

Introduction

A. Introduction

1. Title
 - a. Hebrew: "Qohelet" – Hebrew, "to convene an assembly, a preacher"
 - b. LXX: "Ecclesiastes" – also derived from the idea of one who convenes an assembly
2. Date: 970-931 B.C. – most likely towards the end of Solomon's life; Solomon is the author; "son of David, king in Jerusalem" (1:1); who wrote proverbs (12:9)

B. Author

- Ecclesiastes 1:1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.
- Solomon (he's a king and son of David; he wrote many proverbs cf. 12:9; the extravagance mentioned in Ecclesiastes matches Solomon's)

1 Kings 3:4-5, 12-14; 1 Kings 10:23-24.

1 Kings 3:4-11 The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place; Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. ⁵ In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night; and God said, "Ask what *you wish* me to give you." ⁶ Then Solomon said, "You have shown great lovingkindness to Your servant David my father, according as he walked before You in truth and righteousness and uprightness of heart toward You; and You have reserved for him this great lovingkindness, that You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as *it is* this day." ⁷ "Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king in place of my father David, yet I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸ "Your servant is in the midst of Your people which You have chosen, a great people who are too many to be numbered or counted. ⁹ "So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" ¹⁰ It was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing. ¹¹ God said to him, "Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice, ¹² behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you. ¹³ "I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days. ¹⁴ "If you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days."

1 Kings 10:23-24 So King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. ²⁴ All the earth was seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart.

Then, Eccles 1:16 says, "... I have magnified and increased wisdom more than all who were over Jerusalem before me; and my mind has observed a wealth of wisdom and knowledge."

1 Kings 11:9-10 Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,¹⁰ and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD had commanded.

C. Genre

Keith Essex: "Proverbs is for teenagers, Ecclesiastes is for college students and Song of Solomon is for the married."

D. Major Themes

1. "Vanity" (38x -1:2, 14; 2:1, 11, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 26; 3:19; 4:4, 7, 8, 16; 5:7, 10; 6:2, 4, 9, 11, 12; 7:6, 15; 8:10, 14; 9:9; 11:8, 10; 12:8)

Ecc 1:2 "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "all is vanity!"

2. Man's Inability to Control Many Things in Life

Ecclesiastes 8:14 There is futility which is done on the earth, that is, there are righteous men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked. On the other hand, there are evil men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I say that this too is futility.

Ecclesiastes 9:11-12 I again saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift and the battle is not to the warriors, and neither is bread to the wise nor wealth to the discerning nor favor to men of ability; for time and chance overtake them all. 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.

3. "Under the Sun" (29x – 1:3, 9, 14; 2:11, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22; 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)

Ecclesiastes 1:9 That which has been is that which will be, And that which has been done is that which will be done. So there is nothing new under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 1:14 I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind.

Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind.

Ecclesiastes 4:2-3 So I congratulated the dead who are already dead more than the living who are still living. ³ But better *off* than both of them is the

one who has never existed, who has never seen the evil activity that is done under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 8:17 and 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.

Ecclesiastes 9:9 Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun.

4. Death & the Brevity of Life (2:14, 16, 18; 3:2, 19-20; 4:2; 5:15; 6:6, 12; 7:1; 8:8; 9:2-5, 10; 11:7-8; 12:7)

8:8 no man has authority to restrain the wind [except Christ], or authority over the day of his death

Ecclesiastes 12:5-7 Furthermore, men are afraid of a high place and of terrors on the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags himself along, and the caperberry is ineffective. For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street. 6 Remember Him before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed; 7 then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

5. Labor, Toil, Work (34x – 1:3; 2:17, 19, 21, 23, 26; 3:9; 4:7-8; 8:16)

Ecclesiastes 2:17 So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind.

Ecclesiastes 2:24–25 There is nothing better for a man *than* to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God. ²⁵ For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him

6. Fear God (3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12-13; 12:13)

7:2 It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, because that is the end of every man, and the living takes *it* to heart.

7:10 Do not say, “Why is it that the former days were better than these?” For it is not from wisdom that you ask about this.

7:14 In the day of prosperity be happy, but in the day of adversity consider — God has made the one as well as the other so that man will not discover anything *that will be* after him.

7:20 there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins

10:10 If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen *its* edge, then he must exert more strength. Wisdom has the advantage of giving success.

10:20 Furthermore, in your bedchamber do not curse a king, and in your sleeping rooms do not curse a rich man, for a bird of the heavens will carry the sound and the winged creature will make the matter known.

12:11 The words of wise men are like goads, and masters of these collections are like well-driven nails; they are given by one Shepherd

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

7. Enjoy Life (2:24-26; 3:12-13, 22; 5:18-20; 8:15; 9:7-9; 11:8-9)

- There is a grace in Ecclesiastes:

Ecclesiastes 2:24–25 There is nothing better for a man *than* to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God. ²⁵ For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?

Ecclesiastes 5:18–20 Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun *during* the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward. ¹⁹ Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God. ²⁰ For he will not often consider the years of his life, because God keeps him occupied with the gladness of his heart.

Ecclesiastes 9:7–9 Go *then*, eat your bread in happiness and drink your wine with a cheerful heart; for God has already approved your works. ⁸ Let your clothes be white all the time, and let not oil be lacking on your head. ⁹ Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 11:7 The light is pleasant, and *it is* good for the eyes to see the sun.

Ecclesiastes 11:9–10 Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things. ¹⁰ So, remove grief and anger from your heart and put away pain from your body, because childhood and the prime of life are fleeting.

8. Heart (1:13, 16, 17; 2:1, 3, 10, 15, 20, 22, 23; 3:11, 17, 18; 5:2, 20; 7:2, 3, 4, 7, 21, 22, 25, 26; 8:5, 9, 11, 16; 9:1, 3, 7; 10:2, 3; 11:9, 10)
9. Sons of Man (Men) (1:13; 2:3, 8; 3:10, 18, 19, 21; 8:11; 9:3, 12); Man, Men (1:3, 13; 2:3, 8, 12, 18, 21, 22, 24, 26; 3:10, 11, 13, 18, 19, 21, 22; 5:19; 6:1, 7, 10, 12; 7:2, 14, 20, 28, 29; 8:1, 6, 8, 9, 11, 15, 17; 9:1, 3, 12, 15; 10:14; 11:8; 12:5, 13)
- E. Purpose: Living well in a broken and backwards world means fearing God, enjoying life, but remembering the judgment.
- F. **Big-Picture Exposition of Ecclesiastes:**

1. Remember that there are frequent pains and disappointments of life.

➤ 2:17, 3:20

2. Be prepared for death.

Eccles 5:16 – exactly as a man is born, thus will he die.

Eccles 12:1–8 Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, “I have no delight in them”; ² before the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are darkened, and clouds return after the rain; ³ in the day that the watchmen of the house tremble, and mighty men stoop, the grinding ones stand idle because they are few, and those who look through windows grow dim; ⁴ and the doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low, and one will arise at the sound of the bird, and all the daughters of song will sing softly. ⁵ Furthermore, men are afraid of a high place and of terrors

on the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags himself along, and the caperberry is ineffective. For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street. ⁶ *Remember Him* before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed; ⁷ then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it. ⁸ "Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "all is vanity!"

3. Embracing death and disappointment brings God's peace and strength

David Gibson: Ecclesiastes "gets under the radar of our thinking and acts like an incendiary device to explode our make-believe games and jolt us into realizing that everything is not as clean and tidy as the 'let's-pretend' world suggests."¹

4. There is no formula for the life we want.

5. God encourages appropriate enjoyment in this life.

6. Prepares us to hear the great news of the gospel

G. Bibliography

- David Gibson, *Living Life Backwards*
- Zack Eswine, *The Gospel According to Ecclesiastes*
- Jefferey Meyers, *A Table in the Mist*

¹ Gibson, 19.