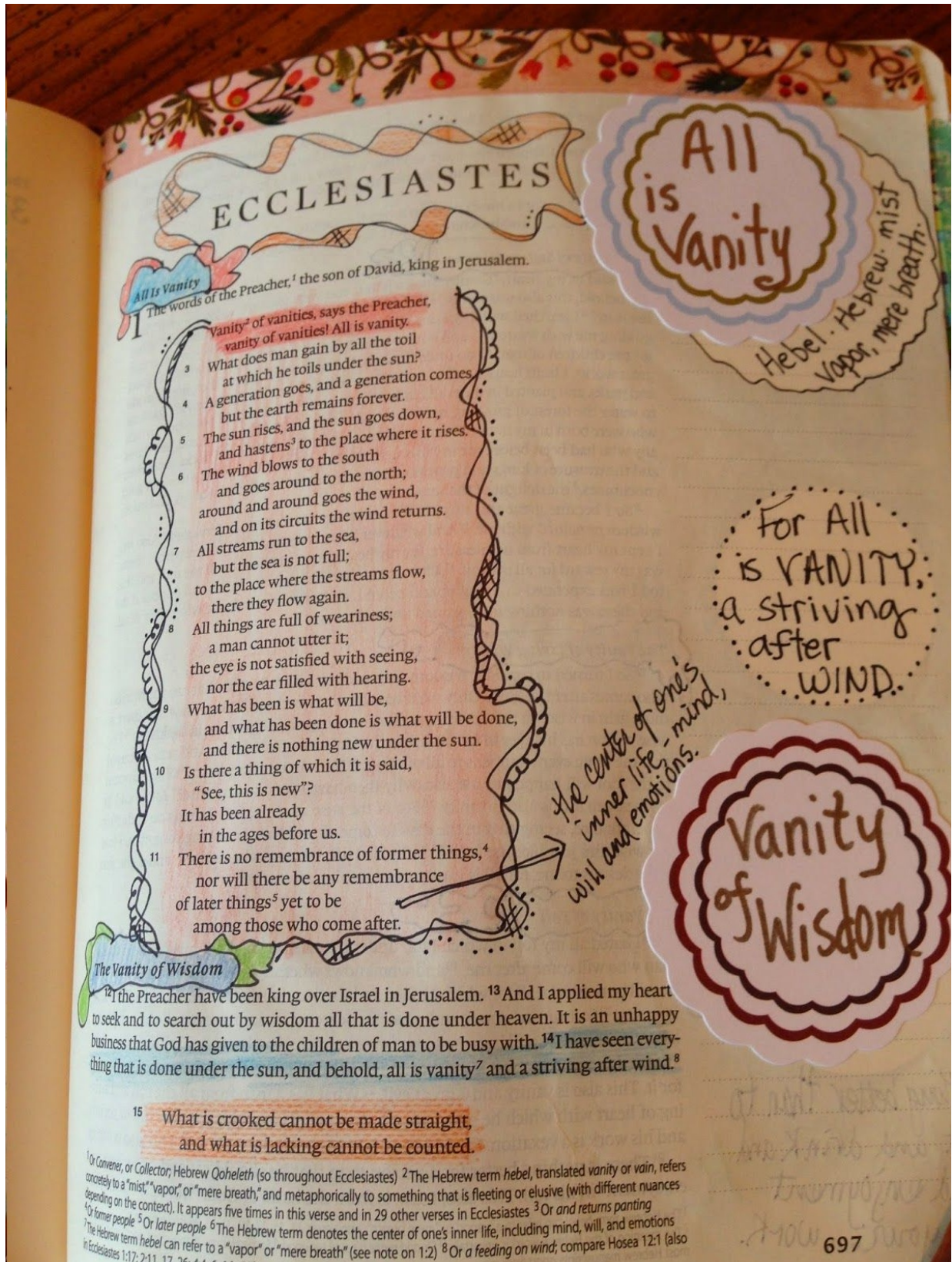
Some of these definitions are taken from  
<https://www.gotquestions.org/>  
<http://gracebiblechurchwichita.org/>  
<http://rickhughesministries.org/content/Biblical-Terms.pdf>  
<http://www.gbible.org/index.php?proc=d4d>  
<http://www.wordoftruthministries.org/terms-and-definitions/>  
<http://www.theopedia.com/>

<a href="#">Chapter Outline</a>	<a href="#">Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines</a>
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**I**ntroductory Remarks to the Book of Ecclesiastes: Solomon, the author of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs, reveals quite an arc in his life. His observations and maxims offered up in the book of Proverbs reveal him to be one of the wisest men of all time. But, in the book of Ecclesiastes, it is clear that he is filled with **human viewpoint**. Solomon clearly searches for human viewpoint solutions; he tries to find entertainment and stimulation in a variety of ways—apart from God—and he over and over again admits to the futility of his approach. This is what the book of Ecclesiastes is about—Solomon trying to find wisdom, contentment and purpose in life—but apart from God. He does this as a man *under the sun*, and over and over again, he concludes that life is meaningless, just like breath; it is transitory and without meaning; and all life is but breath.

In this book, we often come across the word *vanity*; and that is simply a word that means *breath*; *vanity* is how it is translated in the KJV.

The Book of Ecclesiastes (Bible journaling—a graphic); from Pinterest; accessed June 17, 2018.





Somewhere along the way, Solomon turned his thinking around; and at the end of this book, we see him thinking with **divine viewpoint**. There is nothing in the book of Ecclesiastes which tells us *why* Solomon so turned himself around (or how God turned him around). Nor does this book tell us how Solomon got to the place in his life that he did, to write a book like Ecclesiastes. The book just starts in, with Solomon making a lot of statements. We need to examine the narrative of Solomon's life in Kings, and then piece together his motivations and life from that.

We studied 1Kings 9, and there were several things which took place at that time which indicated that Solomon was slipping from the man of great wisdom that he had been before. In 1Kings 11, Solomon will chase after the gods of his many wives; and this is clearly his undoing.

It is only the book of Ecclesiastes which actually tells us that Solomon turned his thinking around. He shifts from human viewpoint to divine viewpoint near the end of this book. As of right now, I don't find anything which tells me how or why Solomon shifted from thinking wrong to thinking right. My guess is, it is personal dissatisfaction with life and the influence of his many wives which led Solomon off course. However, divine discipline, and a renewal of Bible doctrine in his soul seems to have put him straight. These factors combined to get Solomon on the right path near the end of his life.

Surely you have had a friend or relative who has begun a study of Eastern religions—Siddhartha was a particularly enchanting book to those hippies of my generation who did not have the sin nature trend of debauchery. Today, those of the liberal philosophy and politics also see such eastern religion as the summum bonum of wisdom. Solomon himself went on a search for all human wisdom, with few differences in content or philosophies.

One or two sentences which describe Ecclesiastes Introduction.

### Brief Descriptions of Ecclesiastes (by Various Commentators)

Matthew Henry: *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. This is the text of the preacher's sermon, of which in this book he never loses sight.*<sup>5</sup>

Pastor John Griffith: *Solomon reasons through some of the apparent contradictions and perplexities of life. He writes this book not as the king, or the ruler, but from the standpoint of a philosopher, an observer of life and that primarily we will find is from the standpoint of human viewpoint.*<sup>6</sup>

J. Vernon McGee: *The Book of Ecclesiastes is a dramatic autobiography of King Solomon's life when he was away from God. As the Book of Proverbs reveals Solomon's wisdom, the Book of Ecclesiastes reveals his foolishness.*<sup>7</sup>

Brian Bell Commentary: *I titled my message what Solomon wanted to call this book,...Life is not a bowl of cherry's...it's the pits!*<sup>8</sup>

The Open Bible: *The key word in Ecclesiastes is "meaningless," the futile emptiness of trying to be happy apart from God.*<sup>9</sup>

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

One needs to be careful when quoting from the book of Ecclesiastes. Are you sharing Solomon's human viewpoint wisdom or God's?

<sup>5</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–3.

<sup>6</sup> From [http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes\\_01.html](http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_01.html) accessed June 14, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> From [https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt) accessed June 18, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/cbb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 24, 2018.

<sup>9</sup> *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 857.

## Brief Introductions to the book of Ecclesiastes (various commentators)

Keith Krell: *What would it take to make you happy? What if you had the wealth of Bill Gates or Donald Trump? Would this make you happy? What if you had the success of Oprah or Martha Stewart? Do you think you could be happy? What if you had the brains of Carl Sagan or Stephen Hawking? Do you think you could be happy? Let me guess. Your answer is, "I don't know, but I'd sure like to give it a try."*<sup>10</sup>

My own answer here is that I am quite happy with what God has done in my life and all that He has done for me. I don't doubt that Krell feels the same way.

Krell continues (quoting M.R. De Haan II at the end): *A few people have been able to possess wealth, success, and intelligence just as I described. Solomon, the third king of Israel, was one of them. In some ways he had everything. He had a thousand wives and concubines, enormous wealth, international respect, and unparalleled wisdom. What he didn't always have, however, was a reason for living. He didn't always have happiness. He fits the pattern of the highly gifted, extremely ambitious person who climbs the ladder of success—only to contemplate jumping off once he's reached the top.*<sup>11</sup>

F. B. Meyer: *All is vanity!* This cry finds an echo in human hearts of every age and time. God meant man to be happy. *"These things," said our Lord, "I have spoken to you, that your joy may be full."* *"The fruit of the Spirit is joy."* Yet the air is laden with complaint and bitterness. Men are asking constantly, "Is life worth living?" The present age is full of unrest and weariness, of war and strife, of unsatisfied yearnings and desires. The mistake is that men seek to solve the mystery of life and to find their happiness apart from God, who has made us for Himself.

Meyer continues: *This book was written and incorporated in the Bible to show that man's quest for happiness is vain, so long as it is apart from God. Solomon had unbounded opportunities for pursuing his quest. Youth, wealth, wisdom, royalty, human love were his, but when all were mixed in the golden cup of his life, he turned from the draught unsatisfied and sad. Listen to the sigh of the sated voluptuary: *Vanity of vanities!* Let us turn from these bitter experiences to 1Jn. 2:15–17.*<sup>12</sup>

Keith Simons: *[Solomon's] opinion was that, without a right relationship with God, a person achieves nothing worthwhile. Of course a person may become rich or famous but these things do not last. At death, that person loses all such things. And afterwards, nothing matters except that person's relationship with God.*<sup>13</sup>

Ken Cayce: *[S]ome describe the contents of the book as pessimistic, cynical, skeptical, hedonistic, or agnostic, and picture the author as a man of doubt who has wandered far from God.*<sup>14</sup>

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Sometimes, a commentator will begin with a good observation of this chapter of the Bible.

## Brief, but insightful observations of Ecclesiastes (various commentators)

Brian Bell Commentary: *Solomon devoted his life to answering life questions like, What is the meaning of life? What is existence all about? Is life worth living?*

<sup>10</sup> From [Bible.org](#), accessed June 23, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> From [Bible.org](#), accessed June 23, 2018.

<sup>12</sup> F. B. Meyer, *Through the Bible by Day (A Devotional Commentary)*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–18.

<sup>13</sup> From [Useful Bible](#), accessed June 24, 2018.

<sup>14</sup> From <http://www.bible-studys.org> accessed June 24, 2018.

## Brief, but insightful observations of Ecclesiastes (various commentators)

Bell continues:

1. *This is the answer if you hold to a worldview of Humanism.*
2. *This is a negative argument to demonstrate a profound truth.*
3. *This is not a pessimistic book but a realistic book.*
4. *To learn the true meaning of life you must...1st view life apart from God in all its futility. Then, fold in God-connectedness & then life will mean something.<sup>15</sup>*

Pastor John Griffith: *Ecclesiastes is one of the favorite books of the Bible for skeptics, scoffers, atheists, and certain cultists. Reason is that certain passages in this book seem to deny that there is life after death. Hedonists love this book too, because it seemingly endorses a rather epicurean lifestyle. Those who pursue pleasure as the chief aim of life love the book because throughout it we are frequently exhorted to an "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we must die" philosophy. But all of these groups fail to note what we must observe right from the beginning: this book is an examination of secular wisdom and knowledge. The book clearly states at the outset that it is limiting itself to that which is apparent to the natural mind, that is human viewpoint. Ecclesiastes is the findings of what humans are able to discern "under the sun," by which the writer means the visible world.<sup>16</sup>*

The Open Bible: *The book of Ecclesiastes...declares...[that] nothing can fill the God-shaped void in man's life but God himself...[not] power, popularity, prestige or pleasure.*

The Open Bible continues: *Once seen from God's perspective, life takes on meaning and purpose, causing Solomon to exclaim, "Eat...drink...enjoy life...do right...fear God...obey his commands." Skepticism and despair melt away when life is viewed as a daily gift from God.<sup>17</sup> The Open Bible included give generously; but I do not recall that as being a part of God's perspective in this book. If I later find out that I am wrong, then I will change this*

The NIV Study Bible: *With his life largely behind him, the author takes stock of the world as he has experienced it between the horizons of birth and death—the latter a horizon beyond which man cannot see. The world is seen as being full of enigmas, the greatest of which is man himself.<sup>18</sup>*

Pastor John Griffith: *[The book of Ecclesiastes is often seen as] nihilistic, fatalistic, skeptical, cynical or materialistic.<sup>19</sup>*

Pastor John Griffith: *To the twentieth-century "man in the street," life is a puzzle. He feels that he, like his culture, has become plastic. For just as plastic now symbolizes the chief achievement of research, technocracy, and massive sales and distribution agencies, so also plastic people feel themselves to be the fruit of sociological research and constant manipulation by economic, political, social, and religious technocracies. Life has lost its zip. Meanwhile his universe grows silent as he turns away from God, and twentieth-century man is gripped by an inexplicable loneliness. Is there no one home in the universe? Truth with a capital T continues to disappear, almost in direct proportion to the disappearance of God from modern thought. "All is relative," goes the slogan, and that is the only absolute left. Ecclesiastes is the best news around for such baffled modern men. It is the book for men who want to live again-now. It is the working man's book: it answers his boredom with the routine of joylessly eating, drinking, and earning a paycheck. Ecclesiastes has as its central concern that basic hunger of men to see if the totality of life fits into a meaningful pattern.<sup>20</sup>*

<sup>15</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/cbb/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 24, 2018.

<sup>16</sup> From [http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes\\_01.html](http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_01.html) accessed June 14, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 857 (paraphrased).

<sup>18</sup> *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 984.

<sup>19</sup> From [http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes\\_02.html](http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_02.html) accessed June 14, 2018.

<sup>20</sup> From [http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes\\_02.html](http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_02.html) accessed June 14, 2018.

## Brief, but insightful observations of Ecclesiastes (various commentators)

The Bible Illustrator: *This book has been called the sphinx of the Bible, a not unapt name, for the book is grave, majestic, mysterious. Whatever its meaning be, it contradicts itself in the most flagrant way, looked at from every standpoint but one. The book is clearly the record of a debate either between two men—one of them smitten with unbelief and despair, the other filled with conviction and hope; or more probably between two men in some one man—two parts of the same soul.*<sup>21</sup>

Expositor's Bible Commentary: *In accordance with the rules of his art, the dramatic preacher brings himself on the stage of his poem, permits us to hear his most penetrating and characteristic utterances, confesses his own most secret and inward experiences, and thus enables us to conceive and to judge him. He is true to his artistic canons from the outset. His prologue, unlike that of the Book of Job, is cast in the dramatic form. Instead of giving us a clear statement of the moral problem he is about to discuss, he opens with the characteristic utterances of the man who, wearied with many futile endeavours, gathers up his remaining strength to recount the experiments he has tried and the conclusion he has reached.*<sup>22</sup>

David Guzik: *The Book of Ecclesiastes is one of the most unusual and perhaps most difficult to understand books of the Bible. It has a spirit of hopeless despair; it has no praise or peace; it seems to promote questionable conduct. Yet these words of the Preacher show us the futility and foolishness of a life lived without an eternal perspective.*<sup>23</sup>

David Guzik: *In the search for this answer, the Preacher will search the depths of human experience, including despair. He will thoroughly examine the emptiness and futility of life lived without eternity before coming to the conclusion of the necessity of eternity.*<sup>24</sup>

Eaton: *He does not come as a formal philosopher; it is a word from God he has to share, despite his reflective low-key approach. He does not present half-a-dozen arguments for the existence of God. Instead he picks up our own questions. Can you cope with life without having any idea where you are going? You don't have all the answers to life's enigmas, do you? Your neo-pagan view of life doesn't give you any hope of achieving very much, does it? Nature will not answer your questions, and you are bored by it anyway. History baffles your attempts to understand it. You don't like to think about your own death; yet it is the most certain fact about your existence.*<sup>25</sup>

David Guzik: *These are definitely the words of the Preacher, but in this apologetically oriented sermon his focus on God is indirect.*<sup>26</sup>

Eaton: *It makes no mention of Yahweh, the Lord, the name of the God of Israel's covenant faith. It scarcely refers to the law of God, the only possible reference being in Eccles. 12:13. It scarcely refers to the nation of Israel (only in Eccles. 1:12). Why these omissions? The answer seems to be that the Preacher's argument stands on its own feet and does not depend on Israel's covenant faith to be valid. He is appealing to universally observable facts.*<sup>27</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:1.

<sup>22</sup> *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–11.

<sup>23</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:1.

<sup>24</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:1.

<sup>25</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:1.

<sup>26</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:1.

<sup>27</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:1.

**Brief, but insightful observations of Ecclesiastes (various commentators)**

Ray Stedman: *Nothing in itself, the Searcher claims, will satisfy. No thing, no pleasure, no relationship, nothing he found had enduring value in life. That is why my sub-title for this study is, "The Things That Won't Work." Everybody is trying to make them work; everybody has seized on one or another of these philosophies, these views of life, and tries to make it satisfy him. But according to this Searcher, who has gone through it all, nothing will work. When he says, "Vanity of vanities, emptiness of emptiness," that is the Hebrew way of declaring the superlative. There is nothing more empty, this man concludes, than life.*<sup>28</sup>

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We need to know who the people are who populate this chapter.

**The Principals of the Book of Ecclesiastes**

Characters	Biographical Material
Solomon	Solomon is the human author of the book of Ecclesiastes, a topic to be discussed in great detail further down.
God	God is presented as a concept, as the Creator, but not as much as a personal God Who interacts with us personally.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

We need to know where this chapter takes place. I may need to eliminate this one.

**The Places of Ecclesiastes**

Place	Description
Jerusalem	The name of <i>Jerusalem</i> is incidental to this study. It is used to identify Solomon as the author.
Israel	The nation <i>Israel</i> is also incidental to this study, helping to identify the author more than anything else. Although the Old Testament Bible was primarily written and preserved by sons of Israel; there is a universality in the search that Solomon embarks upon in this book (and all of the books of the Old and New Testaments have application to all mankind).

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<sup>28</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 1.

By the Numbers	
Item	Date; duration; size; number
The date this book was written:	Arend Reamers (Sutcliffe Bible Commentary): <i>King Solomon ruled around 970 to 931 BC. The book of Ecclesiastes must therefore date from the end of this period.</i> <sup>29</sup>
<i>Under the sun.</i>	This phrase is found 28 times in the ESV (in 26 verses). The KJV has this phrase 29 times (in 27 different verses). This phrase is found nowhere else in the Bible.
<i>Striving after wind.</i>	This exact phrase is found 9 times in the ESV; and only in Ecclesiastes. In the KJV, this is translation <i>a vexation of spirit</i> and found 9 time in Ecclesiastes and once in Isaiah.
<i>All is vanity.</i>	This phrase is found 5 times in the ESV (and the KJV) and nowhere else in the Bible.
Vanity, vanities.	The word <i>vanity</i> is found 31 times in the ESV and only 3 times elsewhere in the Bible. <i>Vanities</i> is found twice, only in Ecclesiastes.
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>Chapter Outline</span> <span>Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines</span> </div>	

## The Title Ecclesiastes

The Hebrew name of this book is Qoheleth קהלת [pronounced ], and is taken from the designation which the writer himself assumes (Eccles. 1:2 7:27 12:8–10). In the Septuagint, the word is *ekklêsíastês* (ἐκκλησιαστής) [pronounced *ehk-klays-ee-ahs-TACE*]; which is obviously where we get our English word for this book.

Arno Gaebelein: *Whether the word Kohaleth is rendered "preacher," "debater," or "assembler," or "one of an Assembly," the whole tenor of the teaching proves it is wisdom from under the sun, natural wisdom, that is speaking. The wisest of men undertakes to observe and experiment with life under the sun, in order to find out for all men the outcome of all his searchings, and then rehearses all to an assembly of his fellows. He is not supposed to know any divinely-revealed wisdom, or to have heard of a righteousness of faith, or of divine mercy, or of forgiveness of sins. He is to make answer as a natural man to whom is given the resources and helps common to natural men, only he is wiser and richer than they, and so must bring the final answer for all. And also he is a Hebrew and knows of one living and true God.*<sup>30</sup>

James Burton Coffman: *The title "preacher" is the rendering of the Hebrew word qohelet (female gender) that is derived from the verb qahal (Engl. to gather). The word qohelet appears seven times in Ecclesiastes (chap. 1:1 ,2 ,12; 7:27; 12:8-10) but nowhere else in the Bible. The translators of the Septuagint have rendered it with ecclesiasts (from ecclesia, Engl. Assembly, church). Martin Luther was the first one to translate this word (which is difficult to translate) with "preacher". But this meaning has been questioned. Another explanation is based on the principle meaning of "gathering publicly". Accordingly the wisdom described in Ecclesiastes is the one accessible to all men. It is so to say the wisdom taught in the temple court whereas the hidden wisdom taught in the sanctuary (Psalms 73:17)*

<sup>29</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/jsc/ecclesiastes-0.html> accessed June 21, 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–18.

is only opened up for believers. This wisdom is described in Proverbs, which as already mentioned are the "sequel" to Ecclesiastes.<sup>31</sup>

### The Name of the Book of Ecclesiastes (Ron Snider)

- 1) The name of the book is found in the first verse of the book and is commonly known as קהלתה (qoheleth).
- 2) The masculine noun is derived from the verbal root קהל (qahal), which conveys the idea of assembling without regard to why the assembly was convened.
- 3) The form is actually a qal feminine participle, which is not attested in Hebrew literature; however, the niph'al (gather together, congregate) and the hiph'il (to convene an assembly) are used.
- 4) This had led most to conclude that the feminine is an abstract, which in broad terms refers to one who has something to do with an assembly or congregation, perhaps one who calls an assembly.
- 5) Therefore, various interpretations have been advanced, such as *a collector/assembler of sayings, one that convokes of an assembly, or speaker to an assembly.*
- 6) The last two translations underlie the translation of the Hebrew term in the Septuagint, which is the Greek masculine noun ἐκκλησιαστής (ekklesiastes), also denoting one who is somehow related to a congregation.
- 7) The best explanation would then indicate that the term is abstract, indicates an office associated with an assembly, and that it is likely not a proper name.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (this will open as a Word document on your computer); accessed June 16, 2018 (slightly edited).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

## Authorship of the Book of Ecclesiastes

Quite frankly, I probably spent way too much time on this particular topic.

Solomon is clearly the author of the book of Ecclesiastes, but that is a conclusion that we will come to following a great deal of study and discussion. The problem that some people have with this is, the Solomon of Ecclesiastes comes off much differently than the Solomon who wrote Proverbs and the Solomon of 1 Kings 1–9. We will, another chapter or two into Kings, see the chinks of Solomon's armor. But right now, it is very difficult to square the Solomon of Proverbs with the Solomon of Ecclesiastes. They both talk about wisdom, but that seems to take them in very different directions.

Have you ever talked about an historical figure with someone else, either in person or on the internet, and one of you says, "He's a Christian" and the other says, "He's not"? Famous people live a long time and say a lot of things. I have heard people (or, as I like to call them, *idiots*) argue that Hitler was a Christian, and therefore, WWII is a religious war started by a Christian. Throughout life, people change their minds—sometimes they realize it, sometimes they don't, but they change their minds. If Charlie Brown writes down some *profound* thoughts at age 20, it is highly unlikely that he will record the same *profound* thoughts at age 50. For every Christian, there is a period of time during which they were not Christian. No one is born a Christian. You might be raised by Christian parents, but you do not become a Christian until you choose to believe in Jesus Christ. You might do this at age 4 and you might not do it until age 50; but it is a choice that you actually make.

Famous people have thoughts about Christianity and the Bible all of their lives. Sometimes, what they say is favorable and sometimes not. We have a wonderful current president at this time (Donald J. Trump); and a huge percentage of the evangelical community voted for him. Now, is President Trump a Christian? I could not tell you that. He has never clearly made a profession of his Christian faith public (as far as I know), but he clearly understands how important God and Christianity are to the United States. Could I cull out some quotes from

<sup>31</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

President Trump which suggest that he is a Christian? Of course I could. Could I find some things that he said that indicates that he is not? Probably so.

The point I am trying to make is, Solomon wrote a lot of things down. Sometimes, these things were divine viewpoint (such as, the book of Proverbs); sometimes, these things are human viewpoint (most of the book of Ecclesiastes). As we study this book, we simply need to keep all of that in mind.

This is not true of the other human authors of Scripture. What they recorded in the Bible is God's Word. They recorded divine viewpoint. Unless they were arguing a point, they did not write human viewpoint. But, Solomon, in the book of Proverbs, records divine viewpoint; and in the book of Ecclesiastes, he writes a lot of human viewpoint.

As an aside, Solomon did believe in the Revealed God and he wrote the book of Ecclesiastes (as well as making the searches for meaning as a believer in the True Faith).

*J. Vernon McGee: Solomon also wrote the Books of Proverbs and the Song of Solomon. We will find Ecclesiastes to be quite different from the Book of Proverbs. In Proverbs we saw the wisdom of Solomon; here we shall see the foolishness of Solomon. Ecclesiastes is the dramatic autobiography of his life when he was away from God.<sup>32</sup>*

*Expositor's Bible Commentary: opens abruptly with "words of the Preacher," who is at once the author and the hero of the drama. "Who is he," we ask, "and what?" "When did he live, and what place did he fill?" And at present we can only reply, He is the voice of one crying in the wilderness of Oriental antiquity, and saying, "Vanity of vanities! all is vanity!" For what intent, then, does his voice break the long silence? Of what ethical mood is this pathetic note the expression? What prompts his despairing cry?<sup>33</sup>*

By far, the majority of commentators believe Solomon to have written Ecclesiastes.

### **General discussion of the authorship of Ecclesiastes (various commentators)**

*The Cambridge Bible: It is noticeable that the name of Solomon is not mentioned as it is in the titles of the other two books ascribed to him (Prov. 1:1; Song of Songs. 1:1).<sup>34</sup>*

*The College Press Bible Study: Views vary sharply concerning the actual author of Ecclesiastes, but there is little doubt that Solomon fits this description. The name "Solomon" never appears in the book. This does not mean, however, that he is thus discounted as the author. The Jewish tradition held to the Solomonic authorship as did most non-Jewish writers until Hugo Grotius argued against this possibility in 1644 A.D. Since that time modern critics have woven fanciful theories concerning possible authors. Even among conservative writers, there is an uncertainty as to whom the book should be ascribed. Recent tendencies, however, on the part of conservative scholars fashion a return to the more traditional view that Solomon wrote the book.<sup>35</sup>*

<sup>32</sup> From [https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt) accessed June 18, 2018.

<sup>33</sup> *Expositor's Bible Commentary*; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll; ©1887-1896; public domain; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–11.

<sup>34</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1.

<sup>35</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:1.



## General discussion of the authorship of Ecclesiastes (various commentators)

Arno Gaebelein: *[The author of Ecclesiastes] had given himself to wisdom. He possessed unusual wisdom. The king was what we would term today a great scientist. He excelled in wisdom all the children of the East country. Proverbial in his days was "the wisdom of Egypt"; yet his wisdom was greater. His fame was in all nations round about. Philosophy and poetry were his great achievements. "And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things and of fishes" 1 Kings 4:299, etc.). He was a great botanist, an ornithologist and zoologist. He traced God's wonders in nature, that which the natural man can so easily do. But what about all this wisdom? Did it satisfy his soul? We listen to his answer: "I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit." The more knowledge the more sorrow.*<sup>36</sup>

B. H. Carroll on the authorship of Ecclesiastes: *So Solomon wrote this book when he was an old man, from the viewpoint of experience, old age, and penitence; it is a formal discourse, or sermon, the text of which is "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity" (Eccles. 1:2) and the object of it was to search out what good thing the sons of men should do all the days of their life (Eccles. 2:3). The whole book is given to this one thought.*

Carroll continues: *Some of the various ideas of the author of this book are as follows: Some say that he was an Epicurean; others that he was a dyspeptic; yet others, that he was a skeptic, a Stoic, or an atheist; but to the closer student the plan of the book becomes plain.*

Carroll continues: *The book, as a philosophical treatise, contains a discussion of every perplexing question of today. This book fairly represents the struggles of every schoolboy who thinks. Its teaching is that in this life there is but one true philosophy and shows that we are living in a world which is under a curse. Compare Rom. 8:20 ff.*

Carroll concludes: *There is one caution as to its interpretation, viz: Withhold your verdict till the evidence is all in, because in it all theories are tried and the conclusion explains these results. In connection with this book, the book of Job and Psalm 73 should be studied. The author adopts wisdom as the means to try out all the theories of life.*<sup>37</sup>

David Guzik on style: *When Solomon wrote this, he did so in a style understood and appreciated in his day. "The particular brand of wisdom that characterizes Ecclesiastes is well attested in the ancient world. We may call it 'pessimism literature'. Ecclesiastes is the only biblical example of this old literary tradition."* (Eaton).<sup>38</sup>

Eaton then gives an example of this: *In an Egyptian work, The Man Who Was Tired of Life, written between 2300 and 2100 bc, a man disputed with his soul whether life was worth living or whether suicide was the only logical act. 'Life is a transitory state,' he complained to himself; 'you are alive but what profit do you get? Yet you yearn for life like a man of wealth.' Death is 'a bringer of weeping'; never again afterwards will a man 'see the sun'. Little can be done. 'Follow the happy day and forget care.'*<sup>39</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

In the sources that I depend upon, I did not come upon very many who contested Solomon's authorship. It is possible that this was an 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon (from era to era, some odd ideas seem to reign supreme in the general thinking).

<sup>36</sup> Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–18.

<sup>37</sup> B. H. Carroll, *An interpretation of the English Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1 (introduction).

<sup>38</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:1.

<sup>39</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:1.

## Solomon is not the author (various commentators)

Arno Gaebelein (quoting someone else): *the fact that Solomon is not the author, but is introduced in a literary figure, has become such an axiom of the present day interpretation of the book, that no extended argument to prove it is necessary.*<sup>40</sup>

This is not Gaebelein's view, by the way. He writes: *Such presumptions spring from ignorance about the message of the book. We shall find in the text the above assertions refuted and a confirmation likewise of the Solomonic authorship.*<sup>41</sup>

Arend Reamers (Sutcliffe Bible Commentary): *No author's name is mentioned in the book of Ecclesiastes. Already old Jewish tradition says that King Solomon is the author of this book of the Bible. And yet Solomon's authorship has many a times been doubted at for two reasons. Firstly for language reasons and secondly because the name Jehovah does not appear in the book. Both reasons however are neither sound nor compelling.*<sup>42</sup>

Aaron Sturgill offers up the most options: *1. Liberal view—the book was written by three men (preacher, wise man and skeptic)*

*2. Catholic view—musings or thoughts of a rational man attempting to reason himself to God. Man, if given enough data and evidence, can think himself into a corner where only God is.*

*3. Many more modern scholars [Margoliouth, Burkitt, Zimmerman (1945), Delitzsch (late 1800's)] thought the book was originally written in Aramaic and then translated in Hebrew. This thought dates the book in the third century BC. Obviously then the author would not be Solomon.*

*4. Some believe that it would have been unusual for Solomon to write 1:12 (I ... was king over Israel) since Solomon was the king until the day he died.*

*5. Some believe that the book has a pseudonymous author. This position would state that the author wanted to offer the book a Solomonic feel, but was not truly written by Solomon.*

*6. There are a myriad of other extremely unconvincing arguments in favor of non-Solomonic authorship.*<sup>43</sup>

At least one commentator is quit dogmatic about this. Scott: *states that claiming Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes is 'like claiming that a book about Marxism in modern English idiom and spelling was written by Henry VIII'*<sup>44</sup>

It may well be that this is a generational thing, as Franz Delitzsch, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, wrote: *If the book of Koheleth were of old Solomonic origin, then there is no history to the Hebrew language.*<sup>45</sup>

Kaiser then tells us that *Fredericks devoted a careful inspection of all the linguistic arguments for dating the book late and concluded that they were unpersuasive.*<sup>46</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–18. It appears that Gaebelein is quoting someone, but it is not clear who.

<sup>41</sup> Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–18. It appears that Gaebelein is quoting someone, but it is not clear who.

<sup>42</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jsc/ecclesiastes-0.html> accessed June 21, 2018.

<sup>43</sup> From [Bible.org](https://www.bible.org), accessed June 23, 2018.

<sup>44</sup> From [Bible.org](https://www.bible.org), accessed June 23, 2018.

<sup>45</sup> *Hard Sayings of the Bible*; Walter Kaiser Jr., Peter Davids, F.F. Bruce, Manfred Brauch; InterVarsity Press; ©1996; p. 292. This is taken from Delitzsch's book *Commentary on Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes* (1872).

<sup>46</sup> *Hard Sayings of the Bible*; Walter Kaiser Jr., Peter Davids, F.F. Bruce, Manfred Brauch; InterVarsity Press; ©1996; p. 292.

## Solomon is not the author (various commentators)

Gleason L. Archer discusses one of those arguments: *The chief argument against the authenticity of Ecclesiastes as a work of the historic Solomon is drawn from the data of linguistics. It is urged that the language and vocabulary of this book differ markedly from other tenth-century B.C. works composed in Hebrew and contains many terms found in Aramaic documents (such as Daniel and the Talmud) or in late biblical or postbiblical Hebrew (such as Esther, Nehemiah and the Mishnah). Delitzsch drew up a list of ninety-six words, forms, and expressions found no- where else in the Bible except in Exilic and post-Exilic books like Ezra, Esther, Nehemiah, Chronicles, Malachi, or the Mishnah. Zoeckler claimed that there are Aramaisms in almost every verse, but Hengstenberg found only ten demonstrable Aramaisms in the entire twelve chapters. From the standpoint of possible political and social allusions, the fifth century B.C. is suggested as a possible time of composition. But these scholars fail to discuss the prob- lem that Ecclesiastes no more resembles fifth-century Hebrew works than it does those of the tenth century (apart from the Song of Solomon and Proverbs).*<sup>47</sup>

That is not to say that Ecclesiastes is not without its peculiarities in this realm. James Muilenberg (“A Qohelet Scroll from Qumran,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 135 [October 1954]: 20) comments on the discovery of mid-second-century fragments of Ecclesiastes discovered in Qumran Cave Four: “Linguistically the book is unique. There is no question that its language has many striking peculiarities; these have been explained by some to be late Hebrew (discussed by Margoliouth and Gordis) or which the language of the Mishnah is said to offer more than adequate support (a contention effectively answered ... in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* V, 33, where he points out the linguistic affinities of Qohelet with the Phoenician inscriptions, e.g., Eshmunazar, Tabnith). The Aramaic cast of the language has long been recognized, but only within recent years has its Aramaic provenance been claimed and supported in any detail (F. Zimmerman, C.C. Torrey, H.L. Ginsburg) . . . Dahood was written on Canaanite-Phoenician influences in Qohelet, defending the thesis that the book of Ecclesiastes was originally composed by an author who wrote in Hebrew but was influenced by Phoenician spelling, grammar and vocabulary, and who shows heavy Canaanite-Phoenician literary influence ( *Biblica* 33, 1952, pp. 35-52, 191-221).<sup>48</sup>

Archer then comments: *In weighing the force of the linguistic argument, it should be noted that a comprehensive survey of all the data—including vocabulary, morphology, syntax, and style—indicates that the text of Ecclesiastes does not resemble the literary style or vocabulary of any book of the Hebrew Bible, or indeed of any later Hebrew work pre- served to us up into the second century B.C., when the earliest fragments of Ecclesiastes from Qumran are to be dated paleographically. The sole exception would be the apocryphal Book of Ecclesiasticus, which is admittedly composed by an author (Jesus ben Sirach) who was profoundly influenced by Qohelet and tried to imitate its style and approach in many passages.*<sup>49</sup>

Can this be explained? Certainly. Solomon was exploring the wisdom and religious literature of the cultures around him and this study in itself would have influenced his vocabulary, style and language.

Archer also suggests that this book is likely placed in the style of wisdom literature of that era. If one studies many books of that genre, it is not surprising that he would assume the style of the authors he is reading. Bear in mind, Solomon could explore basically any literature available at the time. He was willing and able to pay for it to be brought to him.

Archer goes into much greater detail [here](#), on pages 257–258; I don’t see the point in going into more detail on this.

Here is a criticism which I can sure make of my own work: sometimes, you just spend far too much time on this or that topic. When it comes right down to it, how important is it that Solomon is or is not the author of Ecclesiastes? From time to time, it helps us out or gives us some perspective, but I rather think that the book stands on its own, with or without the author’s identity. That being said, I believe you will concur, after reading further, that Solomon is clearly the author.

<sup>47</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*; Gleason L. Archer; Zondervan Publishing House; ©1982; p. 256.

<sup>48</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*; Gleason L. Archer; Zondervan Publishing House; ©1982; p. 256.

<sup>49</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*; Gleason L. Archer; Zondervan Publishing House; ©1982; p. 256.

## Solomon is not the author (various commentators)

Because of the nature of my work, I do not have to edit myself (although, there may be a time in the future that I will go back and edit out 20% at least of every chapter I have exegeted). However, this is very important for the pastor-teacher. I know from my own work, if a pastor-teacher wanted to spend 10 years teaching the book of Genesis, they clearly could do that. However, that may not be what is right for his congregation. The pastor-teacher needs to consider very carefully the material he is teaching. For instance, a pastor-teacher could easily devote 2 or 3 sermons to the authorship of Ecclesiastes, but, why bother? How edifying can that be? Enough of that doctrine can be taught as a 5 or 8 point doctrine; and then move on to the next thing.

James Burton Coffman: *Many scholars, of course, deny that Solomon is the author here; but in the light of the obvious fact that not any of such `scholars' even pretends to know who did write it, it is clear that none of them has any significant contribution to add to what is written here. We take it for what it says.*<sup>50</sup>

Some of the scholars who reject Solomon as the author: *Delitzsch, Hengstenberg, Leupold, Young, Zoeckler.*<sup>51</sup>

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

**A phony author pretends to be Solomon:** One possible view is, someone who is not Solomon wrote this book, but did it in such a way, as to try to pass himself off as Solomon, but without actually using Solomon's name.

There is also the point of view that, the author of Ecclesiastes tried to make it appear as if he is Solomon. Gleason L. Archer explains: *Most modern scholars admit that the purported author of Ecclesiastes is Solomon; but they maintain that this was simply a literary device employed by a later author, now unknown to us, who wished to teach the ultimate futility of a materialistic worldview. If this could be accepted as valid, it would certainly put in question almost every other affirmation of authorship to be found in any other book of the Bible. Some later, unknown author might equally well have pretended to be Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, or the apostle Paul, simply as "a literary device to express his own views."*

Gleason continues: *If it were any other book than the Bible, this would have to be classified as forgery, a mere product of deception, which would render the actual author of such a spurious work liable to damages in a court of law. It is more than doubtful that a Bible that holds to such high standards of integrity and honesty and that was certified by the Lord Jesus and His apostles as being the infallible Word of God could be composed of spurious work by authors who paraded under assumed names.*<sup>52</sup>

So, even if this was Bob the Theologian, in 400 B.C., writing a book, pretending to be Solomon; that in effect would undermine the authority and, therefore, the inspiration of this book. It does not matter whether Bob is sincere, a great Jewish theologian, etc.; it is his fundamental honesty which calls into question the entire book.

We receive the Old Testament pretty much as an entire unit (even though the Dead Sea Scrolls were a collection of books which included the books of the Bible); so when the disciples or Jesus quoted the Greek Septuagint, they were quoting the accepted Greek translation of the Old Testament canon. Ecclesiastes was in that group of books, suggesting that ancient Jewish theologians had no problem accepting Ecclesiastes as being inspired, despite many of the individual passages; despite many of the weird ideas. One reason a book is accepted as authoritative is the author himself. If the ancient theologians had questions then, I am certain that there would have been some record of it; and if they were serious enough to exclude Ecclesiastes (such as, the book being offered up by a phony author hundreds of years after Solomon's death), it would not have become a part of the Jewish canon of Scripture.

<sup>50</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

<sup>51</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*; Gleason L. Archer; Zondervan Publishing House; ©1982; p. 255.

<sup>52</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*; Gleason L. Archer; Zondervan Publishing House; ©1982; p. 256.

Interestingly enough, Solomon lists himself as the author of Proverbs and of the Song of Songs (Prov. 1:1 SoS 1:1); but his name does not occur specifically in the book of Ecclesiastes.

### Solomon is the author of Ecclesiastes (various commentators)

Arno Gaebelein: *[The author] tells us...[about] himself. "Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem; yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge."* Is this language not sufficient to establish beyond the shadow of the doubt that Solomon speaks? And if not Solomon, who was it who dared to write these words?<sup>53</sup>

James Burton Coffman: *"Words of the Preacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem" (Ecclesiastes 1:1). These words identify Solomon as the author of Ecclesiastes. This verse is supplemented by Ecclesiastes 1:12 in the words, "over Israel," a word which includes all of the Chosen People; and this limits the identification to Solomon, because he is the only "son of David" that ever ruled over the entire Israel in Jerusalem. If anything else had been intended as the meaning here, the words would have read, "Over Judah in Jerusalem."*<sup>54</sup>

Ray Stedman: *First, we learn that the writer is, "the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem." We immediately recognize that that could refer to no one but King Solomon. "The son of David" could refer to any descendant of David who sat on the throne after him, but this particularly relates to Solomon, as several things in the book will confirm.*

Stedman continues: *Many of the critical commentators of our day question that view, and very few of them accept it. They try to date the book after the Babylonian exile, some 500 years after Solomon lived. That is the habitual stance of critics of the Old Testament. But their views have been proved wrong again and again, based, as they think they are, upon an examination of the culture of the day. I think, however, that we shall have no problem accepting the fact that it is indeed Solomon who shares with us in this book the wisdom that God taught him throughout his life.*<sup>55</sup>

Arend Reamers (Sutcliffe Bible Commentary): *In Ecclesiastes chap. 1:1+12 the author calls himself son of David and king in Jerusalem. In verse 16 he speaks of his great wisdom which according to 1 Kings 3:12; 1 Kings 4:2 f; 10:1 only King Solomon had. In Ecclesiastes 12:9 he mentions that he set in order many proverbs. This fact also speaks for Solomon only (see 1 Kings 4:32; Proverbs 1:1).*

Reamers continues: *Various expressions in Ecclesiastes would indicate that Solomon wrote the book only in old age (Ecclesiastes 1:12-18; Ecclesiastes 2:1-11; Ecclesiastes 11:9-10; Ecclesiastes 12:1-7). This is where the author reviews a long life and all his thoughts and deeds and where he is warning youth and points to old age.*<sup>56</sup>

Gleason L. Archer: *[The author of Ecclesiastes] refers to his unrivaled wisdom (1:16), his unsurpassed wealth (2:8), his tremendous retinue of servants (2:7), his unlimited opportunities for carnal pleasure (2:3), and his very extensive building projects. No other descendant of David measures up to these specifications except Solomon, David's immediate successor.*<sup>57</sup>

The targum: *The words of the prophecy, which Choheleth prophesied; the same is Solomon, son of David the king, who was in Jerusalem. For when Solomon, king of Israel, saw by the spirit of prophecy that the kingdom of Rehoboam his son was about to be divided with Jeroboam, the son of Nebat; and the house of the sanctuary was about to be destroyed, and the people of Israel sent into captivity; he said in his word - Vanity of vanities is all that I have labored, and David my father; they are altogether vanity.*<sup>58</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–18.

<sup>54</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

<sup>55</sup> Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 1.

<sup>56</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/jsc/ecclesiastes-0.html> accessed June 21, 2018.

<sup>57</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*; Gleason L. Archer; Zondervan Publishing House; ©1982; p. 256.

<sup>58</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1.

## Solomon is the author of Ecclesiastes (various commentators)

The College Press Bible Study: *An overwhelming amount of evidence within Ecclesiastes sustains the contention for Solomonic authorship. The following list of internal evidence, consistent with Solomon and his day, is offered as worthy of serious consideration: (1) Verse one identified Solomon precisely; (2) The statement in Eccles. 1:12 requires that the author be identified as a king in Jerusalem over Israel; (3) The extensive and elaborate experiments recorded in chapters one and two required wealth and opportunity available only to one of Solomon's greatness; (4) References such as Eccles. 1:16 necessitate an authoritative position and identifies Jerusalem as the base of activity; (5) Collaborating evidence from I Kings, Song of Solomon, Nehemiah, and I Chronicles complements the information of Eccles. 2:1–9 and thus confirms our contention; (6) The inequities identified with the close of Solomon's reign along with the social conditions created by his desire for self enjoyment are in harmony with the descriptions of Eccles. 4:1–6 and Eccles. 5:8; (7) The allusion in Eccles. 4:13 to an old and foolish king (Solomon) and one who has come out of prison (Jeroboam's return from his exile in Egypt) to replace the king, fits the closing days of Solomon's reign explicitly; (8) A final reference noted is found in Eccles. 12:9 where the author of Ecclesiastes has searched out and arranged many proverbs. This is in harmony with 1Kings 4:32 where it is recorded that Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs.*<sup>59</sup>

Aaron Sturgill also offers up a list of reasons: 1. *Christians and Jews have traditionally (up to the 18th and 19th centuries) held that Solomon is the author of the book of Ecclesiastes. Much of this is based on the first verse . . . "the son of David, King in Jerusalem"*

2. *The natural reading of the book is going to lead one to strongly consider Solomon as the author.*
3. *1:12 says that the speaker was king over Israel in Jerusalem. Solomon was the last king to rule in Jerusalem over all of Israel. Following Solomon's rule the kingdom was divided and ruling in Jerusalem would have allowed one to only rule Judah.*
4. *12:9 establishes that the author arranged many proverbs. We know that Solomon wrote many of the proverbs in the book of Proverbs.*
5. *While some want to deny Solomonic authorship due to 1:12, it would make sense that Solomon wrote from that perspective as an old man looking back on his life.*
6. *Becoming the teacher in this book allows Solomon to set aside the mantle of king and take on the mantle of sage or wise man. Therefore the wisdom of Ecclesiastes is the advice of a wise man not the pronouncement of a monarch.*<sup>60</sup>

B. H. Carroll:

1. *The book purports to be the product of Solomon.*
2. *History compared with the book itself proves it. 1Kings 3:12; 1Kings 4:29–34 speaks of Solomon's wisdom. The author claims to have the wisdom he has spoken of (Eccles. 1:16). 1Kings 4:20–28 and 1Kings 10:23–27 tell of Solomon's riches. Compare Eccles. 2:1–11.*
3. *Whoever reads this book and the Song of Solomon can see clearly that the author of one of these books is the author of the other also.*
4. *There is no historical evidence of any Jew living in the time assigned by the radical critics that fills the place.*
5. *There is nothing in the style to contradict the authorship of Solomon.*<sup>61</sup>

<sup>59</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:1.*

<sup>60</sup> From [Bible.org](http://Bible.org), accessed June 23, 2018.

<sup>61</sup> B. H. Carroll, *An interpretation of the English Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1 (introduction).

## Solomon is the author of Ecclesiastes (various commentators)

B. H. Carroll offers up the objections to Solomon's authorship, and his replies:

*The objections to the commonly accepted date and authorship urged by the radical critics are:*

1. *The tense of the verb in Eccles. 1:12 is past and therefore could not refer to Solomon because he reigned in Jerusalem until his death. The reply to this objection is that it is in the past tense because he is now about to give his past experience during his long reign as king in Jerusalem.*
2. *In the same verse is a reference to Jerusalem which indicates a divided kingdom and therefore must be later than Solomon's time. The reply to this is that Jerusalem is here specified, as opposed to David who reigned both in Hebron and Jerusalem. "King of Israel in Jerusalem" implies that he reigned over Israel and Judah combined; whereas David, at Hebron, reigned only over Judah and not until he was settled in Jerusalem, over both Israel and Judah.*
3. *The words used in the book belong to a later date than the time of Solomon. The reply to this is that the roots of these words have all been found in Genesis and other Hebrew writings before the time of Solomon.*
4. *The condition of the people was incompatible with the time of Solomon, the reply to which is, "Not so."*
5. *The difference in the style in this book and Proverbs and the Song of Solomon. But the difference in subject matter justifies the difference in style. Also it must be remembered that Proverbs and the Song were written while Solomon was young, and this book when he was old and wearied with life (Eccles. 2:17).<sup>62</sup>*

*Clarke: It has also been conjectured from this, that if the book were written by Solomon, it was intended to be a posthumous publication. "I that was king, still continue to preach and instruct you." Those who suppose the book to have been written after Solomon's fall, think that he speaks thus through humility. "I was once worthy of the name of king: but I fell into all evil; and, though recovered, I am no longer worthy of the name." I am afraid this is not solid.<sup>63</sup>*

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## The Authorship of Ecclesiastes (by Dr. Peter Pett)

The identity of the author is somewhat restricted by the following facts:

- 1). The author's name is nowhere mentioned. This militates against Solomon because he was so well known and so influential that had he written it his name would surely have been attached to it, as it was to other writings connected with him, such as the Song of Solomon and part of Proverbs.
- 2). The official title 'king in Jerusalem' in Eccles. 1:1 (see context) fits strangely with Solomon who is usually called 'king of Israel'. It is true that in Eccles. 1:12 the title is extended to 'king over Israel in Jerusalem' but this only tends to emphasise the point. The 'in Jerusalem' is clearly the main emphasis. It may indicate that there were rival kings (or a prince-regent who was also called king) at the time so that there was a king 'in somewhere else', or that he was an under-king under an Overlord, but it does not indicate the all powerful, despotic ruler of a large empire like Solomon.
- 3). In Eccles. 1:16 the author says that he 'had increased in knowledge over all who were before him in Jerusalem'. If this refers to 'all kings' then the writer could clearly not have been Solomon, for it is very unlikely that previous Canaanite kings were in mind. It is feasible that it refers to a group of wisdom teachers gathered by David. On the other hand we might well feel that the impression given is that the author was looking back on a longish tradition of wise men or wise kings.
- 4). In Eccles. 1:12 the writer says, 'I Qoheleth WAS (hayithi) king in Jerusalem.' That seems to suggest that

<sup>62</sup> B. H. Carroll, *An interpretation of the English Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1 (introduction).

<sup>63</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:12.

## The Authorship of Ecclesiastes (by Dr. Peter Pett)

he no longer was so. That is one reason why Uzziah has been mooted, for he became a leper and could therefore have been seen as ceasing to be king in Jerusalem as a result of his isolation. And his isolation could well have turned him to an expression of religious philosophy. It could also be seen as true of Manasseh for a period when he was carried off to Babylon. No doubt other kings could have fitted into the pattern. Alternatively it may simply indicate a period of retirement in old age when his son had been left to hold the reins of the kingdom, in which case the king is unidentifiable due to insufficient historical evidence. But it would appear to exclude Solomon, for there is no suggestion that his son was ever co-regent.

On the other hand it may simply mean that he did what he did while he was king, without necessarily signifying that he had now ceased to be king, with what had ceased being his search for truth, not his reign. In other words he had done it while he was king in Jerusalem, but had now ceased to do it.

- 5). More importantly the background of the book does not fit into the age of Solomon. It appears to have been written in a time of misery and vanity (Eccles. 1:2–11) when the splendour that was Solomon's had departed (Eccles. 1:12 to Eccles. 2:26). It appears to have in mind a dark period for Israel (Eccles. 3:1–15), when injustice and violence were common and nothing was being done about it (Eccles. 4:1–3). That seems to exclude the magnificence of the time of Solomon.
- 6). The Hebrew in which the book is written does not, in the view of many scholars, appear to favour the time of Solomon for it is seen to be of a later style, although the presence of Aramaisms is not to be seen as indicating a late date, as Aramaisms were present at Ugarit. The grammar would appear to be of a much later period than Solomon, and many examples are cited. Arguments from style are, however, notoriously equivocal and should be treated cautiously because of the limited material at our disposal.

All these reasons, and especially 3) and 5), appear to militate against Solomonic authorship. But it does not affect the importance and truth of what follows in the slightest.

Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1–3.

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## Authorship and Date of Ecclesiastes (Ron Snider)

- 1) The author identifies himself as the son of David, king over Israel in Jerusalem, and an exceedingly wise and wealthy man. Eccles. 1:1, 12,16, 2:8
- 2) Since the kingdom was divided following the reign of Solomon, he would be the only person that could fulfill both of the first two requirements. 1Kings 4:1
- 3) Additionally, what we know about Solomon from biblical and extra-biblical sources would readily corroborate these two requirements. 1Kings 3:5-13, 10:1ff,23; Josephus Antiquities VIII. 1 *“And when Solomon his son, who was but a youth in age, had taken the kingdom, and whom David had declared, while he was alive, the lord of that people, according to God's will; when he sat upon the throne, the whole body of the people made joyful acclamations to him, as is usual at the beginning of a reign; and wished that all his affairs might come to a blessed conclusion; and that he might arrive at a great age, and at the most happy state of affairs possible.”* VIII.7.3 *“Accordingly there went a great fame all around the neighboring countries, which proclaimed the virtue and wisdom of Solomon, insomuch that all the kings every where were desirous to see him, as not giving credit to what was reported, on account of its being almost incredible: they also demonstrated the regard they had for him by the presents they made him; for they sent him vessels of gold, and silver, and purple garments, and many sorts of spices, and horses, and chariots, and as many mules for his carriages as they could find proper to please the king's eyes, by their strength and beauty.”*
- 4) Since we accept the fact that Solomon actually composed this book, the date would have to come sometime during his reign over Israel. 970-930 B.C.



## Authorship and Date of Ecclesiastes (Ron Snider)

- 5) The language of the book indicates that this was composed toward the end of Solomon's reign, when he would have had the time and prosperity to do all the things he says he did. Eccles. 1:13-14,16, 2:4-10
  - 6) Further, the natural reading of many of his statements suggests a wealth of experience, an understanding of both youth and old age, and one who seen life in all its facets. Eccles. 1:8, 7:15, 11:10, 12:1,12
  - 7) Therefore, this book would have been composed toward the end of his life, 940-930 B.C.
- 
1. In spite of these obvious facts, most modern scholars now regard Solomon's authorship of this book as purely fictional.
    - 1) Some suggest that the book was written by some unknown author and based only on the experiences and insights of the historic Solomon.
    - 2) Supposed allusions to the misfortunes of the Jews through the time of the Babylonian exile and the alleged late characteristics of the language have caused many to assign a date anywhere between the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.
    - 3) Therefore, they assign this book a late date and assert that one or more anonymous authors composed it, who merely adopted the identity of the king.
    - 4) There are a number of other elaborate hypotheses concerning the authorship of this book, with some seeing as few as one writer, some seeing two or three, and some postulating that there were five or more.
  2. One of the primary complaints respecting Solomon's authorship focuses on the nature of the language in the book, which we acknowledge is unusual; in fact, it differs from every other book in the Old Testament, no matter when they were composed.
    - 1) There is no question that the language of the book is unusual; the vocabulary, grammar, and style are dissimilar to any of the late books such as Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, or Malach I.
    - 2) We would suggest that one reason for the peculiar language and style of the book is found in the fact that it is unique as a book of personal reflection and philosophy, which has no parallel in the Old Testament.
    - 3) One of the primary objections to an early date is the supposed affinity with the language of the Phoenicians, and the use of Aramaic and Persian loan words.
    - 4) However, this may be readily explained by the fact that Solomon had extensive contacts with numerous other nations and cultures like Tyre, Egypt, Kue, and Sheba to name a few. 1Kings 4:34, 5:1, 9:16, 10:1, 11:1; IIChron. 1:16
    - 5) Therefore, to find terms from these cultures in his writing would not be something completely unexpected given the cosmopolitan nature of his reign,. *¿Comprende, Mon Ami*
  3. In spite of all these objections, there is nothing that demands more than a single writer (except perhaps for 12:9-12), who describes lifes as he has seen it, and who deliberately raises difficult and troubling issues to challenge and instruct his readers.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (this will open as a Word document on your computer); accessed June 16, 2018 (slightly edited).

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Solomon clearly had the means and the intelligence to pursue the things spoken of in Ecclesiastes.

*The Bible Illustrator: Certainly, he, who had riches as plentiful as the stones of the street (1Kings 10:27), and wisdom as large as the sand of the sea (1Kings 4:29), could want no advantages, either to try experiments, or draw conclusions from them (Eccles. 1:16–17).<sup>64</sup>*

Solomon's authorship is questioned, in part, because he does not give his name as the author, as he does in Proverbs, the Song of Songs, and in Psalms 72 127. Perhaps he did not want himself to be seen as authoritative,

<sup>64</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:2.

as he presents a very human viewpoint approach to life. This would not have the same force or the same level of authority as Proverbs (for instance) would.

David Guzik: *From his royal standing, Solomon had the wisdom, freedom, resources, and standing to write this work.*<sup>65</sup>

References to the author in Ecclesiastes are entirely consistent with what we know about Solomon. Solomon's description of himself in Ecclesiastes matches with the apparently 3<sup>rd</sup> party description found in Kings. There is no other king who could be matched with the self-description given by the author of Ecclesiastes.

The ESV; capitalized is used below.

### Harmony between Ecclesiastes and other information about Solomon

#### Ecclesiastes

#### Kings

Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care. (Eccles. 12:9)

[Solomon] also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. (1Kings 4:32)

Eccles 1:16 I said in my heart, "I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge."

1Kings 4:29–31 And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol, and his fame was in all the surrounding nations.

Kidner: *There will come another enigmatic note in Eccles. 1:16, with its claim to a wisdom 'surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me'. This rules out any successor to the matchless Solomon.*<sup>66</sup>

Eccles. 2:4 I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself.  
Eccles. 2:5 I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees.  
Eccles. 2:6 I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees.

1Kings 9:15 And this is the account of the forced labor that King Solomon drafted to build the house of the LORD and his own house and the Millo and the wall of Jerusalem and Hazor and Megiddo and Gezer  
1Kings 9:16 (Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and captured Gezer and burned it with fire, and had killed the Canaanites who lived in the city, and had given it as dowry to his daughter, Solomon's wife;  
1Kings 9:17 so Solomon rebuilt Gezer) and Lower Beth-horon  
1Kings 9:18 and Baalath and Tamar in the wilderness, in the land of Judah,  
1Kings 9:19 and all the store cities that Solomon had, and the cities for his chariots, and the cities for his horsemen, and whatever Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion.

<sup>65</sup> David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:1.

<sup>66</sup> David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Eccles. 1:1.

## Harmony between Ecclesiastes and other information about Solomon

### Ecclesiastes

### Kings

Eccles. 2:7 I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem.

1Kings 10:21 All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold. None were of silver; silver was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon.

1Kings 10:22 For the king had a fleet of ships of Tarshish at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the fleet of ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.

Eccles. 2:8a I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces.

1Kings 4:21 Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.

1Kings 10:11 Moreover, the fleet of Hiram, which brought gold from Ophir, brought from Ophir a very great amount of almug wood and precious stones.

1Kings 10:14 Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold,

1Kings 10:15 besides that which came from the explorers and from the business of the merchants, and from all the kings of the west and from the governors of the land.

1Kings 10:16 King Solomon made 200 large shields of beaten gold; 600 shekels of gold went into each shield.

1Kings 10:17 And he made 300 shields of beaten gold; three minas of gold went into each shield. And the king put them in the House of the Forest of Lebanon.

Eccles. 2:8 I got...many concubines, the delight of the sons of man.

1Kings 11:3 He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart.

Eccles. 2:9 So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me.

1Kings 4:24 For he had dominion over all the region west of the Euphrates from Tiphshah to Gaza, over all the kings west of the Euphrates. And he had peace on all sides around him.

1Kings 4:34 And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.

1Kings 10:23 Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom.

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## Biographical material on Solomon (various commentators)

The Open Bible: *The teacher, traditionally taken to be Solomon,...[is] the wisest, richest, most influential king in Israel's history.*<sup>67</sup>

Ken Cayce: *Solomon's reputation for possessing extraordinary wisdom fits the Ecclesiastes profile. David recognized his son's wisdom (1 Kings 2:6, and 9), before God gave Solomon an additional measure. After he received a "wise and discerning heart" from the Lord (1 Kings 3:7-12), Solomon gained renown for being exceedingly wise by rendering insightful decisions (1 Kings 3:16-28), a reputation that attracted "all the kings of the earth" to his courts (1 Kings 4:34). In addition, he composed songs and proverbs (1 Kings 4:32; compare 12:9), activity befitting only the ablest of sages. Solomon's wisdom, like Job's wealth, surpassed the wisdom "of all the sons of the east" (1 Kings 4:30; Job 1:3).*<sup>68</sup>

Keith Simons provides a basic biography of Solomon: *was Israel's greatest king, and he made his country wealthy. He was wise, and he became famous.*

*We may consider that Solomon achieved great things in his life. Certainly, Solomon worked hard and his efforts seemed successful (Ecclesiastes 2:4-9). But the Book of Ecclesiastes tells us the truth about Solomon's life. That is, it shows us God's opinion about Solomon's greatness.*

*Towards the end of his life, Solomon was not loyal to God. Formerly, Solomon had a close relationship with God. But Solomon lost that, and he even began to serve false gods (1 Kings 11:7-10).*

*And after Solomon's death, the things that he had achieved did not last. There were wars and great troubles in Israel. The country lost much of its wealth, and the new king lost much of his authority.*

*Even such a great man as Solomon could achieve nothing that lasted. He seemed such a powerful man, but in God's opinion, Solomon's best efforts were very weak. They were as weak as Solomon's own breath, because, in the end, Solomon was just a man. And all people must die.*<sup>69</sup>

The Wells of Living Water Commentary: *Solomon was God's servant. He had a checkered experience. He first sought wisdom from the hand of God. This was given him, and with it he was given wealth. Solomon did not, however, profit by his gifts.*

*God, long before, had said of Israel's king: "He shall not multiply horses to himself." But "Solomon had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen." "And they brought unto Solomon horses out of Egypt, and out of all lands."*

*God had said of Israel's king: "Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away." "But King Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; \* \* concerning which the Lord said \* \* 'Ye shall not go in to them, \* \* for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.' Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart."*

*God had said of Israel's king: "Neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold." But Solomon made "silver to be in Jerusalem as stones."*

*No wonder that "Solomon was not perfect with the Lord his God." No wonder that "Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord." No wonder that "The Lord was angry with Solomon," and that in later years the kingdom was rent from him.*<sup>70</sup>

<sup>67</sup> *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 857.

<sup>68</sup> From <http://www.bible-studys.org> accessed June 24, 2018.

<sup>69</sup> From [Useful Bible](#), accessed June 24, 2018.

<sup>70</sup> From <https://www.study-light.org/commentaries/lwc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 24, 2018.

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### Short Profiles of Solomon (various commentators)

J. Vernon McGee give his own profile of Solomon: *Solomon in the Book of Proverbs gives us gems of wisdom. In Ecclesiastes he gives us...folly. Then in the Song of Solomon love is the subject. Wisdom, foolishness, and love — Solomon was an expert in all three fields. He knew how to play the fool; he was wise in government; and his love life was quite a story. Solomon was the wisest of men, but no man ever played the fool more thoroughly than he did. He is the riddle of revelation. He is the paradox of Scripture. The wisest man was the greatest fool. The Book of Ecclesiastes will reveal this.*<sup>71</sup>

The Open Bible: *If the Teacher is identified as Solomon, Ecclesiastes was written from a unique vantage point, possessing the greatest mental, material and political resources ever combined in one man, he was qualified beyond all others to write this book.*<sup>72</sup>

Keith Krell: *Solomon wrote three books of the Bible: Proverbs, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes. He is considered the wisest and perhaps richest man that has ever lived. He had a fleet of ships that would bring gold to him every day from far off lands. Tragically, Solomon married a foreign woman, which was forbidden by God because of the temptation to be led astray spiritually. Ironically, it was this unwise decision to gain favor from different nations by taking foreign wives that diverted Solomon's eyes from the one true God. Scripture records that he had 700 wives and 300 concubines. Truly, this diverted Solomon's devotion, so that it is often said of him that he had a divided heart.*

Krell continues: *If we were to depict Solomon as someone more modern, he might be considered a mix between Albert Einstein, Bill Gates, Hugh Hefner, and Brad Pitt. In Ecclesiastes, what philosophical conclusions does this rich powerful genius come to after living a life with everything at his fingertips? We would expect Solomon's sermon to be entitled "Seven Habits of Highly Successful Kings."*<sup>73</sup>

Steven Zeisler: *Solomon, David's son, is our example of man's life experiences in the period between Adam and the coming of Christ and the gospel. Solomon is a perfect choice for this study. He had every advantage in life. He had a godly heritage, a brilliant intellect, wealth beyond counting, vast influence, and he ruled in a politically stable climate. In a worldly sense, Solomon was a shining example of humanity at its highest level.*<sup>74</sup>

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Solomon's profile is primarily important, in that we understand that Solomon had the means by which to explore human viewpoint thinking in every way possible. We can possibly integrate Solomon's life and his writings and do a reasonable job with that; but what we need to get out of Ecclesiastes is, Solomon had the means, opportunity and interest in exploring a human viewpoint solution to life's questions.

Snider did an outstanding profile of Solomon.

### Profile of Solomon (by Rick Snider)

A. Solomon is writing this book after he has lived most of his life, which appears to have at least two distinct

<sup>71</sup> From [https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt) accessed June 19, 2018. This title comes from Charlie Bing: "Wisdom for the Real World" (Ecclesiastes 1:1-2): unpublished sermon notes.

<sup>72</sup> *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 858.

<sup>73</sup> From [Bible.org](https://www.bible.org), accessed June 22, 2018.

<sup>74</sup> From <https://www.pbc.org/files/584509089ad2b149c6f68702/4083.html> accessed June 22, 2018.

## Profile of Solomon (by Rick Snider)

- phases, and quite possibly a third.
- B. His youth, when he excelled as a believer (1Kings 3:3); Solomon was characterized by the desire for wisdom, which resulted in great blessing from God. 1Kings 3:5-15
1. He was quite vigorous in his youth and accomplished many things, not the least of which was the construction of the Temple. 1Kings 3:1
  2. His wisdom was not limited to spiritual matters, but encompassed many intellectual disciplines including botany, zoology, and philosophy. 1Kings 4:33
  3. The first half of his reign seems to be characterized by devotion to God and God's blessing on him. 1Kings 9:10
  4. It was during this time that he rendered his most celebrated decision regarding the two women and the baby. 1Kings 3:16-28
- C. It was around the middle of his reign that God appeared to him a second time, reiterating the blessings of continued obedience and warning of the consequences of future disobedience. 1Kings 9:2-9
1. His priorities did not seem to change immediately, as observed when he entertained the Queen of Sheba. 1Kings 10:1-3
  2. It was during the latter half of his life that Solomon began to disregard the doctrine of separation and pursued things (boredom?) outside of God's plan. 1Kings 4:26, 11:1-2
  3. This led to the second phase, during which Solomon became involved in the pagan religious practices of his day. 1Kings 11:3-8
  4. This resulted in Divine discipline, which God had warned Solomon would be the case. 1Kings 11:9-11

Some have postulated a brief third period in which Solomon recovered spiritually. It would seem that such is the case since he clearly seems to be directing his readers toward God and His plan. However, there is no real evidence of any spiritual recovery for Solomon recorded in the historical narrative.

### Solomon's early life and reign.

- a. Solomon was the tenth son of David (who had at least eight wives) and was David's choice to replace him as king over Israel. 1Kings 1:30
- b. David had subdued neighboring nations, which showed themselves hostile to Israel; therefore, Solomon's long rule of forty years was threatened by no formidable enemies and was celebrated as an era of almost unbroken peace.
- c. This is likely anticipated in the name Solomon (שְׁלֹמֹה--sh<sup>e</sup>lomoh), which is derived from the verb that means to be at peace, or be peaceful.
- d. Solomon fully believed that he was not only the choice of David his father, but was also God's choice for the nation. 1Kings 2:24
- e. Initially, Solomon faced opposition from two of David's closest advisors, Joab son of Zeruijah and the priest Abiathar, who sided with Adonijah. 1Kings 1:5,7
- f. When Adonijah came to Solomon and requested the king's servant as a wife, Solomon recognized that this was a veiled attempt to take over his kingdom, and sent Benai ah to kill Adonijah. 1Sam. 23:20-23; 1Kings 2:17-25
- g. He banished Abiathar to the city of Anathoth (1Kings 2:26), followed his father's last instructions to kill Joab (1Kings 2:29-34), and placed Shimei under house arrest until his failure to comply with Solomon's terms. 1Kings 2:36-45
- h. Solomon thus overcame the last potential threats to his kingdom; he then appointed trusted servants of David to key military, governmental and religious posts. 1Kings 2:35

### Foreign affairs under Solomon.

- A. His foreign policy was one that encouraged peace and friendship, as seen in his relationship with Hiram, king of Tyre. 1Kings 5:1,12
- B. Prior to his most famous request for wisdom, Solomon began his diplomatic career with a mistake that

### Profile of Solomon (by Rick Snider)

was common to many of the cultures of that time.

- C. He entered into an alliance with the reigning Pharaoh and cemented that alliance with a marriage to his daughter. 1Kings 3:1
- D. This was the first of many wives Solomon married for political reasons, and in doing so disregarded his father's last words and God's direct commands in the Mosaic Law. 1Kings 2:3; Ex. 34:12-16
- E. These political alliances were viewed as necessary in order to maintain peace in the kingdom, govern the outlying provinces, and solidify trade routes that would eventually bring enormous wealth into the kingdom. 1Kings 10:11,22

### Domestic policy under Solomon

- a. The first thing Solomon clearly did was to eliminate his rivals, establishing and enforcing his authority, and begin an oriental type of centralized monarchy.
- b. He took steps to make the royal authority stronger, more efficient, and more far-reaching.
- c. He sought to maintain the peace his father had achieved through warfare and subjugation, or through David's treaties and alliances.
- d. It seems that Solomon's administration did not follow the somewhat lax reign of David over domestic matters, but was more stern and authoritarian.
- e. The division of Israel into twelve administrative districts, which did not always correspond to the old tribal territories, weakened tribal loyalties. 1Kings 4:7
- f. Each district was supervised by a royal official, who was also responsible for provisioning the royal household during one month of the year.
- g. The construction of the Temple, together with a palace complex, government buildings, and storage cities, required the frequent levying of taxes and a program of forced labor. 1Kings 4:6, 5:13, 9:15
- h. This again led to increased exertion of authority by the central government; the complete subjugation of the Canaanites caused them to bear the main portion of this burden. 1Kings 9:15-21
- i. The **chariot cities** served to protect the trade that flowed through Palestine from places such as Egypt, Arabia, Phoenicia, and Cilicia (Kue). 1Kings 10:26
- j. In cooperation with the Phoenicians of Tyre, Solomon built a trading fleet to exploit and profit from the Red Sea area. 1Kings 9:26-28, 10:22
- k. Some have suggested that the hard questions that the Queen of Sheba traveled a thousand miles from southwest Arabia to ask Solomon were connected with Solomon's monopoly of trade in this area.
- l. Solomon went beyond any ancient monarch in the luxury of the harem, which was comprised of an enormous number of wives (700) and concubines (300); however, this was a direct violation of the Mosaic Law. Deut. 17:17; 1Kings 11:3
- m. Further, he multiplied horses in direct violation of the Mosaic injunction not to do so. Deut. 17:14-16; 1Kings 10:28

### Positive accomplishments and results of Solomon's reign.

- 1. His most notable accomplishment was the project started by his father, the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem, which was extravagant and magnificent. 1Kings 6:2-36, 7:13-50
- 2. He also constructed the **house of the forest of Lebanon**, and another private dwelling for himself and his queen. 1Kings 7:2-8a, 7:8b
- 3. Based on his skill at establishing and maintaining international treaties, Solomon solidified trading routes through the political alliances that he formed.
  - a. While his first treaty with Egypt was not altogether to his advantage, it did prove valuable in later trade relations.
  - b. His treaty with Hiram allowed Solomon to avail himself of Hiram's extensive maritime domain, rich natural resources, and skilled artisans. 1Kings 5:1-12, 9:10-14
  - c. The visit from the Queen of Sheba was as much a trade mission as a trip motivated by her curiosity about the reputed wisdom of Solomon. 1Kings 10:1ff

### Profile of Solomon (by Rick Snider)

- d. The combination of peaceful relationships and the prominent position of Israel, which connected the nations of the south with those of the north, caused wealth to pour into the nation at an unprecedented rate.

### The dedication of the Temple stands as one of the high points (if not the highest) in the religious life of Israel. 1Kings 8:1ff

1. Solomon offered a remarkable prayer that demonstrated his clear faith in the one true God (8:23), who is invisible (8:12), transcendent (8:27), and dwelling among His people (8:29-30); One who gives and fulfills promises (8:15,20), who acts in righteousness and judgment (8:31-32), and who hears and answers prayers (8:33-39).
2. His prayer suggested that one reason for building the Temple was the idea that it would be valuable for the evangelism of the surrounding peoples. 1Kings 8:41-43
3. At the end of this great ceremony, Solomon celebrated a fourteen-day feast with his leaders, and sent a joyful nation back to their homes. 1Kings 8:65-66
  - a. Under Solomon, Israel experienced a consistent period of peace and prosperity, with the standard of living generally moving higher.
  - b. Civil harmony was the rule of the day, and international relationships did not suffer any serious crises under Solomon.
  - c. Solomon's contributions to Israel's culture were great, but one of the greatest had to be in the area of literature. 1Kings 4:30-32; Eccles. 12:9-10

The lack of Solomon's recovery being recorded in the historical narrative does not mean that it did not take place. The narrative of Solomon's life is somewhat peculiar and not at all like the narrative of King David's life, which appears to be simply a narrative of consecutive events.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (this will open as a Word document on your computer); accessed June 16, 2018 (slightly edited).

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This is very good and quite thorough.

### Background of Solomon, the Author of Ecclesiastes (John Griffith)

Author: SOLOMON means peaceable; was the third king of Israel

- a. He was the 10th son of David and 2nd of Bathsheba. 2 Sam 12:24-25  
- at birth the prophet Nathan named him Jedidiah means "beloved of the Lord"
- b. He therefore is royalty in the lineage of the King of Kings.
- c. He was a prolific writer and also known as a learned lecturer on botany and biology of the day.  
- wrote approx. 3000 proverbs and 1005 songs 1 Kings 4:32
- d. Background (beginning of reign - see his vpt.) 1 Kg 3:3-15; 2 Chr 1:1-11
- e. Great income - 2 Chron 9:13  
- one year 666 talents of gold = approx. 705,000 oz's of gold = \$458,250,000 (\$650 oz)  
- with his great income which was increasing (2 Chron 9:14-22) led to increasing distractions.
  1. hunting lodge - decorated with gold shields 15 lbs ea. = \$156,000
  2. unique one of a kind thrones, ivory and gold with lions on each side
  3. Table settings were of gold.
  4. Built a zoo in Jerusalem (vs:21) The most exotic display of rare animals in the ancient world.
- f. Great fame - world renown - 2 Chron 9:22-24
- g. Great harem - 1 Kg 11:1-8  
- He married into every royal house of the neighboring nations including the Pharaoh of Egypt's daughter.



## Background of Solomon, the Author of Ecclesiastes (John Griffith)

- selected the best educated and beautiful from every kingdom
- in violation of Dt 17:14-17 - the king was not to follow the custom of other nations and have many wives.
- h. Solomon's downfall related to his many wives - 1 Kg 11:3-8
  - wives turned his heart away vs:3
  - not wholly devoted to the Lord his God - YHWH - vs:4
  - Worshipped other gods - the gods of his wives & built altars to them - vs:5-8
  - some of the main gods they worshipped:  
 Ashtoreth - goddess of sex and war - worshipped thru sexual perversion of every kind imaginable (Canaanite - Phoenician) (also known as Astarte by the Greeks and Ishtar by the Babylonians) have gained extensive knowledge from Ugaritic literature - especially the Ras Shamra scrolls dated to 1400BC  
 Milcom - god of the Ammonites  
 Chemosh - god of the Moabites
  - As with Molech the worship of these gods included horribly cruel rites including child sacrifice; prohibited in Lev 18:21; 20:1-5
  - demonism and witchcraft were all a part of the worship of these gods as it is with the worship of all false gods.
- i. God's response to Solomon's neg vol and resultant reversionism
  - 1 Kg 11:9 God became angry (anthropathism) Solomon not operating in the sphere God desired for him - has impact on the nation since he is king and has great responsibility.
  - The Lord raised up adversaries against him 11:14 - Hadad the Edomite; 11:23
  - Rezon, a leader of a marauding band from Damascus; 11:26 Jeroboam son of Nebat the Ephraimite
  - PURPOSE: To be used as a rod of affliction to turn Solomon from his negative volition and reversionism.
- j. Characteristics of his reign - time frame
  - Period of peace and great prosperity - especially in the early years - 1st 20 years of his reign.
  - He built and dedicated the Temple to YHWH during those early years (a privilege that was refused to David)
  - Solomon's gov't exhibited no real sense of mission to the nations around them.
  - by the last half of his reign he was pursuing false gods and had no desire to spread the truth
  - In a very real sense Ecclesiastes is a portrait of one who flunks the prosperity test in life.

From [http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes\\_01.html](http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_01.html) accessed June 14, 2018.

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Ecclesiastes is a fascinating book on many levels; and certainly, this book more than any other would have been questioned as to whether or not it belonged in the canon of Scripture. Insofar as we know, Ecclesiastes has always been accepted as a part of the Old Testament canon, despite some of the things stated within the book, which would give a Biblical scholar pause. We would assume that, the authorship of Solomon would have allowed this and the Song of Songs to be added into the canon, despite there being questions in the minds of many, *does this really belong in the Bible?*

We will address the ideas of this book in more detail when we come to the first chapter. As long as one understands the general nature of this book—that Solomon was on a search for truth, but apart from God's revealed wisdom—then it makes perfect sense to us. That Solomon, from time to time, seems to go back and forth between divine viewpoint and human viewpoint, should not be a shock or a disqualifier. Certainly, you know a believer in Jesus Christ who has gone back and forth between the truth and cosmic system wisdom throughout much of their lives.

## The date that Ecclesiastes was written

### The Authorship and Date of Ecclesiastes (James Burton Coffman)

James Burton Coffman: *Jewish tradition says that King Solomon is the author of this book of the Bible. And yet Solomon's authorship has many a times been doubted at for two reasons. Firstly for language reasons and secondly because the name Jehovah does not appear in the book. Both reasons however are neither sound nor compelling.*

Coffman continues: *In Ecclesiastes chap. 1:1+12 the author calls himself son of David and king in Jerusalem. In verse 16 he speaks of his great wisdom which according to 1 Kings 3:12; 1 Kings 4:2 f; 10:1 only King Solomon had. In Ecclesiastes 12:9 he mentions that he set in order many proverbs. This fact also speaks for Solomon only (see 1 Kings 4:32; Proverbs 1:1).*

Coffman concludes: *King Solomon ruled around 970 to 931 BC. The book of Ecclesiastes must therefore date from the end of this period.*<sup>75</sup>

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The dating here depends upon the author. I see Solomon as the only logical author.

### The date of the book of Ecclesiastes (various commentators)

The Open Bible: *Some scholars argue that the literary forms in Ecclesiastes are postexilic, but they are not, in fact, unique, and cannot be used in dating this book...Ecclesiastes was probably written late in Solomon's life, about 935 B.C. If this is so, the great glory that Solomon ushered in early in his reign was already beginning to fade; and the disruption of Israel into two kingdoms would soon take place.*

The Open Bible continues: *Jewish tradition asserts that Solomon wrote Song of Songs in his youthful years, Proverbs in his middle years, and Ecclesiastes in his latter years. This book may be expressing his regret for his folly and wasted time due to carnality and idolatry (cf. 1Kings 11).*<sup>76</sup>

Dean Bradley: *I shall presume that we have in this book, a late, perhaps the very latest, portion of the Old Testament canon; and that the book was written, not in the palmy days of the empire of Solomon, but at a time when the Jewish people, once so full of aspirations to universal empire, always so intolerant of foreign supremacy, was lying beneath the yoke of Persian or Syrian or Egyptian kings; when the Holy Land had become a province, ruled by some Eastern satrap, and suffering from the rapacity and corruption inherent at all times in such government.*<sup>77</sup>

Clarke has an odd theory on the date of this book: *This book, as we have already seen, has been conjectured by some to have been written about the time that Ptolemy Philadelphus formed his great library at Alexandria, about two hundred and eighty-five years before our Lord; and from the multitude of Jews that dwelt there, and resorted to that city for the sake of commerce, it was said there was an Israel in Alexandria.*<sup>78</sup> I have no idea where this theory comes from.

<sup>75</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

<sup>76</sup> *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 857.

<sup>77</sup> Arno Clement Gaebelain, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1–18.

<sup>78</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:12.

## The date of the book of Ecclesiastes (various commentators)

James Burton Coffman: *King Solomon ruled around 970 to 931 BC. The book of Ecclesiastes must therefore date from the end of this period.*<sup>79</sup>

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## Formal Introduction to the Book of Ecclesiastes

It is important to understand what has gone before.

### The Prequel to Ecclesiastes

Since we believe that Solomon wrote this book, it would be a good idea to consider Solomon's reign as related to this book. Solomon began as a young king (I believe as a very young king), and he was on the right track. He had been guided by his father David for a year or so, he took much of David's advice, and, told God that what he wanted was wisdom.

Within the few years of beginning his reign, once all of the political intrigue had calmed down, Solomon began building the Temple (and also, his own palace and other buildings as well). Given what his father had done, and given his own wisdom, life in Israel was idyllic under Solomon.

Solomon's reign is described in this way:

1Kings 4:20–21 *Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and were happy. Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.*

1Kings 4:25 *And Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beersheba, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, all the days of Solomon.* (ESV)

This was the greatest prosperity that Israel had ever known; and it was a prosperity and life that extended to virtually every man of Israel.

At some point in Solomon's reign, he began to take on a whole lot of wives (700 wives and 300 mistresses); and he was also pulled away from God by their religious upbringing. 1Kings 11:1–8. It would make perfect sense for Solomon to have gone astray in his thinking at this time.

It is my opinion that Solomon, who originally taught accurate doctrine at the Temple, at some point, began to lecture human viewpoint. Whether this took place at the Temple (or at all), I could not say; but some of what we read in Ecclesiastes strikes me as having come from lectures delivered by Solomon publically. This paragraph is all conjecture on my part.

Dr. Dan Hill describes his reign in this way: *The reign of Solomon sees Israel in its golden age. All the tribes of Israel were united. Peace and prosperity were the rule rather than the exception in the land. But, nothing ever remains the same, it would not last.*

Hill continues: *Solomon reigned for forty years (from 970 to 930 BC). He was the hand picked and divinely picked successor to his father David. He began his reign 2 Ecclesiastes at the age of 20 and ended it at the age of 60. At the end of his 40 year reign the nation divided, and remained divided until its destruction. The world will not know a united Israel again until the millennial reign of Jesus Christ.*<sup>80</sup>

<sup>79</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

<sup>80</sup> From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Introduction); accessed June 10, 2018.

The dates given by Hill are reasonable; the age of Solomon is conjecture.

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### McGee's Introduction to Ecclesiastes (J. Vernon McGee)

Man has tried to be happy without God; it is being tried every day by millions of people. This book shows the absurdity of the attempt. Solomon was the wisest of men, and he had a wisdom that was God-given. He tried every field of endeavor and pleasure that was known to man, and his conclusion was that all is vanity. The word vanity means "empty, purposeless." Satisfaction in life can never be attained in this manner.

God showed Job, a righteous man, that he was a sinner in God's sight. In Ecclesiastes God showed Solomon, the wisest man, that he was a fool in God's sight. This is a book from which a great many professors, Ph.D.s and Th.D.s, and preachers could learn a great lesson. In spite of all their wisdom, in spite of all attempts at being intellectual, unre generate men in the sight of God are fools. That, my friend, is something that is hard to swallow for those who put an emphasis upon their I.Q. and the amount of knowledge and information that they have accumulated.

In Ecclesiastes we learn that without Christ we cannot be satisfied — even if we possess the whole world and all the things that men consider necessary to make their hearts content. The world cannot satisfy the heart because the heart is too large for the object. In the Song of Solomon, we will learn that if we turn from the world and set our affections on Christ, we cannot fathom the infinite preciousness of His love; the Object is too large for the heart.

The key word is vanity, which occurs thirty-seven times. The key phrase is "under the sun," which occurs twenty-nine times. Another phrase which recurs is "I said in mine heart." In other words, this book contains the cogitations of man's heart. These are conclusions which men have reached through their own intelligence, their own experiments. Although Solomon's conclusions are not inspired, the Scripture that tells us about them is inspired. This is the reason for the explanatory: "I said in mine heart," "under the sun," and "vanity."

This...book...begins with the problem stated: All is vanity in this world. Then we will find that experiments are made. Solomon will seek satisfaction through many different avenues, in many different fields. He will try science, the laws of nature, wisdom and philosophy, pleasure and materialism, as well as living for the "now." He will explore fatalism, egotism, religion, wealth, and morality. Then in the final verses of the book he will give us the result of his experiments.

Keep in mind that the conclusions in each experiment are human, not God's truth. This is man under the sun.

Do not misunderstand what is meant by "inspiration" when we say that the Bible is inspired by God. Inspiration guarantees the accuracy of the words of Scripture, not always the thought that is expressed. The context should be considered, and attention paid to the person who made the statement and under what circumstances the statement was made. For example, in the betrayal of Christ by Judas, the record of the event is inspired, but the act of Judas was not God-inspired; it was satanic. Also the statements that Solomon makes, while he is searching for satisfaction apart from God, are not always in accord with God's thoughts. Inspiration guarantees that what Solomon said has been accurately recorded in Scripture

From [https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt) accessed June 18, 2018.

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Dr. Dan Hill has a nice way of introducing this book.

## Introducing the Book of Ecclesiastes (Dr. Dan Hill)

Fes-to Kivengere, an leading African Christian, told of his experience as follows: My life was like a spinning top. I worked, I played, I worked. The cycle went around, and the more humdrum it became, the speedier it got - spinning like atop. You know the problem of a spinning top - it has a very big head and a very thin base. It can't stand up unless it's spinning. And a top just spins around itself - that's all, it goes no where. My life was exactly like that. I was just running faster and faster, thinking that the faster I ran the more lively life would become. How wrong! Then something wonderful happened to that African leader. A friend who was a new Christian told him the story of salvation and how his sins could be forgiven. Kivengere said, That day God smashed my heart open and introduced me to the living reality of Jesus Christ. My top stopped spinning, and He gave me direction that lasts through eternity. A spinning top has no direction.

We are going to begin a study of the OT book of Ecclesiastes. It is book that defies human authorship alone. It is unusual and unique. It is not the kid of book man would write if he could or could write if he would. It tells the story of Solomon, a spinning top.

The uniqueness of this book is found in the parallel tracks upon which the story unfolds.

The first track is that of wisdom and both secular wisdom is dealt with along with God's divine wisdom. At time the passages almost seem to contradict one another as they develop these two spheres of wisdom.

The second track is that of man's utter despair and man's tremendous hope in God his creator. The book looks at life and declared despair. It seems to shout out Is this all there is? And yet there is also a faith filled perspective that tells us that life is a gift of God and can be lived with Joy.

Why these contradictions, why this approach? Well, the answered is found in the author, Solomon.

Solomon writes this book towards the end of his life looking back about fifteen to twenty years, from the time he was 40 to a time near his death at 60. He evaluates what he went through as he strayed from the truth of God.

So while at one time we read of the hopelessness he sensed at other times we read of the hope he now knows he could have had.

The sad commentary that ends this book is that all the hopelessness was unnecessary. And so this book comes to us and teaches us that we do not have to join in the chorus of those who would say Vanity of vanities, Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Introduction); accessed June 10, 2018.

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Is this misplaced?

## An Introduction to Ecclesiastes 1–2 (Gary Everett)

The Preacher Finds Vanity in the Pursuits of Mental, Spiritual, Physical, and Financial Gratification – Throughout the book of Ecclesiastes the Preacher will attempt to answer the question, “[What profit does a man have of all of his labours in this life?](#)” (Eccles. 1:3) In Eccles. 1:12 to Eccles. 2:11 the Preacher describes his pursuits to find pleasure in this life.

After introducing himself as the king over Israel (Eccles. 1:12), he explains how he pursued gratification for his mind by pursuing wisdom (Eccles. 1:13–18). He then changed his pursuits to find gratification for his heart through wine and laughter (Eccles. 2:1–3). He then describes how he set out to work with his hands to construct great edifices for himself (Eccles. 2:4–6) and to gather much wealth (Eccles. 2:7–11). The Preacher concludes that this too is vanity and grasping for the wind.

## An Introduction to Ecclesiastes 1–2 (Gary Everett)

Thus, we see him referring to the three-fold make-up of man: mind, spirit and body as well as finances. We can assume that these three pursuits took place in the Preacher's life in the order that he gives them. He pursued wisdom and understanding first, followed by mirth and then the construction of great projects and the gathering of wealth. This represents the order of pursuits in the lives of many people. For example, in our society, we start out in our youth focusing upon school and education. When we go into our college years, we find that the influences for party and mirth are everywhere. We later find our place in society by focusing upon a career and learning to work hard towards success. For those who achieve financial success, they are left still searching for a meaning and purpose to their lives, having learned that all of these pursuits did not bring inner peace.

Throughout this passage the author searches for the true meaning of life. He asks the question in Eccles. 1:3, "What profit has a man of all his labor which he takes under the sun?" He experiences different interests throughout life for periods of time, just like people today have fads, or hobbies, which are always changing. Illustration: My father would go through phases in his life of being interested in playing the guitar, working on cars, hunting, and various projects. I watched as these interests changed during the course of his life. The preacher will soon recognize the divine seasons that God orchestrates in the lives of those who obey His Word and keep His commandments (Eccles. 12:13). The king has seasons of pursuits in his life. Because he orchestrated them himself, he found no satisfaction in them. Although none of these pursuits are evil in themselves, they are vanity when a person does not follow God's plan for his life.

Just as Solomon, we too can have seasons of interests in various things of this world. These interests seem to fade in one area, and refocus on a new area through the years. When we follow God's plan for our lives, we can still enjoy those seasons of change, but in a greater and more dynamic way. His plan for our lives will take us to new levels of interest and adventures. Our own pursuits will produce vain interests, as Solomon has stated here. However, when we follow God's will for our lives, these seasons of interests will be satisfying. Seasons of changing interests are normal for us, but they do not satisfy until God is directing these seasons. Life is made up of seasons of change. When we learn to go with God's seasons in our lives, we will find that they are not vain, but very rewarding.

Gary H. Everett *Gary Everett's Bible Commentary*; ©1981-2013; from e-sword, Eccles. 1:12–2:11 (slightly edited).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

## An Introduction to Ecclesiastes (by Ray Stedman)

Ecclesiastes is one of the favorite books of the Bible for skeptics, scoffers, atheists and certain of the cultists. The reason for that is that there are certain passages in this book which seem to deny that there is life after death, that it is all over when this life ends. Atheists love to contend that the book of Ecclesiastes seems to confirm that view. That is why they frequently quote from it. Hedonists love this book too because it apparently endorses a rather Epicurean lifestyle. Those who pursue pleasure as the chief aim of life -- and there are a great many of them in this country today, as the United States is probably more hedonistic than any nation that has ever existed -- love the book because again and again throughout it we are exhorted to an "Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we must die" philosophy. Then there are passages in this book which are the favorite texts of those who declare that even if we survive beyond this life we enter a period of quietness, a time when we have no knowledge or desires. This teaching falls in line with those cultists who teach "soul sleep," i.e., that when the body dies the soul goes to sleep within the body.

But all of these groups fail to note what we must note right from the beginning, that this book is an examination of secular wisdom and knowledge. The book clearly states at the outset that it is limiting itself to that which is apparent to the natural mind. One of the key phrases of the book is the continual repetition of the words, "under the sun." What does a man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?" Verse 3 asks. We find that phrase used again in Verse 9. That is the limitation put upon this book.

## An Introduction to Ecclesiastes (by Ray Stedman)

Ecclesiastes is a collection of what man is able to discern under the sun, i.e., in the visible world. The book does not take into consideration revelation that comes from beyond man's powers of observation and reason. It is an inspired, an accurate book. It guarantees that what it reports is what people actually believe. but it is an examination of those beliefs. The book is not merely a collection of ancient philosophy, for what it talks about is very much up-to-date and extremely relevant. Here is what you will hear propounded in soap operas, in political speeches, in the radical or conservative movements of our day. Here is what you will hear in the halls of academia, or on the streets of any city. In this book the philosophies by which people attempt to live life are brought into consideration and examined. That is why Ecclesiastes is so practical and up-to-date.

The first three verses introduce the theme of the book:  
 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.  
 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher,  
 vanity of vanities! All is vanity  
 What does man gain by all the toil  
 at which he toils under the sun? (Eccles. 1:1-3 RSV)

Ray Stedman, *Stedman's Bible Commentary*; from E-sword; Ecclesiastes 1.

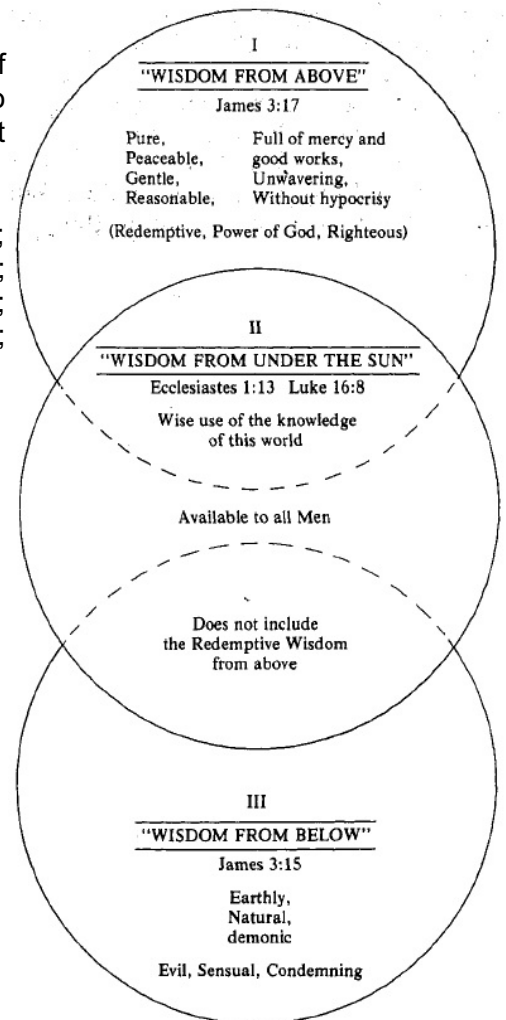
Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

### Wisdom in the Book of Ecclesiastes

Although we will eventually touch on the general themes of the book of Ecclesiastes, it might be helpful to first understand its references to wisdom. They are much different than the wisdom which we read about in the book of Proverbs.

Wisdom in Ecclesiastes: Eccles. 1:13; Eccles. 1:16-18; Eccles. 2:3; Eccles. 2:9; Eccles. 2:12-13; Eccles. 2:21; Eccles. 2:26; Eccles. 7:11-12; Eccles. 7:19; Eccles. 7:23; Eccles. 7:25; Eccles. 8:1; Eccles. 8:16; Eccles. 9:10; Eccles. 9:13; Eccles. 9:15-16; Eccles. 9:18; Eccles. 10:1; Eccles. 10:10.



Wisdom Diagram (from College Press Bible Study<sup>81</sup>). Presents the 3 kinds of wisdom spoken of in Scripture.

Understanding this is fundamental to understanding Ecclesiastes and Proverbs as being written by the same person. The ESV; capitalized is used below (except in the McGee quote, which is the updated KJV).

### Categories of the Wisdom of Solomon

I, like almost every other commentator, originally proposed that there were two types of wisdom found in the life of Solomon: divine wisdom and human viewpoint wisdom. J. Vernon McGee suggests a third type.

J. Vernon McGee: *I think that the wisdom God gave Solomon was a little different from what we think it was. We imagine that he was given spiritual insight, but Scripture does not tell us that he even asked for that. He had prayed: "Give therefore your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this your so great a people?" (1Kings 3:9). Apparently God gave him what he asked for: wisdom to rule. He was wise in political economy and probably did a marvelous job of ruling the nation. He brought in an era of peace. Other nations of the world went there to study and to behold the wisdom of Solomon. He gave a testimony for God through the temple with the altar where sacrifice was made for sinners. These were some of the things that the Queen of Sheba learned when she came from the ends of the earth.*<sup>82</sup>

This got me thinking. Therefore, let me suggest that Solomon had 4 types of wisdom/knowledge:

1. Divine viewpoint, spiritual wisdom, which he attained first from the teaching of King David; and later by personal study (he clearly studied the Mosaic Law before his 1Kings 8 sermon). How much Solomon availed himself of the teaching of various prophets as he grew is unknown. We call this Bible doctrine in the soul.

Divine viewpoint, spiritual wisdom is the sort of wisdom which we find throughout the book of Proverbs, where Solomon appears to be sharing his notes from Bible class under the teaching of his father.

2. Divine establishment wisdom, which is what Solomon specifically prayed for, and what God gave him. In today's world in the United States, it is quite difficult to avoid any political discussion. There are people who, for the most part, have divine establishment norms and standards (conservatives) and those who have cosmic system wisdom (liberals). Sometimes, they arrived at these points in their lives through thinking and experience; sometimes they were brought up to think in this way. Divine establishment wisdom is that which McGee above was speaking of.

We read about this wisdom in 1Kings 4:29–31 *And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol, and his fame was in all the surrounding nations.*

There was an era, following the deaths of many ancient patriarchs, which spurred the concept of the knowledgeable leader. These are leaders who tried to devise the best laws for their countries, based upon their own wisdom. Some had divine establishment viewpoints; but many would have been operating under cosmic system wisdom. Some came to Solomon for his knowledge in this area: 1Kings 4:34 *And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.*

<sup>81</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1 (chapter comments).

<sup>82</sup> From [https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt) accessed June 19, 2018 (slightly edited).



## Categories of the Wisdom of Solomon

We read in 1Kings 4:32 *He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005.* Let me suggest that these proverbs and songs were a mixture of divine viewpoint thinking (which proverbs and songs were saved in the Holy Scriptures); and that most of them were divine establishment wisdom, which information was already abundant in the Scriptures up to that point in time, and would have been quiet redundant. Whether these proverbs and songs included the knowledge from the next two categories is unknown.

3. There is scientific knowledge and understanding. That seems to have been included in the knowledge which God gave to Solomon. 1Kings 4:33 *He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall. He spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish.* It is possible that Solomon developed this on his own. Ideally speaking, this is knowledge gathered from observation and the scientific method; but it can be faulty (such as, man first thinking that the sun revolved around the earth).

This could include scientific knowledge—some of it true and some of it false. There are many people today who have studied a particular field of science, who are very brilliant in that field, who also subscribe to faulty “science”, such as “climate change science” and Darwinian evolution science.

4. Human viewpoint, cosmic system wisdom. This is the *wisdom* referred to in the book of Ecclesiastes; which wisdom provides no final answers and no satisfaction. Many of the observations made by Solomon in Ecclesiastes are the result of human viewpoint wisdom.

One may ask, *why not simply use different words?* The word *wisdom* is used primarily in the Bible to refer to *divine wisdom* or to *the wise application of doctrine*. However, this term was used in the world to refer to a variety of knowledge—specifically what is found above. We often think of Plato or Socrates or Gandhi as being *wise* or *having wisdom* (even though they do not). Solomon is simply using the term as the world uses it.

The very same words of the Hebrew could apply to any of these 4 categories of wisdom.

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

The NIV Study Bible on the shortcomings of human wisdom: *From there perspective of his own understanding, the Teacher takes measure of man, examining his capabilities. He discovers that human wisdom, even that of a godly persons, has limits (1:13, 16–18 7:24 8:16–17). It cannot find out the larger purposes of God or the ultimate meaning of man’s existence.*<sup>83</sup>

The NIV Study Bible looks at the futility of human enterprise and production: *as the author looks about at the human enterprise, he sees man in mad pursuit of one thing and then another—laboring as if he could master the world, lay bare its secrets, change its fundamental structures, break through the bounds of human limitations and master his own destiny. He sees man vainly pursuing hopes and expectations that in reality are “meaningless, chasing after the wind” (1:14 2:11, 17, 26 4:4, 16 6:9; cf. 1:17 4:6).*<sup>84</sup>

I used the ESV below.

## The Book of Ecclesiastes is the Pursuit of Human Wisdom

We know that Ecclesiastes is all about a pursuit of human viewpoint wisdom, for a number of reasons.

1. 4 times (in the ESV) Solomon says, *I applied my heart [to]* (Eccles. 1:13,17 8:9,16); 6 times, Solomon writes *I said in my heart* (Eccles. 1:16 2:1,15 3:17,18); and there are several other similar phrases, exclusive to the book of Ecclesiastes.

<sup>83</sup> *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 984.

<sup>84</sup> *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 984.

## The Book of Ecclesiastes is the Pursuit of Human Wisdom

2. *Under the sun* describes where this search for wisdom took place, a phrase occurring 28 times in Ecclesiastes (Eccles. 1:3,9,14 2:11,17,18,19,20 3:16 4:1,3,7,15 5:13,18 6:1,12 8:9,15,17 9:3,6,9,11,13 10:5) and nowhere else.
3. The phrase *striving after wind* is found 9 times in Ecclesiastes (Eccles. 1:14,17 2:11,17,26 4:4,6,16 6:9); and nowhere else. This describes the result of Solomon's search.

Even the casual reader cannot help but notice these key phrases occurring again and again.

This does not mean that Solomon is an unbeliever. Solomon is clearly a believer in the Revealed God early on in his life. But, he has taken a wrong turn—he is in reversionism (he has reverted back to the control of the sin nature)—so his mind thinks like the mind of an unbeliever.

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Although Hill placed this in chapter 1 of Ecclesiastes, I believe it fits better in the introduction. I am guessing that he uses the NASB translation.

[The adjective secular denotes attitudes, activities, or other things that have no religious or spiritual basis. "secular buildings"]<sup>85</sup>

## The Fundamental Flaws of Secular Wisdom (Dr. Dan Hill)

Solomon takes a look at life around him, at his own life a part from fellowship with God, and sees three elements at work. These elements of life intrude upon man's secular wisdom. These three elements assume that God is irrelevant, that God is out of picture. And with that secular approach to life these three things will encompass man.

1. The first is death: Death is a rather serious problem for the human race. The person who puts all his eggs in life's earthly basket will soon discover that life is going to end. In our youth we may think we will live forever but then, maybe around 40 or so, we recognize that our days are numbered.

Ecc. 2:16 For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man as it also is with the fool, inasmuch as in the coming days all will be forgotten. And how the wise man and the fool alike die!

2. The second intrusion upon secular wisdom is evil: Evil is present in the world. It can be found anywhere. We see injustice where we should see justice, we oppression when we see compassion, we observe greed and exploitation rather than benevolence. Social systems that are intended to help, end up hurting.

Ecc. 9:3 This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one fate for all men. Furthermore, the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives. Afterwards they go to the dead.

3. The third element is chance: Solomon explodes the myth that man can master their own welfare much less their own fate. Time and chance will eventually get to everyone. A part from God every decision is a roll of the dice which will at times make the player the loser.

Ecc. 9:12 Moreover, man does not know his time: like fish caught in a treacherous net, and birds trapped in a snare, so the sons of men are ensnared at an evil time when it suddenly falls on them.

<sup>85</sup> From <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/secular> accessed June 11, 2018.

## The Fundamental Flaws of Secular Wisdom (Dr. Dan Hill)

Too many other forces, greater than man's resolve and determination, are at work in the world for man to not experience the intrusion of chance, what some might call just plain bad luck, into his secular wisdom. So Solomon meets man on man's level. He assumes God is not in the picture and from his wisdom, but perhaps more from his experience, he sees that life even at its best is open to the intrusions of death, evil, and chance. It is no wonder that he proclaims even at the end of the story: Vanity or vanities, emptiness of emptiness, all is vanity, all is empty.

Eccl. 1:2 and Eccl. 12:8 is the somber declaration of the meaningless of life. These are the bookends of despair.

Eccl. 1:2 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity." (NASB)

Eccles. 1:2 The Teacher says this. "Like a vapor of mist, like a breeze in the wind, everything vanishes, leaving many questions. (ULLB)

This leaves secular man in a life which has no meaning, no purpose, yet certainly an end.

From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Ecclesiastes 1); accessed June 10, 2018 (appended).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

## Summaries of the Book of Ecclesiastes

I have decided to place this chart in the Introduction, so that it is near the beginning of the book and easy to find. You can refer back to this chart to see where we have been, to gain context, and to see where we are going.

Unfortunately, I do not perceive the overall organization of this book, although it clearly has a beginning (Ecclesiastes 1:1–11) and an end (Ecclesiastes 12). Could chapters 6 and 7 (or whatever) be reversed, without any problems?

### Chapter by Chapter Descriptions for the Book of Ecclesiastes

Chapter	Brief Description
<b>1a</b>	Introduction; author; theme of book, circular nature of life.
<b>1b</b>	Solomon's unsatisfactory search for human wisdom.
<b>2</b>	Experiments to find happiness: pursuit of mirth and stimulation; legacy of construction projects; the accumulation of wealth and symbols of wealth; all to naught. Everything is chasing after wind.  Solomon questions the man who will follow him.
<b>3</b>	To everything, there is a season.  Men work hard and God has made everything beautiful in its time.  Inherent wickedness and injustice.  Men and beasts both die and go to the same place.

## Chapter by Chapter Descriptions for the Book of Ecclesiastes

Chapter	Brief Description
4	<p>For some, it might be better that they had never been born.</p> <p>Inner travail.</p> <p>Importance of friendship.</p> <p>Who is really better off?</p>
5	<p>Take seriously the vows that you make to God.</p> <p>Do not allow greed to pervert justice or to harm the poor.</p>
6	<p>If your focus in work is only upon wealth, to the detriment of your soul, you will be quite unhappy. Or, woe to him who gains the whole world but loses his soul.</p>
7	<p>Conventional human wisdom is often wrong.</p>
8	<p>Obedying God and the laws of divine establishment are the right things to do.</p> <p>Everyone dies, but death may not be the ultimate measure of justice.</p> <p>Justice may not be found in this temporal life.</p>
9	<p>Death comes to all.</p> <p>Recommendations for life.</p> <p>Wisdom is far superior to foolishness; although the works of the wise may be forgotten.</p>
10	<p>The wise man versus the fool.</p>
11	<p>Observations in life and nature.</p> <p>Seek God early in your life.</p>
12	<p>The plague of old age that comes upon us all.</p> <p>Divine wisdom is to fear God and to keep His commandments.</p>

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

## Summaries of Ecclesiastes (Various Commentators)

S. Cox: *The search for the summum bonum, the quest of the chief good, is the theme of the book of Ecclesiastes. Naturally we look to find this theme, this problem, this "riddle of the painful earth," distinctly stated in the opening verses of the book. It is stated, but not distinctly. For the book is a drama, not an essay or a treatise. Instead of introducing the drama with a brief narrative or a clear statement of the moral problem he is about to discuss, the Preacher opens with the characteristic utterances of the man who, wearied with many futile endeavours, gathers up his remaining strength for a last attempt to discover the chief good of life.*<sup>86</sup>

The Summarized Bible: *Solomon writes this between 985 and 980 B.C. Apart from God, life is full of weariness and disappointment.*<sup>87</sup>

Pastor John Griffith on the book of Ecclesiastes:

- *Written in Solomon's old age prior to the collapse of the kingdom, approx. 940BC*
- *Was a part of the third section of the Hebrew Bible - the writings (Kathubhim)*
- *Was read annually on the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles last feast of the year - month of Tishri (Oct) 15-21 which prefigures the millennium.*
- *REASON READ ANNUALLY: Its message is of such transcendent importance that it must be proclaimed to man year by year - even during the period of peace and prosperity of righteousness and joy that will be realized on earth in the personal reign of Christ during the millennium. It is the message that everything on earth, even at its best, is fleeting and unsatisfying, and that the heart of man, the real you, was made for God (in His image) and will not find real rest and satisfaction till it finds that realization in Him who is changeless, absolute and permanent.*<sup>88</sup>

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[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

## A Summary of Ecclesiastes (J. Hamilton)

- I. It need not then surprise us if we find in these chapters many strange questionings and startling opinions before we arrive at the final conclusion. Intermingled with much that is noble and holy, these "doubtful disquisitions" are not the dialogue of a believer and an infidel, but the soliloquy of a "divided heart," the debate of a truant will with an upbraiding conscience.
- II. In the search after happiness, his first resource was knowledge, then merry-making, then the solace of absolute power. But no sooner did he find his power supreme and unchallenged than he began to be visited with misgivings as to his successor. "Yea, I hated all the labour which I had taken under the sun, because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me."
- III. Who is there that apart from God's favour has ever tasted solid joy and satisfaction of spirit? All will be vanity to the heart which is vile, and all will be vexation to the spirit which the peace of God is not possessing.

*The Sermon Bible Commentary*; ©1888-1893; in the Public Domain; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll, M.A., LL.D., from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1-2.

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<sup>86</sup> *The Sermon Bible Commentary*; ©1888-1893; in the Public Domain; Edited by the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll, M.A., LL.D., from e-sword, Eccles. 1:1-11.

<sup>87</sup> Keith L. Brooks, *Summarized Bible; Complete Summary of the Bible*; ©1919; from e-Sword, Ecclesiastes book comments (slightly edited).

<sup>88</sup> From [http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes\\_01.html](http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_01.html) accessed June 14, 2018.

The first chapter heading sometimes does double duty, giving an overall view of the chapter and/or telling what the first section is about.

<b>Topic Divisions of Modern Translations for Ecclesiastes</b>			
<b>Christian Standard Bible</b>	<b>NASB</b>	<b>New King James Version</b>	<b>New Life Version</b>
Everything is Futile 1:1–11	The Futility of All Endeavor 1:1–11	The Vanity of Life 1:1–11	Life Is of No Worth 1:1–11
The Limitations of Wisdom 1:12–18	The Futility of Wisdom 1:12–18	The Grief of Wisdom 1:12–18	Looking for Wisdom Is like Trying to Catch the Wind 1:12–18
The Emptiness of Pleasure 2:1–3	The Futility of Pleasure and Possessions 2:1–11	The Vanity of Pleasure 2:1–11	Fun Is of No Worth 2:1–11
The Emptiness of Possessions 2:4–11			
The Relative Value of Wisdom 2:12–17	Wisdom Excels Folly 2:12–17	The End of the Wise and the Fool 2:12–26	The End of the Wise Man or Fool 2:12–26
The Emptiness of Work 2:18–26	The Futility of Labor 2:18–26		
The Mystery of Time 3:1–15	A Time for Everything 3:1–10	Everything Has Its Time 3:1–8	A Time for Everything 3:1–8
	God Set Eternity in the Heart of Man 3:11–22	The God-Given Task 3:9–15	The God-Given Work 3:9–15
The Mystery of Injustice and Death 3:16–4:3		Injustice Seems to Prevail 3:16–22	Sin Is Everywhere 3:16–4:8
	The Evils of Oppression 4:1–16	The Uselessness of Selfish Toil 4:1–3	
The Loneliness of Wealth 4:4–16		The Vanity of Selfish Toil 4:4–8	
		The Value of a Friend 4:9–12	A True Friend 4:9–16
		Popularity Passes Away 4:13–	
Caution in God's Presence 5:1–7	Your Attitude Toward God 5:1–9	Fear God, Keep Your Vows 5:1–7	Do What You Promise 5:1–7
The Realities of Wealth 5:8–6:12	The Folly of Riches 5:10–20	The Vanity of Gain and Honor 5:8–20	Money and Honor Are of Little Worth 5:8–6:12
	The Futility of Life 6:1–12	Wealth Is Not the Goal of Life 6:1–12	
Wise Sayings 7:1–14	Wisdom and Folly Contrasted 7:1–29	The Value of Practical Wisdom 7:1–29	Wisdom Is Worth a Lot 7:1–8:1
Avoiding Extremes 7:15–22			
What the Teacher Found 7:23–29			

Topic Divisions of Modern Translations for Ecclesiastes			
Christian Standard Bible	NASB	New King James Version	New Life Version
Wisdom, Authorities, and Inequities 8:1–17	Obey Rulers 8:1–17	Obey Authorities for God's Sake 8:1	
		Obey Authorities for God's Sake 8:2–9	Obey the King 8:2–9
		Death Comes to All 8:10–17	Death Comes to Everyone 8:10–9:12
Enjoy Life Despite Death 9:1–10	Men Are in the Hand of God 9:1–9	Death Comes to All 9:1–12	
The Limitations of Wisdom 9:11–18	Whatever Your Hand Finds to Do 9:10–18	Wisdom Superior to Folly 9:13–18	Wisdom Is Better Than Being Foolish 9:13–10:20
The Burden of Folly 10:1–20	A Little Foolishness 10:1–20	Wisdom and Folly 10:1–20	
Invest in Life 11:1–10	Cast Your Bread on the Waters 11:1–10	The Value of Diligence 11:1–8	The Ways of a Wise Man 11:1–8
		Seek God in Early Life 11:9–10	What Young People Should Do 11:9–12:8
The Twilight of Life 12:1–8	Remember God in Your Youth 12:1–8	Seek God in Early Life 12:1–8	
The Teacher's Objectives and Conclusion 12:9–14	Purpose of the Preacher 12:9–14	The Whole Duty of Man 12:9–14	The Preacher's Last Words 12:9–14

From [www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ecclesiastes%205&version=NASB;NKJV;NRSV;CEB;CEV](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ecclesiastes%205&version=NASB;NKJV;NRSV;CEB;CEV); concept inspired by Dr. Bob Utley.

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[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

## Outlines/Organization/Overviews of the Book of Ecclesiastes

### Outlines of Ecclesiastes (Various Commentators)

Keith Krell:

1. Declaration of futility (1:1-11)
2. Demonstration of futility (1:12-6:12)
3. Deliverance from futility (7:1-12:14)<sup>89</sup>

<sup>89</sup> From [Bible.org](http://Bible.org), accessed June 23, 2018.

## Outlines of Ecclesiastes (Various Commentators)

Keith Simons:

- Ecclesiastes 1:1-3 - What can people achieve during their lives?  
 Ecclesiastes 1:4-7 - Who can change the world?  
 Ecclesiastes 1:8-11 - Can our desires ever satisfy us?  
 Ecclesiastes 1:12-15 - Why is life so hard?  
 Ecclesiastes 1:16-18 - Does wisdom improve a person's life?<sup>90</sup>

The NIV Study Bible:

- I. Author (1:1)
- II. Theme: The meaninglessness of man's efforts on earth apart from God (1:2)
- III. Introduction: The profitlessness of working to accumulate things to achieve happiness (1:3–11)
- IV. Discourse, Part 1: In spite of life's apparent enigmas and meaninglessness, it is to be enjoyed as a gift from God (1:12–11:6)
- V. Discourse, Part 2: Since old age and death will soon come, man should enjoy life in his youth, remembering that God will judge (11:7–12:7)
- VI. Theme Repeated (12:8)
- VII. Conclusion: Reverently trust in and obey God (12:9–14)<sup>91</sup>

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## Ecclesiastes Chart (from the Open Bible)

Focus	Thesis: All "Is Meaningless"		Proof: "Life Is Meaningless"			Counsel: Fear God	
<b>Reference</b>	1:1–2	1:3–11	1:12–2:26	3:1–6:12	7:1–9:18	10:1–12:8	12:9–14
<b>Division</b>	Introduction to Meaninglessness	Illustrations of Meaninglessness	Proof from Scripture	Proof from Observation	Coping in a Wicked World	Counsel for Uncertainty	Conclusion: Fear and Obey God
<b>Topic</b>	Declaration of Meaninglessness		Demonstration of Meaninglessness		From Meaninglessness		
<b>Location</b>	Subject		Sermon			Summary	
<b>Time</b>	Universe: "Under the Sun"						
<b>Time</b>	935 B.C.						

This could very well be the basic chart that they used for all books of the Bible. Sometimes, it is very hard to pull back this far from any given book.

*The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 858 (slightly edited).

<sup>90</sup> From <http://usefulbible.com/ecclesiastes/index.htm> accessed June 23, 2018.

<sup>91</sup> *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; pp. 984–985.



### Coffman's Outline of Ecclesiastes (James Burton Coffman)

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11	: Introduction - Emptiness of Life without God
Ecclesiastes 1:12-18; Ecclesiastes 2- 6	: Question for Sense in all that Happens on Earth
Chapter 1:12-18	The Seeker
Chapter 2	Result of Seeking: Worthlessness of all Labour
Chapter 3	Certainty of Death
Chapter 4	Comparison of Various Circumstances of Life
Chapter 5	Correct Conduct towards God and the Neighbour
Chapter 6	Vanity of the Various Circumstances of Life
Ecclesiastes 7-11; Ecclesiastes 12:1-10	: Good Counsels
Chapter 7	Various Aspects of Wisdom
Chapter 8	Goings-On of Men
Chapter 9	Equal Fate for Everybody
Chapter 10	Human Doings and Its Consequences
Chapter 11:1-12:10	Vanity of Human Life from Youth to Old Age
Ecclesiastes 12:10-14	: End - Life in Light of Eternity

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### Snider's Outline of Ecclesiastes (Ron Snider)

- A Once again, interpreters are widely divided on the structure of the book, but we will provide a few of the more basic ones.
- B Many outlines have been advanced, which range from some that are quite simple (three divisions) to ones that are extremely elaborate (36 or more divisions).
- C Schofield perhaps proposed the easiest threefold division.
- 1 Solomon's experience of the fleeting and futile nature of earthly life. Eccles. 1-4
  - 2 Exhortations in light of that experience. Eccles. 5-10
  - 3 The conclusion of the matter. Eccles. 11-12
- D The Zondervan Encyclopedia suggests that there are four discourses and a conclusion.
- 1 First discourse. Eccles 1:1-2:26
    - a Thesis-human effort and achievement are futile. 1:1-3
    - b Thesis demonstrated. 1:4-2:26
  - 2 Second discourse. Eccles. 3:1-5:20
    - a Thesis-Divine laws and timing govern human existence. Eccles. 3:11
    - b Thesis demonstrated. 3:1-5:20
  - 3 Third discourse. Eccles. 6:1-8:17
    - a Thesis-There is no lasting satisfaction in earthly endeavors. Eccles. 6:12
    - b Thesis demonstrated. 6:1-8:17
  - 4 Fourth discourse. Eccles 9:1-12:8
    - a Thesis-Recognition that God is in control and should be obeyed. Eccles. 9:1
    - b Thesis demonstrated. Eccles. 9:1-12:8
  - 5 Epilogue. Eccles. 12:9-14
- E While we could propose another outline, we should probably view this as a treatise that is designed to provide direction and comfort to the young first, and then to a considerably wider audience, in a fallen world.

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

**McGee's Outline of Ecclesiastes (J. Vernon McGee)**

- I. Problem Stated: "All Is Vanity," Eccl. 1:1-3
- II. Experiment Made, Eccl. 1:4 through Eccl. 12:12  
(Seeking Satisfaction in the Following:)
  - A. Science, Eccl. 1:4-11
  - B. Wisdom and Philosophy, Eccl. 1:12-18
  - C. Pleasure, Eccl. 2:1-11
  - D. Materialism (Living for the "Now"), Eccl. 2:12-26
  - E. Fatalism, Eccl. 3:1-15
  - F. Egotism, Eccl. 3:16 through Eccl. 4:16
  - G. Religion, Eccl. 5:1-8
  - H. Wealth, Eccl. 5:9 through Eccl. 6:12
  - I. Morality, Eccl. 7:1 through Eccl. 12:12
- III. Result of Experiment, Eccl. 12:13-14

From [https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/21-Ecclesiastes/21-ECCLESIASTES_djvu.txt) accessed June 18, 2018.

## Chapter Outline

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**Outline and Organization (from the Open Bible)****Part One: The Thesis That Everything Is Meaningless (1:1–1:11)**

- I. Introduction of Futility 1:1–2
- II. Illustrations of Futility 1:3–11

**Part Two: The Proof that Everything Is Meaningless (1:12–6:12)**

- I. **Proof That Everything Is Meaningless from Experience 1:12–2:26**
  - A. Futility of Striving after Wisdom 1:12–18
  - B. Futility of Striving after Pleasure 2:1–3
  - C. Futility of Great Accomplishments 2:4–16
  - D. Futility of Hard Labor 2:17–23
  - E. Conclusion: Be Content 2:24–26
- II. **Proof That Everything Is Meaningless from Observation 3:1–6:12**
  - A. Immutability of God's Program
    - 1. God Predetermines the Events of Life 3:1–8
    - 2. God Predetermines the Conditions of Life 3:9–15
    - 3. God Judges All 3:16–22
  - B. Inequalities of Life 4:1–16
    - 1. Evil Oppression 4:1–3
    - 2. Folly of Hard Work 4:4–12
    - 3. Transience of Popularity 4:13–16
  - C. Insufficiencies of Human Religion 5:1–7
  - D. Insufficiencies of Wealth 5:8–20
    - 1. Wealth Does Not Satisfy 5:8–12
    - 2. Wealth Brings difficulties 5:13–17
    - 3. Wealth Comes Ultimately from God 5:18–20
  - E. Inescapable Futility of Life 6:1–12

## Outline and Organization (from the Open Bible)

1. No Satisfaction in Wealth 6:1–2
2. No Satisfaction in Children 6:3–6
3. No Satisfaction in Labor 6:7–9
4. No Satisfaction in the Future 6:10–12

### Part Three: The Counsel for Living with Futility (7:1–12:14)

#### I. Coping in a Wicked World 7:1–9:18

- A. Wisdom and Folly Contrasted 7:1–14
- B. Wisdom and Moderation 7:15–18
- C. Strength of Wisdom 7:19–29
- D. Submit to authority 8:1–8
- E. Inability to Understand All God's Doing 8:9–17
- F. Judgment Comes to All 9:1–8
- G. Enjoy Life While You Have It 9:9–12
- H. Value of Wisdom 9:13–18

#### II. Counsel for the Uncertainties of Life 10:1–12:8

- A. Wisdom's Characteristics 10:1–15
- B. Wisdom Related to the King 10:16–20
- C. Wisdom Related to Business 11:1–6
- D. Wisdom Related to the Youth 11:7–12:8
  1. Rejoice in Your Youth 11:7–10
  2. Remember God in Your Youth 12:1–8

#### III. Conclusion: "Fear God and Obey His Commands" 12:9–14

*The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, pp. 859–860.

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## Carroll's outline of Ecclesiastes (B. H. Carroll)

**The Title** (Eccles. 1:1)

**The Prologue** (Eccles. 1:2–11)

- (1) His text (Eccles. 1:2)
- (2) His introductory interrogatory (Eccles. 1:3)
- (3) The passing of the generations (Eccles. 1:4)
- (4) The material world (Eccles. 1:5–7)
- (5) The monotony of it all (Eccles. 1:8)
- (6) There is nothing new (Eccles. 1:9–10)
- (7) There is no remembrance (Eccles. 1:11)

I. **The Pursuit of Wisdom** (Eccles. 1:12–18)

II. **The Pursuit of Pleasure** (Eccles. 2:1–3)

III. **The Pursuit of Great Works** (Eccles. 2:4–25)

1. Great works enumerated (Eccles. 2:4–11)
2. A comparison between wisdom and folly, or pleasure (Eccles. 2:12–17)
3. He hated his labor because he had to die and leave it to another (Eccles. 2:18–23) therefore conclusion No. I (Eccles. 2:24 a) but the God thought knocks it over (Eccles. 2:24 b; Eccles. 2:25f)

IV. **Elements that limit** (Ecclesiastes 3:1–5:9)

1. Divine elements:
  - (1) Law of opportunes (Eccles. 3:1–8)
  - (2) Eternity in our hearts (Eccles. 3:9–11 a)

### Carroll's outline of Ecclesiastes (B. H. Carroll)

- (3) Finiteness of man's nature limits him (Eccles. 3:11 b) then conclusion No. 2 (Eccles. 3:12) but the God thought knocks it over (Eccles. 3:13)
- (4) The laws of God are infrangible (Eccles. 3:14 f)
2. Human elements:
  - (1) Iniquity in the place of justice (Eccles. 3:16) but modified by a divine element (Eccles. 3:17) and the divine purpose, since man dies like beasts (Eccles. 3:18–21) therefore, conclusion No. 3 (Eccles. 3:22)
  - (2) Oppression of the poor (Eccles. 4:1) therefore the dead or unborn are better off (Eccles. 4:2–3)
  - (3) Labor and skill actuated only by rivalry with his neighbor (Eccles. 4:4) therefore the fool folds his hands (Eccles. 4:5 f) and then two examples (Eccles. 4:7–12; and Ecclesiastes:13–16)
  - (4) Elements of weakness in human worship (Eccles. 5:1–7)
  - (5) Some further observations (Eccles. 5:8–9)
- V. **Riches tried** (Ecclesiastes 5:10–6:12) and found insufficient, because,
  1. They cannot satisfy (Eccles. 5:10)
  2. Consumers of wealth increase with wealth (Eccles. 5:11 a)
  3. The owner can only, look at it (Eccles. 5:11 b)
  4. He cannot sleep as a laborer (Eccles. 5:12)
  5. Riches may hurt the owner (Eccles. 5:13)
  6. They may perish in an unlucky venture (Eccles. 5:14 a)
  7. The owner begets a son when he is bankrupt (Eccles. 5:14 b)
  8. In any event, he is stripped of all at death (Eccles. 5:15)
  9. He leads a worried life (Eccles. 5:16 f) therefore, conclusion No. 4, (Eccles. 5:18–20)
  10. The care of a rich man who could not enjoy it (Eccles. 6:1–12) because,
    - (1) He cannot eat it (Eccles. 6:1–6)
    - (2) All his labor is for his mouth (Eccles. 6:7–9)
    - (3) The greatest is but a man and cannot contend against God (Eccles. 6:10–12)
- VI. **The golden mean tried** (Ecclesiastes 7:1–8:15)
  1. Value of a good name (Eccles. 7:1)
  2. House of mourning better than the house of feasting (Eccles. 7:2–4)
  3. Listen to the reproof of the wise, rather than the laughter of fools (Eccles. 7:5–7)
  4. Do not yield to anger (Eccles. 7:8 f)
  5. Do not talk of the good old days as better than these (Eccles. 7:10)
  6. Consider the advantage of wisdom over wealth Ecclesiastes (7:11f)
  7. Don't try to straighten all the crooked things (Eccles. 7:13)
  8. If prosperous, be content (Eccles. 7:14 a)
  9. In adversity remember it, too, comes from God (Eccles. 7:14 b)
  10. Since it sometimes happens that the righteous die while the wicked live, be not righteous over much, nor too wise, nor too wicked, nor too foolish; hold somewhat to both (Eccles. 7:15–18) this golden mean plan is great because there is not a righteous man in the earth that sinneth not (Eccles. 7:19 f)
  11. Don't try to find out all that people say about you (Eccles. 7:21 f)
  12. The result is unsatisfactory (Ecclesiastes 7:23–8:15) it fails because,
    - (1) Things are too deep for the human mind (Eccles. 7:23–25)
    - (2) Woman is more bitter than death (Eccles. 7:26–28)
    - (3) Man one of a thousand though fallen (Eccles. 7:29)
    - (4) When applied to public affairs that say,
      - (a) Do not rebel (Eccles. 8:1–2)
      - (b) Do not resent oppression (Eccles. 8:3 f)
      - (c) Leave the case to God's restitution (Eccles. 8:5–7)
      - (d) The evil ruler will die; there is no furlough in that war (Eccles. 8:8)
    - (5) There are rulers who rule over men to their hurt (Eccles. 8:9 f).

### Carroll's outline of Ecclesiastes (B. H. Carroll)

- (6) The mills of the gods grind too slow for the correction of this evil (Eccles. 8:11–13)
  - (7) Though ultimately it is well with the righteous and evil with the wicked, yet here and now we do see wicked men get the crown of the righteous and vice versa (Eccles. 8:14) therefore, conclusion No. 5, (Eccles. 8:15)
- VII. **The means used to solve the problem condemned** (Ecclesiastes 8:16–10:20) **because,**
- 1. It is too wearisome (Eccles. 8:16)
  - 2. Finite wisdom cannot fathom it (Ecclesiastes 8:17–9:1)
  - 3. Death comes alike to all (Eccles. 9:2–6) therefore, conclusion No. 6, (Eccles. 9:7–10)
  - 4. The race is not to the swift (Eccles. 9:11–12) illustrated (Eccles. 9:13–15)
  - 5. One fool can destroy much good (Ecclesiastes 9:16–10:4)
  - 6. Passive resistance to the ruler tends to promote fools (Eccles. 10:5–15)
  - 7. The king may be a child (Eccles. 10:16–20)
- VIII. **If the means of solution be discarded, what then?** (Ecclesiastes 11:1-12:14)
- 1. Cast thy bread upon the waters (Eccles. 11:1)
  - 2. Give a portion to all (Eccles. 11:2)
  - 3. Don't watch the wind and the cloud (Eccles. 11:3–5)
  - 4. Work all seasons (Eccles. 11:6–8)
  - 5. Let the young in their joys remember the judgment (Eccles. 11:9–10)
  - 6. Remember God in youth (Eccles. 12:1)
  - 7. Lest death itself come (Eccles. 12:2–8)
  - 8. The real good thing to do (Eccles. 12:9–13)
  - 9. Why? The judgment is before us (Eccles. 12:14)

B. H. Carroll, *An interpretation of the English Bible*; from e-Sword, Eccles. 1:1 (introduction).

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Garrett views the outline from a topical approach.

### Garrett's Outline of Ecclesiastes (Duane Garrett)

- 1. Introduction (1:1-2)
- 2. On time and the World (1:3-11)
- 3. On Wisdom (1:12-18)
- 4. On Wealth (2:1-11)
- 5. On Wisdom (2:12-17)
- 6. On Wealth (2:18-26)
- 7. On Time and the World (3:1-15b)
- 8. On Politics (3:15c-17)
- 9. On Death (3:18-22)
- 10. On Politics (4:1-3)
- 11. On Wealth (4:4-8)
- 12. On Friendship (4:9-12)
- 13. On Politics (4:13-16)
- 14. On Religion (5:1-7)
- 15. On Politics (5:8-9)
- 16. On Wealth (5:10-6:6)
- 17. Transition (6:7-9)
- 18. On Wisdom and Death (6:10-7:4)
- 19. Transition (7:5-6)
- 20. On Wisdom and Politics (7:7-9)
- 21. Transition (7:10)

### Garrett's Outline of Ecclesiastes (Duane Garrett)

22. On Wisdom and Wealth (7:11-14)
23. On Wisdom and Religion (7:15-29)
24. Transition (8:1)
25. On Politics (8:2-6)
26. Transition (8:7-8)
27. On Theodicy (8:9-9:1)
28. Transition (9:2)
29. On Death and Contentment (9:3-10)
30. Transition (9:11-12)
31. On Politics (9:13-10:17)
32. Transition (10:18-20)
33. On Wealth (11:1-6)
34. On Death and Contentment (11:7-12:7)
35. Conclusion (12:8-14)

From [Bible.org](https://www.bible.org), accessed June 23, 2018.

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This does not look very helpful at all.

### 929 Chapters outlines Ecclesiastes

- Ecclesiastes chapter 1 – Reflections
- Ecclesiastes chapter 2 – Reflections
- Ecclesiastes chapter 3 – Reflections
- Ecclesiastes chapter 4 – Reflections
- Ecclesiastes chapter 5 – Reflections
- Ecclesiastes chapter 6 – Reflections
- Ecclesiastes chapter 7 – Assorted Sayings and Lessons
- Ecclesiastes chapter 8 – Reflections
- Ecclesiastes chapter 9 – Reflections on Life and Death
- Ecclesiastes chapter 10 – Assorted Sayings
- Ecclesiastes chapter 11 – Assorted Wisdom Sayings
- Ecclesiastes chapter 12 – Death and Dying; Postscript

From <https://929chapters.com/the-book-of-ecclesiastes/> accessed June 14, 2018.

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### Reamers' Outline of Ecclesiastes (Arend Reamers—Sutcliffe Bible Commentary)

- Ecclesiastes 1:1-11 : Introduction - Emptiness of Life without God
- Ecclesiastes 1:12-18; Ecclesiastes 2- 6 : Question for Sense in all that Happens on Earth
  - Chapter 1:12-18 The Seeker
  - Chapter 2 Result of Seeking: Worthlessness of all Labour
  - Chapter 3 Certainty of Death
  - Chapter 4 Comparison of Various Circumstances of Life
  - Chapter 5 Correct Conduct towards God and the Neighbour
  - Chapter 6 Vanity of the Various Circumstances of Life

## Reamers' Outline of Ecclesiastes (Arend Reamers—Sutcliffe Bible Commentary)

Ecclesiastes 7-11; Ecclesiastes 12:1-10 : Good Counsels  
 Chapter 7 Various Aspects of Wisdom  
 Chapter 8 Goings-On of Men  
 Chapter 9 Equal Fate for Everybody  
 Chapter 10 Human Doings and Its Consequences  
 Chapter 11:1-12:10 Vanity of Human Life from Youth to Old Age  
 Ecclesiastes 12:10-14 : End - Life in Light of Eternity

From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jsc/ecclesiastes-0.html> accessed June 21, 2018.

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### Interpreting Ecclesiastes

As I study a chapter, questions will occur to me—some of them important and many of them minor. Not all of these questions will be satisfactorily answered.

## Fundamental Questions About Ecclesiastes

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Snider did an outstanding job with this topic as well.

## History of Interpretation of Ecclesiastes (Rick Snider)

1. The general view of the Midrashim (Jewish exegesis of the Old Testament, largely composed after the Exile) was that Solomon wrote Qoheleth in his old age, when weary of life, to ex-pose the emptiness and vanity of worldly pursuits, and to show that the happiness of man consists in fearing God and obeying His commands. Eccles. 12:13
2. Early Christian commentators (Gregory Thaumaturgos, 217-270 AD) held Solomon as a prophet, who attempted to demonstrate that all the affairs and pursuits of man in the human realm were vain and useless. This should cause people to contemplate more weighty spiritual matters.
3. Jerome (347-420 AD), who often interpreted allegorically, wrote his commentary to encour-age others to pursue a monastic life, stating that the book is "to show the utter vanity of every enjoyment, and the necessity of taking an ascetic life, devoted entirely to the service of God."
4. Beginning with Martin Luther and extending into the 18th-19th centuries, many rejected Solomon's authorship and regarded the book as a compilation, interpreting it as a dialogue be-tween two or more factions within Israel.
5. Some modern exegetes understand the book as a book of philosophy, which is designed to detail the attempt to find happiness by a man who has everything.
6. Others point out that it is paradoxical in nature, filled with statements that create or are in tension with each other (despair-enjoyment).
7. They suggest that the book is derived from ancient Near Eastern methodology, which is es-sentially Hegelian (an exchange of propositions {theses} and counter-propositions {antithes-es} that result in a synthesis of the opposing assertions) in nature.
  - 1) This may be the closest to the truth except for the fact that Hegelian dialect offers opposing sides

## History of Interpretation of Ecclesiastes (Rick Snider)

- moving toward one another.
- 2) Therefore, the side of truth must compromise with error in order to form the new thesis; then, the more truth is opposed, the more it is compromised.
  - 3) In our case, the younger Solomon is working his way toward truth and understanding, while the older judge has attained greater levels of truth and understanding.
8. Others see the book as being woefully pessimistic and melancholy, having called it the "most puzzling book of the Old Testament."
  9. Therefore, multitudes of commentaries have been written in order to explain the contents, confirming Solomon's assertion. Eccles. 12:12

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## Themes and Key Ideas in the Book of Ecclesiastes

There are many words and phrases found uniquely in the book of Ecclesiastes: the *Qoheleth* (*the lecturer, the preacher, the assembler*). The phrases *a breath of breaths*, *vanity*, *all is vanity*, and *under the sun* also stand out.

## Themes and Key Ideas of Ecclesiastes (the Open Bible)

Ecclesiastes reports the results of a diligent quest for purpose, meaning, and satisfaction in human life. The Teacher poignantly sees the emptiness and futility of power, popularity, prestige, and pleasure apart from God.

The word *meaningless* appears numerous times to express the many things that cannot be understood about life. All earthly goals and ambitions when pursued as ends in themselves lead to dissatisfaction and frustration. Life "under the sun" seems to be filled with inequities, uncertainties, changes in fortune, and violations of justice.

But Ecclesiastes does not give an answer of atheism or skepticism; God is referred to throughout. In fact, it claims that the search for man's summum bonum must end in God. Satisfaction in life can be found only by looking beyond this world.

Ecclesiastes gives an analysis of negative themes, but it also develops the positive theme of overcoming the vanities of life by fearing a God who is good, just and sovereign (12:13–14). Wisdom involves seeing life from a divine perspective and trusting God in the face of apparent futility and lack of purpose. Life is a daily gift from God and it should be enjoyed as much as possible (see 2:24–26 3:12–13, 22 5:18–20 8:15 9:7–10 11:8–9).

Our comprehension is indeed limited, but there are many things we can understand. Koheleth recognized that ultimately God will judge all people. Therefore, he exhorted: "**Fear God and obey His commands**" (12:13).

*The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 858.

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## Overall Theme of Ecclesiastes (John W. Ritenbaugh)

When Solomon suggests there is no profit in all man's labor, he means that nothing in this world makes life worth living. How depressing!

Apparently, Ecclesiastes was written as the conclusion to an experiment that lasted many years, maybe even his entire lifetime. Solomon was eminently qualified to write this. He was intelligent and given understanding as a special gift by God, which he asked for. He did not ask for wisdom but understanding that he might be wise. Understanding must precede right application. If one does not understand a situation he is in, he will not be wise, so Solomon asked God for understanding, and from that developed wisdom.

He had power and authority because he was king in Israel. He had money, perhaps as nobody else has ever experienced in the history of mankind. Solomon was no square. He was active, inquiring, and had an analytical mind, reaching conclusions that were logical and right given the circumstances and the information he had.

So what follows after he states his theme? Life is irrational, absurd, meaningless. His lifetime experiment had not put him in a happy frame of mind.

From [Bible tools](#) accessed June 17, 2018.

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## Vanity/All is Vanity (various commentators)

James Burton Coffman: *Verses 2 and 3 of the first chapter summarize suitably contents and purpose of the book: "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?" The word "vanity" appears not less than 37 times in this book! It is the Hebrew word "hevel" which also is to be found in the name Adam and Eve gave to their second son Abel (Genesis 4:2) after sin had entered the world by their disobedience.*<sup>92</sup>

Ken Cayce: *The author's declaration that "all is vanity" envelops the primary message of the book, (1:2 and 12:8). The word translated "vanity" is used in a least three ways throughout the book. In each case, it looks at the nature of man's activity "under the sun" as:*

Cayce continues: (1) *Fleeting, this has in view the vapor like or transitory nature of life (James 4:14);*  
 (2) *Futile or meaningless, which focuses on the cursed condition of the universe and the debilitating effects it has on man's earthly experience; or*  
 (3) *Incomprehensible or enigmatic, which gives consideration to life's unanswerable questions.*<sup>93</sup>

Cayce later writes: *The Hebrew word translated "vanity," "vanities," and "vain life" expresses the futile attempt to be satisfied apart from God. This word is used 38 times expressing the many things hard to understand about life. All earthly goals and ambitions when pursued as ends in themselves produce only emptiness. Paul was probably echoing Solomon's dissatisfaction when he wrote, "... the creation was subjected to futility" (Solomon's "vanity"; Romans 8:19-21). Solomon's experience with the effects of the curse (see Gen. 3:17-19), led him to view life as "chasing after the wind".*<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

<sup>93</sup> From <http://www.bible-studys.org> accessed June 24, 2018.

<sup>94</sup> From <http://www.bible-studys.org> accessed June 24, 2018.

### Under the Sun (various commentators)

James Burton Coffman: *The expression "under the sun" also appears 29 times. This expression stresses the character of the book that describes life on this earth from the viewpoint of fallen man. It has therefore rightly been called a scene of the consequences of fall of man (compare Genesis 3:17-19).*<sup>95</sup>

The Wells of Living Water Commentary:

1. "Man's labour which he taketh under the sun."
2. "There is no new thing under the sun."
3. "The works that are done under the sun."
4. "There was no profit under the sun."
5. "I have shewed myself wise under the sun."
6. "A time to every purpose" under the sun.
7. "The oppressions that are done under the sun."
8. "I saw vanity under the sun."
9. "What shall be after a man under the sun."
10. "The living which walk under the sun."<sup>96</sup>

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## Purpose for the Book of Ecclesiastes

How should we consider this book? In what context do we place it? What was Solomon's purpose in writing it?

### Methodology and purpose (Rick Snider)

1. In order to interpret the book properly, one must have an understanding of the method that Solomon is using in order to accomplish his objectives for writing.
2. There is evidence within the book that Solomon is directing men toward God by examining his past thinking in light of his current thinking. Eccles. 2:25 12:1,13
  - 1) It should be recognized that the younger Solomon was moving toward the truth, but could never get there since he was stuck in the past.
  - 2) The older, wiser Solomon holds the younger Solomon (his thinking, his activities) up to scrutiny, records his observations, and the conclusions at which the younger Solomon arrived. Eccles. 2:11
  - 3) The older judge does not necessarily comment on the veracity of the conclusions, he simply offers them for the reader to consider.
  - 4) Occasionally the older, wiser Solomon does offer his current views, which are generally found in various statements about God, or seen in the use of imperatives. Eccles. 5:1,4,7, 7:13,14, 8:12
  - 5) Therefore, it is key to recognize which Solomon is speaking when seeking to interpret a particular portion of Ecclesiastes.
  - 6) Therefore a major consideration when properly interpreting this book is to recognize that the thoughts of Qoheleth are not those of the older Solomon, but the thoughts and actions of the younger Solomon.
3. While the discussions of language, style, methodology, etc. are important in terms of interpretation, the question as to Solomon's purpose for writing has led to many divergent opinions.

<sup>95</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

<sup>96</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/lwc/ecclesiastes-1.html> accessed June 24, 2018.

## Methodology and purpose (Rick Snider)

4. Since the book is in the Canon of Scripture, we recognize that it is here for the edification of positive believers, who are generally the primary audience; specifically, the main audience was the younger generation--likely beginning with Solomon's own son. Eccles. 11:9,10, 12:1,12
  - 1) The primary purpose for writing was to encourage younger people to recognize the value of properly fearing and serving God early in their lives. Eccles. 12:1,13-14
    - (1) In that regard, this book is designed to encourage and strengthen faith in that which is of real value by exposing the insubstantial things Solomon has observed and pursued in his own lifetime.
    - (2) Solomon provides an unflinching look at the realities that govern the experience of this life; he essentially is warning younger people about the many things in life that will not provide lasting satisfaction.
    - (3) This ought to carry the utmost weight with the younger reader (indeed, with all readers) since Solomon was recognized as the wisest man of his generation; he was possibly the wisest man that ever lived.
    - (4) Further, his personal observations about the nature of things should serve as a source of encouragement when younger people encountered these difficulties, frustrations, and inequities, which Solomon describes, later in their lives.
  - 2) Since life is filled with evils (many beyond your control), a secondary purpose is found in the latter half of the book, which offers practical advice on how to minimize the vanity of life.
  - 3) He does not attempt to water down or ignore the more difficult issues of life, he wants his readers to recognize that this is the way it is under the sun. Eccles. 5:8
5. While his primary audience may have been his son and/or younger believers, his work has relevance for the wider audience of positive believers.
6. Solomon's writings must be understood against the backdrop of the fall of mankind and the effects it had on man and his world.
  - 1) Solomon acknowledges that life is filled with frustrations, inequities, and many variables that lead to a sense of vanity.
  - 2) Solomon wants his readers to understand that the world has been subjected to futility, re-sulting in certain frustrations for the human race. Rom. 8:20
  - 3) In fact, the Greek term *mataio,tj* (*mataiotes*-futility, frustration, emptiness) found in Romans is used by the translators of the LXX to translate the Hebrew term *lb,h*, (*hebhel*-vanity).
  - 4) Solomon's Bible would have consisted of only of the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Job, and anything that had been recorded by the time of David (the Psalms and possibly the books of Samuel).
  - 5) No doubt, Solomon was a student of the Old Testament, and many of his observations and conclusions seem to be rooted in the book of Genesis
    - (1) God created the world with regular and observable cycles. Gen. 1, 8:22; Eccles. 1:2-7
    - (2) Man was created from dust and will return to dust. Gen. 2:7; Eccles. 12:7
    - (3) God placed the spirit of life within man. Gen. 2:7; Eccles. 12:7
    - (4) God ordained marriage (Diving Institution #2) for the blessing of man. Gen. 2:18ff; Eccles. 9:9
    - (5) At the fall, the environment was subjected to futility, in which man was forced to necessarily share. Gen. 3:17-18; Eccles. 1:2; Rom. 8:20
    - (6) The principle of toil and futility is a direct result of the fall. Gen. 3:17-19; Eccles. 1:3, 2:11,20
    - (7) Death becomes a certainty as a result of the fall. Gen. 2:17, 3:19; Eccles. 8:8, 9:3
    - (8) The fall of mankind results in the introduction of evil via the formation of the genetic sin nature. Gen. 3:22, 6:5, 8:21; Eccles. 7:20,29, 8:11, 9:3; Rom. 5:12ff
7. Four reasons may be presented as to why Solomon presents such a dark picture of life, filled with many seeming contradictions, inequities, and finally death.
  - 1) First, Solomon was demonstrating that life apart from God has no real meaning; it only leads to dissatisfaction, emptiness, and fatigue.
  - 2) Second, Solomon acknowledges that much of life cannot be fully understood; thus, he emphasizes

## Methodology and purpose (Rick Snider)

- the need for believers to live by faith and not by sight.
- 3) Third, like Job, Solomon provides a balance with the sometimes-unqualified optimism of traditional wisdom literature; therefore, he examines a world that is unfair, beyond one's control, and not fully comprehended. Prov. 13:4 cf. Eccles. 2:22-23; Prov. 8:11 cf. Eccles. 2:15; Prov. 10:6 cf. Eccles.
  - 4) Fourth, Solomon affirms that one significant aspect of true happiness consists in the principle of contentment-taking proper enjoyment in the things that God has provided rather than striving after
    - (1) He cites his own attempts in life to provide satisfaction by pursuing anything and everything he thought to be appropriate, up to and including the highest pursuit--wisdom.
    - (2) He subtly and not so subtly points out that real blessing and satisfaction in life comes from God alone. Eccles. 2:24,26, 3:13, 5:7, 8:12,13, 12:13

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## Solomon's Purpose for Writing Ecclesiastes (various commentators)

James Burton Coffman: *Various expressions in Ecclesiastes would indicate that Solomon wrote the book only in old age (Ecclesiastes 1:12-18; Ecclesiastes 2:1-11; Ecclesiastes 11:9-10; Ecclesiastes 12:1-7). This is where the author reviews a long life and all his thoughts and deeds and where he is warning youth and points to old age.*

Coffman continues: *The underlying crucial question could be asked as follows: Which is the best way to spend life for a human being? - The answers to these questions are mostly given from human viewpoint. They therefore give the impression of the author being far away of the divine truth. Some of such false conclusions can be found in Ecclesiastes 3:19-22; Ecclesiastes 7:16-17; Ecclesiastes 8:15; Ecclesiastes 9:6; Ecclesiastes 9:10.*

Coffman continues: *Such statements might make the reader wonder how such a thing can possibly be written in the Word of God. And yet the explanation is not difficult. This human reasoning is no divine revelation (as e. g. the Epistle to the Ephesians in the NT) but it has been added to the Bible by divine inspiration. Solomon's experiences and thoughts are recorded as utterances of a man who is disappointed of life, even if man is not viewed in the book as having a living relationship of faith to God (although every man is responsible as creature towards God his Creator). This is why Ecclesiastes often has been called a book of sceptical or pessimistic character. And in fact we find no word of praising God and nothing of grace and redemption throughout the whole book. If the name of God appears the expression used is Elohim, but never the name Jehovah (over 40 times in total).<sup>97</sup>*

Arend Reamers (Sutcliffe Bible Commentary): *Verses 2 and 3 of the first chapter summarize suitably contents and purpose of the book: "Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?" The word "vanity" appears not less than 37 times in this book! It is the Hebrew word "hevel" which also is to be found in the name Adam and Eve gave to their second son Abel (Genesis 4:2) after sin had entered the world by their disobedience.*

Reamers continues: *The expression "under the sun" also appears 29 times. This expression stresses the character of the book that describes life on this earth from the viewpoint of fallen man. It has therefore rightly been called a scene of the consequences of fall of man (compare Genesis 3:17-19).*

<sup>97</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

## Solomon's Purpose for Writing Ecclesiastes (various commentators)

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Reamers concludes: *God's direct teaching of man appears only in chap. 12:11-14. These final words can be considered a suitable introduction to the book of Proverbs. Although Proverbs precedes Ecclesiastes it is a step ahead of it in spiritual matters.<sup>98</sup>*

Steven Zeisler: *Here we could ask why should such a book be included in the Bible? What good does it do? One very important thing it does is make believers sensitive to people who know nothing about God's breakthrough in Jesus Christ; those who do not know that there is resurrection after death; the hurting and broken who are living in a darkened world, convinced that this is all there is to life. I believe Ecclesiastes was written as a pre-evangelistic text, in which Qoheleth (this is the word translated "Preacher"; the professor, the one who collected information) was saying to those who do not yet know that God speaks and expresses his love, "We understand what life seems like to you. We have thought about it and entered into it."<sup>99</sup>*

Ken Cayce: *The book is applicable to all who would listen and benefit, not so much from Solomon's experiences, but from the principles he drew as a result. Its aim is to answer some of life's most challenging questions, particularly where they seem contrary to Solomon's expectations. This has led some unwisely to take the view that Ecclesiastes is a book of skepticism. But in spite of amazingly unwise behavior and thinking, Solomon never let go of his faith in God (12:13-14).*

Cayce continues: *Interpretation – Purpose: Within the history of the church there have been two basic views on the theology of the book. On the one hand, some describe the contents of the book as pessimistic, cynical, skeptical, hedonistic, or agnostic, and picture the author as a man of doubt who has wandered far from God. On the other hand, many interpret the book quite positively: the author is a man of faith, a realist, who sees that man simply cannot put the whole of life together. The latter view is favored since the author believes God is good (2:24; 3:13); believes God has a wise plan (3:11, 14; 7:14; 8:17); believes God is just (3:17; 8:11-13); and always exhorts men to fear God (8:12, 13; 12:13, 14).<sup>100</sup>*

Cayce then gives us the 6 key ideas of Ecclesiastes:

*The thought of the book centers in six key ideas. Three of these are negative and revolve around the problems of life:*

- (1) *All is vanity;*
- (2) *Man is limited;*
- (3) *God is hidden.*

<sup>98</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/jsc/ecclesiastes-0.html> accessed June 21, 2018 (slightly edited).

<sup>99</sup> From <https://www.pbc.org/files/584509089ad2b149c6f68702/4083.html> accessed June 22, 2018.

<sup>100</sup> From <http://www.bible-studys.org> accessed June 24, 2018.

## Solomon's Purpose for Writing Ecclesiastes (various commentators)

The other three are positive and give the solution to life's crises:

- (4) Fear God and keep His commandments;
- (5) Enjoy life;
- (6) Use wisdom properly.

Cayce continues: *All six ideas are scattered throughout the book, but taken together they demonstrate that the purpose of the book is to show men that they should lead godly and joyous lives, though they live in a world of divinely condoned mysteries.*

Cayce concludes: *Solomon's conclusion to "fear God and keep His commandments" (12:13-14), is more than the book's summary. It is the only hope of the good life and the only reasonable response of faith and obedience to sovereign God. He precisely works out all activities under the sun, each in its time according to His perfect plan, but also discloses only as much as His perfect wisdom dictates and holds all men accountable. Those who refuse to take God and His Word seriously are doomed to lives of the severest vanity.*<sup>101</sup>

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## God/Deity in the Book of Ecclesiastes

### God in Ecclesiastes (various commentators)

James Burton Coffman: *God's direct teaching of man appears only in chap. 12:11-14. These final words can be considered a suitable introduction to the book of Proverbs. Although Proverbs precedes Ecclesiastes it is a step ahead of it in spiritual matters.*<sup>102</sup>

James Burton Coffman: *Typically enough the name Jehovah appears not once in this book whereas the name Elohim (God) appears over 40 times. By studying the Pentateuch and the Psalms we have already seen, that the name Elohim shows God in His absoluteness and His omnipotence as Creator. On the other hand Jehovah is God's name, which shows His grace and His relationship to men and especially to his covenant-people Israel. The fact that the name Jehovah appears not at all in Ecclesiastes is a sign to show that the subject is not one man or one people in a certain relation of covenant or faith to Him. It rather shows that the subject is man in general who is responsible to His Creator-God (Ecclesiastes 11:9; Ecclesiastes 12:1).*<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> From <http://www.bible-studys.org> accessed June 24, 2018.

<sup>102</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

<sup>103</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

<sup>104</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jsc/ecclesiastes-0.html> accessed June 21, 2018.

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## Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

College Press Bible Study: *The term for God appears forty-one times in the book. He also speaks of God as Creator and the Shepherd. He uses the pronouns "He," "His," and "Him" ten times. Thus, there are fifty-three direct references to God in the book.*

The College Press Bible Study continues: *Solomon selected the term Elohim for God. Never once did he employ the term Jehovah. There is a distinction that is often made between the two names. Jehovah is the name for God which communicates the idea that God covenants with His people, entering in a more personal relationship than what may be indicated in the use of Elohim. Elohim is the term used to speak of God as He is discovered, not in a covenant pact, but through the evidence of nature.*

The College Press Bible Study continues: *[Some have] reasoned that the name Jehovah speaks of the God of divine revelation and covenant relationships, and is, therefore, excluded from Solomon's writings because it is his purpose to discover truths on his own through his own wisdom and experimentation. It is not Solomon's intention to pretend that God does not exist, or that God is not interested in His world and that which is contained in it. Quite the contrary, God's concern for man and man's need to be concerned about God is the conclusion of the whole book. It is Solomon's intention to demonstrate that man is hopelessly frustrated if all he has as his guide is the evidence of nature. Elohim is the God of providence and creation. He may be discovered in that sense by all men. God's glory is manifested through the work of His hands in both the heavens and the earth. Cf. Psalm 19:1.<sup>105</sup>*

### The Theology of Ecclesiastes (Ron Snider)

1. First, it must be emphasized that Solomon is not writing from the perspective of an unbeliever (a very common interpretation); he references God 40 times and presents God as Creator, Provider, and Judge.
  - 1) God made everything. Eccles. 11:5
  - 2) There is a time and place for everything in creation. Eccles. 3:1-11
  - 3) He makes things crooked and straight; He is the author of prosperity and adversity. Eccles. 3:1-11
  - 4) Man was created straight or upright. Eccles. 7:29
  - 5) He provides the capacity for enjoyment. Eccles. 2:24,26
  - 6) He controls the length of life. Eccles. 5:18, 8:15
  - 7) God will judge the righteous and the wicked. Eccles. 3:17, 11:9
  - 8) God tests people. Eccles. 3:18
  - 9) God and His works are beyond our full comprehension. Eccles. 3:11; Job 5:9
  - 10) Man should order his life accordingly. Eccles. 5:2,4,6,7
2. Therefore, when coupled with his concluding exhortation about fearing God and keeping His commandments, the book is one that is permeated with a real faith in God.
3. However, it should be observed that despite his faith in God, the author has recognized that wickedness, oppression, and suffering are present within God's creation. Eccles. 3:16.4:1, 5:8
4. The one clear theological certainty throughout this book permeates the thinking of the younger Solomon is that all men will die. Eccles. 2:16, 5:16, 9:5
  - 1) In that regard, men simply parallel animals in that all eventually die. Eccles. 3:19-20
  - 2) This message is particularly appropriate for the young, who often think they are immortal.
  - 3) He acknowledges that life is transient and fleeting, which is something not always recognized or

<sup>105</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1 (chapter comments).

## The Theology of Ecclesiastes (Ron Snider)

- fully appreciated by the young.
- 4) This message should serve to cause the reader to pause and evaluate his life in terms of the fact that death will bring it all to a final end.
  - 5) Therefore, all things must be evaluated in terms of their relative value in the present time, but with the recognition that all activity and achievement ends at death.
5. Although Solomon recognizes that nothing is of any permanent value because all will be lost from this world in death, he does not advocate a theology of inactivity. Eccles. 2:18-19
- 1) In that regard, his comments are very consistent with what we find in other portions of the Word of God.
  - 2) Although toil is vain in some ways, he does not encourage idleness. Eccles. 4:5, 11:4,6; Prov. 19:15; Col. 3:23
  - 3) Wisdom is superior to folly; although death limits the value of either approach, Solomon recognizes the superiority of wisdom. Eccles. 2:12-16; Prov. 1:7; Col. 1:9
  - 4) Riches do not provide satisfaction in this life unless God blesses the owner. Eccles. 4:8, 5:19, 6:2; 1Tim. 6:9,17
6. His recognition of evil and inequities are balanced by his understanding that the world is un-folding as God permits or demands, which he acknowledges is fully beyond his comprehension. Eccles. 3:11, 7:13, 8:17
7. Although he clearly understands that the world is governed by Divine providence (Eccles. 9:1), he acknowledges that man may also be taken by time and chance in an uncertain world. Eccles. 9:11-12
8. Although this book may appear to be cynical and skeptical, this view is sometimes in contrast with the Bible, and sometimes confirmed by other parts of the Bible.
- 1) In spite of the fact that the theology of Ecclesiastes may challenge some sensibilities, it does present one view of the world apart from (and sometimes in the midst of) the realities of doctrine.
  - 2) There is nothing in the book about faith, salvation, redemption, forgiveness, mercy, grace, or hope; in that regard, it is never quoted in the New Testament.
  - 3) This book must be read much like the book of Job; although it is preserved in the canon of Scripture, one must recognize the context and purpose for writing.
  - 4) Not everything Job or his friends says is wrong, but much of it does not accord with the divine perspective offered by God at the end of that book.
  - 5) Similarly, this book is composed of the introspective musings of a man that has seen and done it all; he can comment intelligently on the value of it and the measure of satisfaction it has brought.

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### Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Arend Reamers (Sutcliffe Bible Commentary): *Ecclesiastes is one of the few books of the OT, which is not once referred to in the NT, although there might be many parallel thoughts (e. g. Ecclesiastes 5:1 and Matthew 6:7; Ecclesiastes 12:14 and 2 Corinthians 5:10; Ecclesiastes 7:9 and James 1:19).*<sup>106</sup>

The Geneva Bible had trouble with Solomon's spiritual life; and then comparing it to the words that he uses throughout this book. So this is how they explained it: *Solomon as a preacher and one that desired to instruct all in the way of salvation, describes the deceivable vanities of this world: that man should not be addicted to anything under the sun, but rather inflamed with the desire of the heavenly life: therefore he confutes their opinions, which set their happiness either in knowledge or in pleasures, or in dignity and riches, wishing that man's true happiness consists in that he is united with God and will enjoy his presence: so that all other things must be rejected, save in as much as they further us to attain to this heavenly treasure, which is sure and permanent, and cannot be found in any other save in God alone.*

<sup>106</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jsc/ecclesiastes-0.html> accessed June 21, 2018.



The Geneva Bible then adds: *Solomon is here called a preacher, or one who assembles the people, because he teaches the true knowledge of God, and how men ought to pass their life in this transitory world.*

### Changes—additions and subtractions:

I began this study with quite a number of recently added charts: Titles and/or Brief Descriptions of Ecclesiastes Introduction (by Various Commentators); Brief, but insightful observations of Ecclesiastes Introduction (various commentators); Fundamental Questions About Ecclesiastes Introduction; A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes Introduction; Outlines of Ecclesiastes Introduction (Various Commentators); A Synopsis of Ecclesiastes Introduction from the Summarized Bible; and The Big Picture (Ecclesiastes –), all added to the introduction.

Many of these new charts and ideas will be eventually added to previous chapters of Ecclesiastes.

I drew from hundreds of sources for this chapter. I literally stand on the shoulders of thousands of men in order to put this document together.

## Miscellaneous Topics in the Book of Ecclesiastes

I may want to edit this down.

### The Mistakes of Solomon (Dr. Dan Hill)

Four things happened.

1. He loved God but worshipped God in the wrong way.

I Kings 3:3 Now Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David, except he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.

2. He took wives of the Caananites, a practice prohibited by God.

I Kings 11:1-4

Deuteronomy 17:15-17 You shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses, one from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman. Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the Lord has said to you, You shall never again return that way. Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself. Notice the Prohibitions.

1) Not multiply horses

2) Not go back to Egypt to multiply horses

3) Not multiply wives (is 700 wives and 300 concubines multiplication or what?)

4) Not increase in gold and silver for himself

3. He also had a fatal flaw of setting aside the work of God in order to complete his own agenda. His priorities were misplaced.

II Chronicles 3:1-2 Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. And he began to build on the second

## The Mistakes of Solomon (Dr. Dan Hill)

Also compare that he took seven years to build the Temple but took thirteen years to build his own palace.  
 I Kings 6:38 compare I Kings 7:1 compare I Kings 9:10  
 I Kings 6:38 And in the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, which is the eighth month, the house was finished throughout all its parts and according to all its plans. So he was seven years in building it.  
 I Kings 7:1 Now Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished all his house.  
 I Kings 9:10 And it came about at the end of twenty years in which Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the Lord and the king's house.  
 So he started the Temple in the 4th year of his reign and it took seven years to complete.  
 His own palace took thirteen years and both were finished in the twentieth year of his reign.  
 Hence, from year seven to year eleven (four years) he took workers away from the Temple project to build his own house. This was a distraction which slowed down the building of the Temple.

4. And then we have the fatal flaw of greed:

Solomon was the wealthiest man in the world. He did not have to get into the business of being a chariot dealer and these chariots would eventually be used against Israel.

Read 2 Chronicles 1:14-17

And Solomon amassed chariots and horsemen. He had 1,400 chariots, and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities and with the king at Jerusalem. And the king made silver and gold as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones, and he made cedars as plentiful as sycamores in the lowland. And Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and from Kue; the king's traders procured them from Kue for a price. And they imported chariots from Egypt for 600 shekels of silver apiece, and horses for 150 apiece, and by the same means they exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Aram.

Let's see some of Solomon's other forms of greed.

I Kings 9:11-14. Solomon cheated Hiram yet Hiram was gracious to Solomon.

I Kings 9:26-28. That is 16 tons of gold

I Kings 10:1-10. The gift of the Queen of Sheba was 4.5 tons of gold, just a little trinket.

I Kings 10:14. In one year alone, 25.5 tons of Gold

I Kings 10:16. Shields of gold are very impractical in battle

I Kings 10:22. He had so much gold that silver was devalued

I Kings 10:18. An ivory throne but covered the ivory with gold

I Kings 10:22. More gold, silver, ivory and apes and peacocks (nasty animals, nothing like a loyal dog).

I Kings 10:28-29. Horses and chariots from Egypt

Deuteronomy 17:15-17 You shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses, one from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman. Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the Lord has said to you, You shall never again return that way. Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself. This is what went wrong. Solomon carried with himself four fatal flaws that he would not abandon for the greater promises of the plan of God.

He did many things God's way but there was some leaven in the loaf of his service as King. And eventually this leaven brought him down.

Remember the added promise of I Kings 3, the thing that Solomon did not ask for but that God promised him?

I Kings 3:14 And if you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days.

Psalms 90:10 As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, Or if due to strength, eighty years. away. Now it doesn't take a lot of math to take Solomon's age at the beginning of his reign, age twenty, add it to a 40 year reign, and come up with 60 years, at the time of his death.

And he was promised a prolonging of days, but that did not occur did it? And the last twenty years of his reign, the major portion of the last twenty of his life are lived out in the contradictions of the book of Ecclesiastes.

From <https://www.gracenotes.info/ecclesiastes/ecclesiastes.pdf> (Introduction); accessed June 10, 2018.

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## **Ecclesiastes is a discussion between two men—or souls (The Bible Illustrator)**

The first speaker, in order that he may illustrate this to the full, takes “Solomon in all his glory” as a chief instance. “Vanity of vanities, saith the debater; all is vanity!” What are the sources that feed this pessimism? The speaker tells us—

1. His experience of life. He was king in Jerusalem, and he resolved to give life a fair trial, to see what it was good for the sons of men to do under the heavens all the days of their life.

(1) First he tried wisdom. He set himself to seek and to find the truth that lies at the heart of things—to read the riddle of the world and discover the meaning of God. He studied men and women, all sorts and conditions of men, yet he found nothing.

(2) Foiled in that direction he went to the other extreme. He said in his heart, “Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure.” A truce to thought! Shut out the mystery, forget all the problems of the world, let us eat and drink and be merry! But alas! he found that somehow he was spoilt for a life of brutal sensualism. He soon sickened of it. “This also was vanity.”

(3) Next he tried a combination of wisdom and pleasure—a scholarly, philosophic, refined voluptuousness. He called in the aid of the various arts, architecture, painting, music, horticulture. He gratified every desire, yet wisely, daintily, carefully avoiding all the vulgarities and grossness that breed loathing and disgust. Yet it was all in vain.

2. But perhaps, we say, your experience was exceptionally unhappy, No, he answers, I have looked over the whole of life and find it everywhere the same. There is, for instance, he goes on, a season, a marked fixed time for everything and to every purpose under the heavens, and he enumerates some twenty-eight of these seasons, and the activities for which they are propitious. Looked at from one point of view it is very beautiful, no doubt, but under such a fatalism, in a world where everything is arranged beforehand, what room is there for man to will or act? Fate! Fate! everywhere fate and vanity.

3. Or come again, says this terrible Debater; we may differ as to philosophy, but let us look at the facts of everyday life! In Nature I see a terrible grim order, I see forces that go on their way full of silent contempt for man and his schemes and dreams. I hear a voice that says to him, “Don’t fuss and fret, little sir! eat and drink and die—for you can do nothing else.” In the world of human nature, on the contrary, I see disorder of a very terrible kind. Here men find thorns on vines and thistles on fig-trees. As I looked I said to myself, he continues (Ecc\_3:16): God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time there—that is in the eternal world, for every purpose and for every work. But alas! is there such a place as there? Who knows? Looking then, he says, at the oppression that men endure under the sun, and seeing no hope of any comfort, seeing no prospect of deliverance anywhere, I praised the dead, they who are out of it all—after life’s fever they sleep well—more than the living; yea, better than both did I esteem him who hath not yet lived at all.

4. But surely, some one will say, this man generalizes too much. He paints with too black a brush. All are not oppressed and do not fail. There is such a thing as prosperity in the world, but this dyspeptic debater never seems to have heard of it. Yes, he has heard of it, and taken the measure of it too, and if one thing more than another serves to bring out the littleness and the vanity of his life it is, in his mind, that which men call its prosperity. Let us look, he says, at the successful man. Idleness is of course folly, but is not success also embittered by hatred and envy? Does it not separate a man from his fellows? He gains something, but does he gain anything so good as what he loses—brotherhood and love? Look again at the isolation of the man who loves money. “He hath neither son nor brother, yet there is no end to his labours, neither are his eyes satisfied with riches.” There he is alone with his money! Nothing in all the world is so precious, so essential to man as the love and confidence of another man. Success without comradeship is a poor thing—it is vanity; there is nothing in it, and the richest miser is literally miserable for want of that which he might have had for the asking—love. Look for the last time, he says, at the strange vicissitudes that befall even the highest of men. A king on the throne has many flatterers, but no friend. Plots are hatched, disaffection grows to a head, and he is deposed. His young kinsman whom he in his jealousy has kept in prison, is brought out with tumult of

## Ecclesiastes is a discussion between two men—or souls (The Bible Illustrator)

applause. All follow the new king! Yes, says this terrible pessimist, but only for a while. They will tire of him also,—“They that come after shall not rejoice in him.” He too will be deposed in favour of some other popular idol of the moment. Surely all is vanity and a striving after wind. So far the spokesman of despair.

II. But now in the fifth chapter another speaker—either without or within the man—takes up his parable and champions the cause of faith and hope. He does not, cannot indeed, solve all the difficulties, or meet all the objections that the other has propounded. Rather he gives utterance to the calm precepts of old experience; he re-affirms with conviction what the good have said in every age. Granting that life is full of mystery and has much that is sad in it, he lays emphasis on the clearness and the urgency of duty. In doing right alone each man shall find refuge from despair; he shall find God and be able to take refuge in God from all the pursuing, harassing mysteries of God’s government.

1. “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God.” It may be the temple, or it may be the little rustic synagogue, but it is ever Beth-el, the house of God. Go to it reverently, prayerfully, expectantly, dutifully.

2. Again, study to be quiet. Until God vouchsafe thee a revelation, be thou patient and obedient, for to draw nigh to hear (that is to hear His orders—to obey) is better than to offer the sacrifice.

3. Finally, be sober-minded. Try to see life steadily, and see it whole. One swallow does not make a summer, nor one dead leaf a winter; nor do acts of oppression prove that the whole of human society is rotten. No doubt bad men exist and bad things are done. It is hard to catch a rogue—especially if he be a big rogue, but everywhere there is some sort of government, an organized justice, one official above another right up to the highest, and the highest of all on earth exists for the sake of protecting the lowest. “The king is servant to the field.” No doubt it is often very imperfectly administered, nevertheless law exists on earth, and in the main justice is done; and all earthly law and earthly justice are but dim troubled reflections of an eternal heavenly law and a divine justice that rule over all things, and by which in time every oppressed one will be righted, and every oppressor receive his reward. (J. M. Gibbon)

*The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Eccles. 1:1.

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## Canonicity Questions Concerning the Book of Ecclesiastes

James Burton Coffman on Ecclesiastes in the New Testament: *Ecclesiastes is one of the few books of the OT, which is not once referred to in the NT, although there might be many parallel thoughts (e. g. Ecclesiastes 5:1 and Matthew 6:7; Ecclesiastes 12:14 and 2 Corinthians 5:10; Ecclesiastes 7:9 and James 1:19).*<sup>107</sup>

Arend Reamers (Sutcliffe Bible Commentary): *Ecclesiastes belongs to the last part in the Hebrew Bible, the "writings" (Hebr. ketubim) and further to the so-called five scrolls (Hebr. megillot), which are still read at Jewish feast days. Ecclesiastes is being read in the synagogue for the feast of tabernacles.*<sup>108</sup>

On the one hand, the content of Ecclesiastes can be quite jarring; the book itself appears to have been faithfully transcribed over the many hundreds of years.

The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible writes: *all the witnesses the scrolls, the Masoretic Text, and the Septuagint—generally exhibit a similar text, though each is dotted with minor variants. Most of the variants are small participles, late versus classical forms, minor scribal errors, look-alike words, or changes of word order. A few letters are extant at the edge of the [Dead Sea Scrolls manuscript]...do*

<sup>107</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/ecclesiastes.html> accessed June 17, 2018.

<sup>108</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/jsc/ecclesiastes-0.html> accessed June 21, 2018.

*not agree with the words in the Masoretic Text. Some minor features in Hebrew and Greek cannot be mirrored in the opposite language, but when minor differences between the Hebrew texts can be reflected in the Greek, the Septuagint usually agrees with the Masoretic Text, though sometimes it follows the scroll.*<sup>109</sup>

## Why some have rejected the canonicity of Ecclesiastes (Aaron Sturgill)

### Contradictions

#### 1. With the Torah

Num. 15:39 You must have this tassel so that you may look at it and remember all the commandments of the LORD and obey them and so that you do not follow after your own heart and your own eyes that lead you to unfaithfulness.

Eccles. 11:9 Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes, but know that God will judge your motives and actions.

#### 2. With Proverbs

Prov. 1:7 Fearing the LORD is the beginning of moral knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Eccles. 7:16 So do not be excessively righteous or excessively wise; otherwise you might be disappointed.

Eccles. 2:12-16 Next, I decided to consider wisdom, as well as foolish behavior and ideas. For what more can the king's successor do than what the king has already done? I realized that wisdom is preferable to folly, just as light is preferable to darkness: The wise man can see where he is going, but the fool walks in darkness. Yet I also realized that the same fate happens to them both. So I thought to myself, "The fate of the fool will happen even to me! Then what did I gain by becoming so excessively wise?" So I lamented to myself, "The benefits of wisdom are ultimately meaningless!" For the wise man, like the fool, will not be remembered for very long, because in the days to come, both will already have been forgotten. Alas, the wise man dies – just like the fool!

#### 3. With Itself

Eccles. 2:2 I said of partying, "It is folly," and of self-indulgent pleasure, "It accomplishes nothing!"

Eccles. 7:3 Sorrow is better than laughter, because sober reflection is good for the heart.

Eccles. 8:15 So I recommend the enjoyment of life, for there is nothing better on earth for a person to do except to eat, drink, and enjoy life. So joy will accompany him in his toil during the days of his life which God gives him on earth.

#### 4. Heresy

"The sages sought to store away the Book of Ecclesiastes, because they found words in it which tended to heresy."

Jerome states "The Jews say that . . . this book seemed to fit to be consigned to oblivion, because it asserted the creatures of God to be vain, and preferred eating, drinking, and transitory pleasures to all things . . ."

Even though these concerns were held by many Jewish Rabbis, the book was still accepted as canonical, primarily due to the truth stated in the beginning and end of the book.

From [Bible.org](http://Bible.org), accessed June 23, 2018 (slightly edited).

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<sup>109</sup> *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*; translation and commentary by Martin Abegg Jr., Peter Flint and Eugene Ulrich; Harper SF, ©1999, pp. 619–620.

Quite frankly, this is a subject rarely contemplated by the average believer.

### Reasons why many others believe Ecclesiastes to be canonical (Aaron Sturgill)

1. The overwhelming majority of Jewish history acknowledges the canonicity of Ecclesiastes.
2. It seems to be only a recent phenomenon to reject the canonicity of Ecclesiastes. While it is true that some Jewish authorities desired to reject it due to its seeming contradictions, those authorities were outweighed by the many who acknowledged its canonicity.
3. By the first century AD, Josephus implies (“contains hymns to God”) that Ecclesiastes is part of the inspired canon.
4. Fragments of Ecclesiastes were found at Qumran.
5. Many of the early church fathers call it canonical (Melito of Sardis, Epiphanius, Origen, Jerome)
6. Accepting Solomonic authorship allows one to easily accept canonicity due to the many other accepted canonical writings of Solomon (Proverbs, Song of Solomon).
7. Its continued preservation seems to strongly support its canonicity.

From [Bible.org](http://Bible.org), accessed June 23, 2018.

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### Is Ecclesiastes inspired? (Paraphrased from Geisler and Howe)

The point is made that Ecclesiastes is not quote in the New Testament; and therefore, should we not question whether or not it is properly considered a part of the Word of God? Furthermore, as has been noted throughout, the point of view of Ecclesiastes is quite different than what we find in the rest of the Bible—so is that not a good reason to dismiss this book from the canon as well?

First of all, there are no citations from the books of Ruth, Chronicles, Esther, or the Song of Songs; and yet those books are understood to be inspired, the Divine Author being God the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, there are parallel concepts to be found in Ecclesiastes and in the New Testament

Concept	Ecclesiastes	New Testament
We reap what we sow	Eccles. 1:11	Gal. 6:7
Avoid the lusts of youth	Eccles. 11:10	2Tim. 2:22
Death is a divinely appointed event	Eccles. 3:2	Heb. 9:2
Love of money is evil	Eccles. 5:10	1Tim. 6:10
Don't be overly wordy in your prayers	Eccles. 5:2	Matt. 6:7

How often a book is quoted is no indication or measurement of its inspiration

Paraphrased from *When Critics Ask*; Geisler and Howe, ©1992, Victor Books, p. 253.

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## How could such a skeptical book as Ecclesiastes be canonical? (Archer)

It is often alleged that Qohelet (“the Preacher,” the Hebrew term rendered by the Septuagint as Ekklesiastes) represents a cynical departure from normative Hebrew faith. Solomon, the Preacher, expresses an agnostic attitude about what happens to a man after he dies: “For who knows what is good for a man during his lifetime, during the few days of his futile life? He will spend them like a shadow. For who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun?” (6:12, NASB). Or again, “I have seen everything during my lifetime of futility; there is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness. Do not be excessively righteous, and do not be overly wise. Why should you ruin yourself?” (7:15-16, NASB).

Extreme pessimism in the face of death seems to be conveyed by 9:4-5: “For whoever is joined with the living, there is hope; surely a live dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten” (NASB). Taken in isolation, these above passages do indeed sound skeptical about the spiritual dimension of human life and the worthwhileness of earnest endeavor. There are some statements that sound almost hedonistic, such as “For what does a man get in all his labor? . . . Because all his days his task is painful and grievous. . . . There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good” (2:22-24, NASB).

But this work is a masterpiece of philosophical insight that must be taken together as an organic whole, rather than its being taken out of context. Only then can its real contribution to the whole counsel of God set forth in Scripture be properly and intelligently evaluated.

A careful synthetic study of Ecclesiastes brings out the true purpose and theme of its author. After he has tried every other avenue to the highest value in human life, Solomon gives his personal testimony as to the emptiness and disgust that resulted from his tasting to the full all that the world could offer him in the way of satisfaction and pleasure. It all turned out to be futile and unworthy, completely lacking in ultimate satisfaction. “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity” (1:2).

The announced purpose of his search for the summum bonum was to try out every type of pleasure or practical achievement possible (2:2-8), even including the achievement of top distinction in philosophy and knowledge (v.9). “All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my [temporary and evanescent] reward for all my labor. Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun” (vv. 10-11, NASB). In other words, it is as if this wise, wealthy, and powerful king had undertaken a trial of Jesus’ later challenge: “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” (Matt. 16:26). And so he set about gaining the whole world and the full enjoyment of all the pleasures and satisfactions that this life could give him, and he found that in the long run they added up to zero.

The key term throughout this book is *tahat hassemes* (“under the sun”). The whole perspective is of this world. The natural man who has never taken God seriously falls into the delusion that “this world is all there is.” Well then, replies the Preacher, if this world is all there is, let us find out by experience whether there is anything ultimately worthwhile in this world — anything that yields real satisfaction. The result of his extensive experiment, carried on under the most favorable conditions possible, was that nothing but meaninglessness and profound disappointment await the secularistic materialist. All his ambitions, though fully achieved, all his lusts, though fully indulged, lead only to revulsion and nausea. For him life is “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.”

## How could such a skeptical book as Ecclesiastes be canonical? (Archer)

The message that comes through loud and clear in Ecclesiastes is that true meaning in life is found only in a relationship with God. Unless there is in man's heart a sincere regard for the will of God and an earnest desire to carry out His purposes, man's life will end up a meaningless tragedy. "Although a sinner does evil a hundred times and may lengthen his life, still I know that it will be well for those who fear God, who fear Him openly" (8:12, NASB). This life takes on real meaning only as an arena of opportunity for man to serve God before he steps out into eternity. It is true that death overtakes the wise man and the fool alike, and all living creatures end up in the grave. After we are dead and confined in Sheol (or Hades), we have no more knowledge of what goes on in the world; there is no longer any opportunity for earning rewards (9:5), and our memory may be forgotten by future generations on earth.

But the only conclusion to draw before we pass off this earthly scene is the need of coming to terms with God and His will for our lives. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (12:13). "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come" (12:1). "Remember Him before the silver cord is broken and ... the pitcher by the well is shattered ... then the dust [of your body] will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit [or 'breath'] will return to the God that gave it" (vv.6-7). Otherwise, "all is vanity" (v.8), for "God will bring every act to judgment, everything that is hidden, whether it is good or evil" (v. 14; cf. Matt. 10:26; Rom. 2:16).

*The Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*; Gleason L. Archer; Zondervan Publishing House; ©1982; pp. 254–255.

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## Concluding remarks on the Book of Ecclesiastes

Not everything in the book of Ecclesiastes is human viewpoint thinking.

### Solomon does provide hope for the searcher (paraphrased from John Griffith)

Solomon does eventually get back on track. His thinking and his search for human viewpoint truth has him mostly veering off into cosmic system thinking. However, Solomon does catch himself, from time to time, and provide true and accurate guidance.

1. At least 6 times, Solomon speaks of fearing God (Eccles. 3:14 5:7 8:12,13 12:13).
2. Good things come from the hand of God (Eccles. 2:24 3:13 5:18, 20 7:9 9:1, 7).
3. God will judge the righteous and the wicked (Eccles. 3:17 9:1 11:9 12:14).
4. God reviews the quality of every man's life (Eccles. 2:24 3:10, 15, 18).
5. Life is better for the man who pleases God (Eccles. 2:26 7:26 9:1).
6. God is in the heart of man (Eccles. 3:11).
7. God gives things in life to make man's life worthwhile (Eccles. 3:13 5:18, 19, 20 8:15 9:7).
8. We are to be circumspect in all things related to God (Eccles. 5:1, 2, 4, 6).
9. We cannot change or improve upon the work of God (Eccles. 7:13).
10. God cannot be found out by a human viewpoint search (Eccles. 8:16–17 11:5).

Paraphrased from John Griffith, taken from [http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes\\_02.html](http://www.ironrangebible.com/griffith/Ecclesiastes/Ecclesiastes_02.html) accessed June 14, 2018 (appended).

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## Conclusions in the Book of Ecclesiastes (commentators/discussion)

The NIV Study Bible: *Faith teaches him [the author] that God has ordered all things according to his own purposes (3:1–15) 5:19 6:1–2 9:1) and that man’s role is to accept these, including his own limitations, as God’s appointments. Man, therefore, should be patient and enjoy life as God gives it. He should know his own limitations and not vex himself with unrealistic expectations. He should be prudent in everything, living carefully before God and the king and, above all, fearing God and keeping His commandments (12:13).*<sup>110</sup>

The NIV Study Bible goes on to say: *Life not centered on God is purposeless and meaningless. Without Him, nothing else can satisfy (2:25). With Him, all of life and his other good gifts are to be gratefully received (see James 1:17) and used and enjoyed to the full (2:26 11:8). The book contains the philosophical and theological reflections of an old man (12:1–7), most of whose life was meaningless because he had not himself relied on God.*<sup>111</sup>

Let me suggest that *most* of Solomon’s life was not meaningless; but that he did spend a great deal of his life—perhaps as much as 20 years—out of fellowship and out of the plan of God. He clearly started off on the right foot, under David’s guidance; and he asked God for the right thing—knowledge. Furthermore, he build the Temple and gave its first message, which was outstanding (1Kings 9). However, in this period of time, he also revealed some chinks in his armor; and there was a point at which, Solomon experienced a serious bout with reversionism.

The College Press Bible Study: *Any pathway taken to unlock the mystery of the book of Ecclesiastes has at least one inescapable criterion: it must lead to Solomon’s stated conclusion.*<sup>112</sup>

The conclusion is drawn by Solomon himself: Eccles. 12:12–14 *My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh. The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. So, even though Solomon took a rather circuitous approach to get there, this is where he ended up.*

The College Press Bible Study: *Solomon arrives at an exciting, positive conclusion. His thorough examination of all things, and his extensive experimentations with greatness, work, and pleasure, led him to the frustration of dead-end streets and blind alleys. His conclusion in reality is a fresh, new beginning. The entanglements of the world of vanity are behind him and a clear new horizon looms before him. He draws his reader to the inescapable doorway to the new life. A burst of heavenly sunlight drives all the meaningless experiments and observations of the past deeper into the ever darkening shadows of the outer periphery of little concern. His grip now is on his new found truth. He clings to it and to it alone. He has finally managed his priority list in such a way that life becomes worth living and filled with purpose and enjoyment. He has managed to bring into focus, in the center of his existence, the central truth alone worth knowing, and most importantly worth believing. He declares this single truth with a note of triumph: “Fear God and keep His commandments” (Eccles. 12:13).*<sup>113</sup>

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Hill is probably using the NASB translation.

## The Correct Conclusions of Ecclesiastes (Dr. Dan Hill)

[A secular existence is not all there is.] Solomon also explores the track of divine or spiritual wisdom and in that

<sup>110</sup> *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 984.

<sup>111</sup> *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 984.

<sup>112</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:1.

<sup>113</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Eccles. 1:1.

## The Correct Conclusions of Ecclesiastes (Dr. Dan Hill)

he declares that life has meaning, it is worth living, and can be lived with Joy. In his faith filled perspective, Solomon is going to see life in light of five attributes of God.

1. God is the creator and there is meaning to His creative power.

Ecc. 11:5 *Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things.*

God creates, we cannot change it, but we can enjoy it.

2. God is the Sovereign: He is in charge, not us. He is the one who determines what we shall both endure and enjoy. And His determination is perfect.

Ecc. 2:26 *For to a person who is good in His sight He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This too is vanity and striving after wind.*

God is in charge and so He can also protect those who love Him.

Ecc. 9:1 *For I have taken all this to my heart and explain it that righteous men, wise men, and their deeds are in the hand of God.*

3. God is Wisdom: He is unsearchable by man.

Ecc. 3:11 *He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.*

The wisest person in the world (and that was Solomon) will not be able to understand the works and wisdom of God.

Ecc. 8:17 *I saw every work of God, I concluded that man cannot discover the work which has been done under the sun. Even though man should seek laboriously, he will not discover; and though the wise man should say, I know, he cannot discover.*

4. God is the righteous One: And his righteousness means that He will judge the wicked.

Ecc. 3:17 *I said to myself, God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man, for a time for every matter and for every deed is there.*

We are to live knowing that there is an absolute standard of righteousness and that standard is God himself. If we want to be righteous we must be rightly related to Him.

Ecc. 9:1 *For I have taken all this to my heart and explain it that righteous men, wise men, and their deeds are in the hand of God.*

5. And God is Love: And because He is perfect love he can be perfectly trusted.

Solomon explains the love of God like no one else in the Bible. He looks at life, its suffering, its hardships, its evil, its death, all the things we see in life that would make us think God is not a God of love but then he makes the point. That in spite of what we see we have a more sure promise, a more sure fact, and that is that God loves us, that is just the kind of God He is. And His love is greater than all the hate and hurt we face in the world.

## The Correct Conclusions of Ecclesiastes (Dr. Dan Hill)

The conclusion is these two tracks of wisdom is a question: How do you want to live? Do you want to live separated from God and His power, might, wisdom, and love and in doing so live at the hands of death, evil, and chance? Or do you want to live in God's plan.

Eccl. 12:13-14 The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this {applies to} every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

That is where this book will bring us but not before it pulls out from under us all the props we might use to seek security and significance in the world and through secular wisdom.

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[Exegetical Studies in Ecclesiastes](#)

## A Set of Summary Doctrines and Commentary

When I study a chapter of the Bible, one of the questions which I nearly always have is, *why is this chapter in the Word of God?*

### Why Ecclesiastes is in the Word of God

- 1.
- 2.

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When studying a chapter in the Bible, there are a number of topics which that study leads to.

### What We Learn from Ecclesiastes

- 1.

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Many chapters of the Bible look forward to Jesus Christ in some way or another. A person or situation might foreshadow the Lord or His work on the cross (or His reign over Israel in the Millennium). The chapter may contain a prophecy about the Lord or it may, in some way, lead us toward the Lord (for instance, by means of genealogy).

### Jesus Christ in Ecclesiastes

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Carroll summarizes portions of the Kings narrative very much like Edersheim does.

### Arno Gaebelein Summarizes Ecclesiastes

From *An Interpretation of the English Bible*, by Dr. B.H. Carroll; from e-sword; Ecclesiastes 25:19-28:9. Updated.

Recheck this reference; consider removing this doctrine.

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Alfred Edersheim wrote a book called *The Bible History, Old Testament*, which is very similar to Josephus, where he simply rewrites much of what is in the Bible, and adds in notes and comments as he deems to be relevant. This volume of the book is entitled *The World Before the Flood, and The History of the Patriarchs*.

Edersheim's commentary on this chapter, with some slight updating and editing.

### Edersheim Summarizes Ecclesiastes Introduction

From <http://www.biblestudytools.com/history/edersheim-old-testament/volume-5/> accessed . Footnotes were interspersed in the text and bracketed.

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### A Complete Translation of Ecclesiastes Introduction

#### A Reasonably Literal Translation

#### A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase

A Complete Translation of Ecclesiastes Introduction	
A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase
<a href="#">Chapter Outline</a>	<a href="#">Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines</a>

The following Psalms would be appropriately studied at this time:

R. B. Thieme, Jr. covered this chapter in lessons # of his **series**.

### Word Cloud from Ecclesiastes (NASB)



### Word Cloud from Exegesis of Ecclesiastes Introduction<sup>114</sup>

These two graphics should be very similar; this means that the exegesis of Ecclesiastes Introduction has stayed on topic and has covered the information found in this chapter of the Word of God.

<a href="#">Chapter Outline</a>	<a href="#">Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines</a>	
<a href="#">Beginning of Document</a>	<a href="#">Verse Navigation</a>	<a href="#">Introduction and Text</a>
<a href="#">First Verse</a>	<a href="#">Chapter Summary</a>	<a href="#">Addendum</a>
<a href="http://www.kukis.org">www.kukis.org</a>	<a href="#">Exegetical Studies in Ecclesiastes</a>	

<sup>114</sup> Some words have been left out of this graphic; including *Strong*, *BDB*, and *pronounced*.