

## Ecclesiastes

### *Introduction*

The Name of the Book	Ecclesiastes is a translation of the Hebrew word “koheleth” meaning “one who leads an assembly” or simply <u>a preacher</u> . The question is: who is the preacher?
The Identity of the Preacher	The phrase “Son of David” presumably refers to Solomon. He also says: “I, the preacher, was king over Jerusalem,” meaning Solomon. What’s interesting is that Solomon wasn’t a preacher.
Purpose of the Book	The book asks a question: how do we live well/righteously/justly when life itself is uncontrollable? Any attempt to try and control our lives is pointless. But life itself <u>isn’t</u> pointless.
The Unsettling Aspect of the Book	The preacher examines every aspect of life and comes away with a cynical and unsettling view: life seems meaningless/uncontrollable.
The Settling Conclusion	If life seems meaningless/uncontrollable, the only conclusion for the preacher is to fear God and keep his commandments. Life may appear meaningless/uncontrollable to you, but it’s not to God.

### *Outline of the Book*

Introduction 1:1-11	Vanity of vanities. All is Vanity.
Investigation and Discovery 1:12-6:12	So I set my mind to seek and explore
Conclusions to Investigation and Discovery 7:1-11:6	The same eventual outcome happens to the righteous and the wicked
Admonition 11:7-12:8	So remember your Creator. That’s the only way to make sense of life.
Conclusion/The End of the Search 12:9-14	The only wise things to do are (1) fear God and (2) obey Him. Because someday we will face Him.

### *Introduction (1:1-11)*

Main Idea	The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem: <sup>2</sup> “Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Utterly meaningless. Everything is meaningless.” <sup>3</sup> What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun?
Main Observation	<sup>4</sup> Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. <sup>5</sup> The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. <sup>6</sup> The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. <sup>7</sup> All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again. <sup>8</sup> All things are wearisome, more than one can say. The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing. <sup>9</sup> What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. <sup>10</sup> Is there anything of which one can say, “Look! This is something new”? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time. <sup>11</sup> No one remembers the former generations, and even those yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow them.
Main Help	Imagine Solomon as older and getting on in years. What he has observed has made him cynical about how life seems to operate. It would be a mistake to confuse the outlook with pessimism though in light of the conclusion of the book.

### *Investigation and Discovery (1:12-6:12)*

<sup>12</sup> I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> I applied my mind to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under the heavens. What a heavy burden God has laid on mankind! <sup>14</sup> I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.	
What He Discovered About Wisdom	For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief (1:18).

What He Discovered About Pleasures	<sup>10</sup> I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil. <sup>11</sup> Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun (10-11)
What He Discovered About the Wise Man and the Fool	<sup>13</sup> I saw that wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness. <sup>4</sup> The wise have eyes in their heads, while the fool walks in the darkness; but I came to realize that the same fate overtakes them both. <sup>15</sup> Then I said to myself, “The fate of the fool will overtake me also. What then do I gain by being wise?” I said to myself, “This too is meaningless.” (2:13-15)
What He Discovered About Toil	<sup>20</sup> So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. <sup>21</sup> For a person may labor with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then they must leave all they own to another who has not toiled for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. <sup>22</sup> What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun? <sup>23</sup> All their days their work is grief and pain; even at night their minds do not rest. This too is meaningless.” (2:20-23)
What He Discovered About Injustice	Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun: I saw the tears of the oppressed—and they have no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors—and they have no comforter. (4:1)
What He Discovered About Envy	<sup>4</sup> And I saw that all toil and all achievement spring from one person’s envy of another. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind (4:4)
What He Discovered About Riches	I have seen another evil under the sun, and it weighs heavily on mankind: <sup>2</sup> God gives some people wealth, possessions and honor, so that they lack nothing their hearts desire, but God does not grant them the ability to enjoy them, and strangers enjoy them instead. This is meaningless, a grievous evil (6:1-2)

***Conclusions to the Investigation and Discovery (7:1-11:6)***

Main Observation	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. <sup>2</sup> All share a common destiny—the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, <sup>[a]</sup> the clean and the unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not. (9:1-2)
So What	If life is a toil and the same destiny overtakes all, what’s the purpose of living? The answer follows in the next sections: It’s God.

***Admonition (11:7-12:8)***

Main Observation	<sup>9</sup> You who are young, be happy while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment (11:9).
What He Means	The best course for life in terms of finding meaning is to follow God and start young.

***Conclusion (12:9-14)***

What the End of the Search Has Yielded	<sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.
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