

Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes is the greek term for the Hebrew term “*Qoheleth*”. It refers to the person who addresses an assembly.

So, the author refers to himself as _____.
(1:1,2, 12, 7:27, 12:8, 9, 10)

The book is basically about one major theme: Man’s search for meaning outside of fellowship with God.

Ray Steadman had a great subtitle for Ecclesiastes “The Inspired Book of Error.”

The word that emerges most frequently in the book is “vanity. Vanity can mean something different in our day, so you might substitute “meaningless”.

Solomon looks at life “under the sun.”

- It describes life lived from a purely human perspective.
- Solomon concludes that life lived this way is meaningless.

In the end, Solomon’s search ends with God: Eccl. 12:13: “*The conclusion when all has been heard is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.*”

- If you try and find meaning, purpose, and fulfillment outside of God, you will be frustrated.
- Wisdom is seeing life through the lens of God’s perspective. It is trusting God in the face of difficulties.

Nine times Solomon will write that this life under the sun is “*striving after the wind.*”

The preacher (teacher) sums up everything as vanity (meaningless).

There are 10 items that are specifically listed as “vanity” in this book:

Human wisdom (2:14-16)	Human effort (2:18-23)
Human achievement (2:26)	Human life (3:18-22)
Human rivalry (4:4)	Human selfish sacrifice (4:7-8)
Human power (4:16)	Human greed (5:10)
Human accumulation (6:1-12)	Human religion (8:10-14)

Solomon ends the book in a way that points to the ultimate source of meaning, purpose, and fulfillment in life...

“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 judgement, everything whites hidden, whether good or evil.” (12:13-14)

Solomon filled his life with compromises.

- He had many wives.
- He allowed many gods to be worshiped in addition to the one true God (syncretism).
- He departed from an obedient walk with God, abandoning the source of his wisdom.

Solomon had the best of life from a divine perspective and from a natural perspective.

- But his final analysis records that God is the meaning of life.
- He writes this book to tell us that life lived apart from fellowship with God can never satisfy the human heart.
- The only person who can bring lasting satisfaction and meaning is Jesus Christ.

We have a choice how to live our lives...

- We can live “under the sun”.
- We can neglect God and neglect to give Him credit.
- We can live as if there is no God...._____.
- Or we can live “under the Son.”

Key Principle from Ecclesiastes...

- God is sovereign and He uses every event of our lives for His purposes.
- The world’s philosophies lead to cynicism and despair
- Life is meaningless apart from God.
- Wisdom is moral, not merely intellectual.
- Wisdom is better than folly as light is better than darkness.
- Wisdom comes through God’s word, and He gives it freely - if we ask.
- Fear God and keep his commandments (the conclusion of the whole matter).
- Store up treasure in heaven, not on earth.
- Keep your focus on eternity, not the things of this world.
- The day of judgement is coming.
- Eternity is set in the hearts of men and women. Even unbelievers.

End Notes

The following sources were used in this study:

1. Mark Dever, *The Message Of The Old Testament*, 508, 509, 511-522
2. This lesson references material from Capitol Hill Baptists core seminar on the Old Testament. www.capitolhillbaptist.org-introduction-to-the-old-testament/
3. John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Handbook*, 161, 169, 171
4. Bruce Wilkinson & Kenneth Boa, *Talk Through the Bible*, 162,165,163,170, 172
5. Dr. Allen B.Stringfellow, *Through the Bible in One Year*, 72
6. Gerard Crispin, *The Bible Panorama*, 276
7. The above sources for this study were compiled by Kevin McAeer
8. John MacArthur, *End Of An Era, The Rise and Fall of Solomon*, 9-39
9. Ray Stedman, *Adventuring Through the Bible*, 277-287
10. Steven Lawson, *Foundations of Grace, A Long Line of Godly Men*, 150-159