

Welcome to

Journey through the Bible



Book by book
Bible study

Ecclesiastes



God's light on life
"under the sun"

What is Ecclesiastes?

? Is it a despairing and very human look at life with all its futility apart from God?
(a negative interpretation)

Or

? Is it the well reasoned search for the meaning of life that arrives at a worthy answer? (a positive interpretation)

A negative view of the message

Five major conclusions:

1. Death cancels everything
2. Wisdom cannot achieve its goal
3. God is unknowable
4. The world is crooked
5. Pleasure commends itself

James L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom*, p. 129

Looking at life “without” God

Life is a never ending walk on a treadmill,
“there is nothing new under the sun”

Immersing yourself in study, pleasure,
great projects, and pursuit of wealth, in
themselves proves to be meaningless

It appears the best you can do is eat,
drink and find satisfaction in work.

But, if life seems empty and monotonous,
God is the answer, He gives life meaning!

Message, a positive view

Ecclesiastes is the best news around for
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 joyously
eating, drinking and earning a paycheck.

Walter C. Kaiser, *Ecclesiastes: Total Life*, p. 8

Futility of life or Fulfillment in life?

- | | |
|---|---|
| ★ Despair | ★ Hope |
| ★ Death | ★ Life |
| ★ Doubt | ★ Faith |
| ★ Man’s view of life | ★ God’s view of life |
| ★ What life is | ★ What life should be |
| ★ Life without God | ★ Life with God |
| ★ Vanity of vanities,
all is vanity- futile
Tremper Longman III | ★ Find satisfaction,
this is the gift of God
Walter C. Kaiser |

The search for the meaning of life

Ecclesiastes is a book about hope, not despair;
about life, not death; about faith, not doubt. The
conclusion of the book should be read first!

“I applied my mind to study and to explore by
wisdom all that is done under the sun.” (1:12)

“Not only was the teacher wise, but he also
imparted knowledge to the people. ... He
searched to find just the right words, and what
he wrote was upright and true.” (12:10-11)

There is a “God shaped” vacuum in life

He has made everything beautiful in its time.
 He has also set eternity in the human heart;
 yet no one can fathom what God has done
 from beginning to end. (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

Ecclesiastes unravels the mystery of life

You feel eternity tugging at your heart 3:11a
 Your heart cries out for something more 3:11b
 The meaning of life seems elusive 3:11c

Structure of Ecclesiastes

- ☆ Life is a gift from God, Enjoy it! 1-2
- ☆ Life is Planned by God, Understand it! 3-5
- ☆ Life is Governed by God, Evaluate it! 6-8
- ☆ Life is Judged by God, Invest it! 9-12

ECCLESIASTES: God's Light on Life Under the Sun

Key Words: Chasing after wind, Under the sun, Meaningless, God, man, Wise, fool, Wisdom, Work.

Key verse: 12:13, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man"

Life under the sun is:

Given by God

Planned by God

Governed by God

Judged by God

1:1-11 1:12 3:1 4:1 8:16 12:8 12:9-14

Introduction	Experimentation	Investigation	Evaluation	Obligation	Conclusion
Enjoy it!	Understand it!	Evaluate it!	Invest it!		
Everything is meaningless!	Experimentation	Investigation	Evaluation	Obligation	Solomon 970-930 BC.
There is nothing new under the sun. Study, pleasure, great projects, wealth, all of it is meaningless. Eat, drink and enjoy the labor of God. This too is the gift of God.	There is a time for everything. He set eternity in the hearts of men. Everything God does endures forever. As for man, God tests them. God is in heaven and you are on earth so let your words be few. To accept the lot that is yours is to accept the gift of God.	Consider what God has done. God makes good times and bad. God made wisdom and insight, but men have gone in search of many schemes. It will go better with God-fearing men, who are steadfast before God.	So I commend the enjoyment of life. You cannot understand the work of God the Maker of all things. Remember your Creator in the days of your youth. God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing. This is the whole duty of man.	Fear God and keep his commandments!	

Life is a gift from God, enjoy it! 1-2

The Problem: 1:1-3
 Life appears to be empty & profitless

The Observation: 1:4-11
 Life's ceaseless rounds reinforce the sense of emptiness in life

The Experiment: 1:12-2:23
 Exploring answers to the emptiness of life still leaves one feeling empty

The conclusion:

God gives meaning and joy in life

A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without Him, who can eat or find enjoyment? To the person who pleases Him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner He gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. (2:24-26, NIV)

Life is planned by God, understand it! 3-5

Life does have a plan: embrace it!
3:1-15

Life's injustices do not overrule God's plan!
3:16-4:16

Always grasping for more is futile
5:1-17

God gives satisfaction to life's labors!
5:18-20

Life does have a plan: Embrace it!

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven:

- a time to be born and a time to die,
- a time to plant and a time to uproot, ...
- a time to love and a time to hate,
- a time for war and a time for peace.

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. (3:1-11)

God's plan: that all will revere Him!

I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that people will fear him. Whatever is has already been, and what will be has been done before; and God will call the past to account. (3:12-15)

**God is the answer to our search,
He gives life meaning, brings joy!**

- ★ You feel eternity tugging at your heart- 3:11a
- ★ Your heart cries out for something more- 3:11b
- ★ But, the answer to life seems elusive- 3:11c
- ★ Life is God's gift to man, to be enjoyed- 3:12-13
- ★ God's plan is perfect, it endures forever- 3:14a
- ★ Life's realities should lead us to God- 3:14b

Injustices do not overrule God's plan!

I saw something else under the sun:
In the place of judgment— wickedness,
in the place of justice—wickedness.
I thought in my heart,
God will bring into judgment
both the righteous and the wicked,
for there will be a time for every activity,
a time to judge every deed.
As for men, God tests them so that they
may see that they are like animals. (3:16-19)

Life may appear to be in chaos,

I saw all the oppression ... under the sun:
I saw the tears of the oppressed—
and they have no comforter;
and I declared that the dead, ...
who had already died,
are happier than the living,
who are still alive.
But better than both
is the one who has never been born
who has not seen the evil
that is done under the sun (4:1-3)

But, we must stand in awe of God!

Much dreaming, many words are meaningless.
Therefore stand in awe of God. ...
Whoever loves money never has enough,
whoever loves wealth is never satisfied
This too is meaningless.
The sleep of a laborer is sweet,
whether he eats little or much,
but the abundance of a rich man
permits him no sleep. (5:7-12)

God gives meaning and joy in life

Then I realized that it is good and appropriate for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given them—for this is their lot. Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God. They seldom reflect on the days of their life, because God keeps them occupied with gladness of heart. 5:18-20

Life is governed by God, live it wisely! 6-8

Learn to profit from both adversity and prosperity. 6:1-7:14

Neither wisdom nor righteousness give life-time guarantees. 7:15-29

Let wisdom teach you how to behave among men. 8:1-11

Life is better for those that fear God. 8:12-15

Life doesn't always "play fair"

I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on mankind: God gives some people wealth, possessions and honor, so that they lack nothing their hearts desire, but God does not give them the ability to enjoy them; and strangers enjoy them instead. This is meaningless, a grievous evil. ...

Do not all go to the same place? ...

Who knows what is good for a man in life, during the few and meaningless days he passes through like a shadow. (6:1-12)

Profit from both adversity and prosperity!

It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting ...

for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart. ...

It is better to heed a wise man's rebuke than to listen to the song of fools ...

When times are good, be happy, when times are bad, consider:

God has made one as well as the other.

(7:1-14)

Life goes better for those that fear God

“Although a wicked person who commits a hundred crimes may live a long time, I know that it will go better with those who fear God, who are reverent before him. ...

So I commend the enjoyment of life, because there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany them in their toil all the days of the life God has given them under the sun.” (8:12-15)

Life is judged by God, invest it! 9-12

Don't let the uncertainty of life rob you of its joy! 8:16-9:10

Don't let uncertainty keep you from working wisely! 9:11-11:6

Don't let the excitement of being young make you forget your Creator! 11:7-12:14

God holds everyone accountable, so obey His commandments! 12:13-14

Life is in God's hands, live it wisely & well

“So I reflected on all this and concluded that the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God's hands, but no one knows whether love or hate awaits them.

Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for it is now that God favors what you do. ... Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. ... no man knows when his hour will come; (Ecclesiastes 9:1-12)

Enjoy life while you are young, but know that you are accountable God!

“Light is sweet, and it pleases the eyes to see the sun, However many years anyone may live, let him enjoy them all.

You who are young, be happy while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. ...

But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. (11:7-9)

**Don't let the excitement of being young,
make you forget God, your Creator!**

Remember your Creator
in the days of your youth,
before the days of trouble come
and the years approach when you say,
"I find no pleasure in them—" (12:1)

**The conclusion: Live wisely,
God holds all accountable!**

Now all has been heard;
here is the conclusion of the matter:
Fear God and keep his commandments,
for this is the duty of all mankind.
For God will bring every deed into judgment,
including every hidden thing,
whether it is good or evil. (12:13-14)

The message of Ecclesiastes:

"It is a summary of the beginning, middle and end of life as we know it on this earth: coming to know and trust the living God; receiving the gifts of life's goods, learning how to enjoy those mundane gifts; understanding the major part of the plan of God; and being guided into joyous and strenuous activity in the art of living, even while portions of life remain enigmatic. What a book! What a good God! What a life! and What a plan!"

Walter C. Kaiser, *Ecclesiastes: Total Life*, p. 125

See you next week!

**Song of Solomon
True love triumphs!**


