

Ecclesiastes: Jesus the reason for life

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Ecclesiastes is Greek for the Hebrew title but the word in the title is found only seven times and in this book it is always rendered "*Preacher*", which means "*a gather for an assembly*" or a "*collector*". The author tells us that he; "*pondered and sought out and set in order many proverbs to find acceptable words so that what was written was upright; words of truth like goads and well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd?*" (12:9-11) The key for the authors "collection" is to be found in his use of repeated words and phrases through out the book.

- **Vanity**: Used 38 times in this book does not describe a person who spends to much time in front of a mirror but means emptiness and is best defined by the author in 1:14 as "*grasping for the wind*" (nine times in Eccl).
- **Under the sun**: Used 29 times and give us **perspective** of the point of view of this book. The author's concern is from the human point of view what he can gather from the natural mind from the visible world. He is not concerned with heavens perspective.

- **Profit**: Used ten times in this book as the author uses it to ask what *benefit, advantage or gain* does mankind get out of his life on this earth.
- **Labor**: Used 23 times describes “*working to the point of exhaustion while experiencing no fulfillment in the labor*”.
- **Wisdom**: Used 28 times and in verse 13 he declares, “*I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven*”. The author set out to understand the greatest questions man has ever asked, “*What is life really all about?*”
- **Evil and Man**: Eighteen times he uses “*evil*” and forty eight times he uses the word “*man*”. The author ponders mankind’s situations and continually comes back to the fact that something is wrong with the world.
- **God**: Forty times in 36 verses he uses this word but what is interesting to me is that he always uses the same Hebrew word for God, “*Elohim*”. Not one time in those 40 uses does he ever use the covenant name “*Jehovah*” which describes God as eternal and self-existent. From this it seems as though the author believes in God but does not see how this all-powerful God has any real concern with the affairs of man.

What has happened to the world in which God proudly looked over “*everything that He had made, and declared indeed it was very good?*” Something has changed from “*very good to emptiness*”! Reading through these 12 chapters is to realize that he did not write this as fiction, nor did he write it as time went on. Instead it was his life experience that he wrote about at the end of his life.

In 1:1 we are given the author as he refers to himself in this book only by the same title of the book “*preacher*” or as I prefer “*collector*”. Here’s what he does reveal about himself in this book:

- 1:1,12 Son of David and King of Jerusalem
- 1:16 Wisest of all who were before him as King
- 2:1-3 Indulged in every imaginable pleasure
- 2:4-6 Accomplished great architectural works (buildings, gardens etc.)
- 2:7-10 Unparalleled wealth
- 12:9 Pondered and wrote many proverbs

From this we can conclude that the author is David’s son by way Bathsheba, Solomon.

I.) Chp. 1:1-11 What’s empty?

Solomon’s summary of all that earthly life has to offering mankind with any lasting enjoyment is zero, a big fat goose egg! This from a man who had the **resources and opportunity** to pursue all that his heart desired. You can:

- Gather every gadget
- Pursue every single pleasure
- Enjoy every earthly relationship
- Go after every creative endeavor
- Follow every philosophy of life to satisfy you

And says Solomon, you will still find nothing that will do so! Its one thing to make a statement like this and quite another to discover the truth of this over a lifetime of having both the **resources and opportunities to pursue their quest**. Solomon comes back at the end of his life with this summation that all of life’s pursuits are, (1:14) “*grasping for the*

wind". What a vivid description that is, "*Oh got some! Then you open up your hand to observe what you've got and discover that you have nothing!*" You see no matter how much of something we seem to get we are never satisfied with just that. "**Everything becomes nothing once nothing has become everything!**" It is only when a man considers that there is someone "over the sun" that the things "under the sun" are seen in their true light! What's left over for a man that finds no fulfillment in his life? Well it can best be summed up by the words of Mick Jager of the Rolling Stones when he sang, "*Can't get no satisfaction!*" Solomon tried everything in life apart from an obedient relationship with God and found that there was no lasting satisfaction in the 4 "P's":

- Possessions
- Pleasures
- Power
- Prestige

No matter what he accomplished or acquired, life was empty! Solomon made the mistake of so many by placing the world above the Word and the outcome was a disaster in his life.

II.) Chp. 1:12-2:26 What's life all about?

Solomon lists two things that made him uniquely qualified to undertake this:

1. Vs. 12-15 **Position:**
 - a. Vs. 12 King over Israel: Solomon had a unique perspective that no one else in the world had, he was the King of Israel. He had a knowledge of other cultures and places that was unsurpassed. Solomon had a monopoly

on life as he alone had the resources necessary to experiment with any and everything to see “what made life worth living”.

- b. Vs. 13 Investigator: Not only could he buy it, he made sure that he researched it well enough. He uses two different words to describe his research: “Seek” which, means to get to the root of the matter and “Search” which, means to explore all sides!

Yet, Solomon said that with his unique ability to pursue and investigate what makes life worth living, something is broken something is missing! “Mankind is broken and what’s worse yet even with the means and wisdom Solomon possessed man can’t be fixed.” Not only are we broke beyond the ability to repair ourselves “There is something missing that can’t be found!” When we put into the quest for “what makes life worth living”, God, then the answer comes back that He alone can fix that which is broken & find that which is lost even if from our perspective it is hopeless!

So often we here people say, “I’m just not happy!” That is why Solomon begins by asking, “*What makes me happy?*” Solomon recognized that having a good time was obvious fun and one likes to do the things that bring pleasure.

In chapter 2:3-10 Solomon is gives us three areas in which is pursued that brought happiness to him.

- a. Vs. 3 PARTY: “*I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine*”: Solomon became the party animal. In 1st Kings 4:22-23 we are told what Solomon required per day for his parities in the palace. “*The daily food requirements for Solomon's palace were 150 bushels of choice flour and 300 bushels of meal, ten oxen from the fattening pens, twenty pasture--fed cattle,*

one hundred sheep or goats, as well as deer, gazelles, roebucks, and choice fowl.” It has been estimated that this menu was enough to feed 10,000 people. Man was that ever a rip-roaring party. Now while being the poster boy for the party life he did so with the aim to see what might be good for mankind.

- b. Vs. 4-6 **PROJECTS**: Since the party life was a waste, (pardon the pun) he decided to seek pleasure in accomplishing great things, houses, vineyards, gardens & water pools. But notice that all that he built was for him self! Four times in these verses we see Solomon referring to why he built what he did it was all for himself! It took him 14 years to build his house the pools to water his forests and stalls to keep his horses are still visible today. Solomon was first an alcoholic then he became a workaholic.
- c. Vs. 7-10 **POSSESSIONS**: Solomon became the first “Material Guy”. He gathered servants to wait on him. Why he had servant’s to wait on his servants. This of course brought him fame, (verse 9) he was a jet setting playboy that had anything he wanted! But he say’s in verse 10 that for a time he found enjoyment in having everything he ever wanted, 30,000 workers were drafted to work on his projects but in the end they resented him for it.

In the end Solomon describes that it was a vicious cycle, **the more he spent the more he had to make to spend and thus he was never truly satisfied.**

III.) Chp. 3:1-4:16 Life’s not fair!

Next Solomon describes the times and seasons of life and what God would have you know about them. That He will make “everything beautiful in its time.” In your physical life He wants us to see that He alone holds:

- **PERIMETERS** of our lives.
- **PROVISION** for our lives.
- **PROTECTION** for our lives.
- **PERFECTING** for our lives.

In the realm of what we think & feel & how that will effect how we relate to others, He wants us to know that:

- **STABILITY** for our lives.
- **STILLNESS** for our lives.
- **STANDPOINT** for our lives.
- **SUPPORT** for our lives.

Finally, in the realm of our spiritual lives (the inner decisions, commitment to Him and our values), we see that what God wants us to know that He alone is the:

- **TRUTH** for our lives.
- **WAY** for our lives.
- **LIFE** for us.
- **WORD** for our lives.
- **LOVE** for our lives.
- **REST** for our lives.

IV.) Chp. 5:1-6:12 No satisfaction!

Solomon point's out **four things that money can't buy**:

1. Vs. 10 **Satisfaction**: Remember who it is that is writing these words, Solomon was the wealthiest man in the world so surly he was qualified to render his

opinion on this. Solomon is proclaiming the truth that “**If your intimacy is on money then your heart will go hungry!**”

2. Vs. 11 **Solutions**: Solomon you will recall experienced this first hand according to 1st Kings 4:22-23. We are told that the, “*daily food requirements for Solomon's palace were 150 bushels (donkey loads) of choice flour and 300 bushels (donkey loads) of meal, ten oxen from the fattening pens, twenty pasture--fed cattle, one hundred sheep or goats, as well as deer, gazelles, roebucks, and choice fowl.*” People think, “*If I just had enough money all my problems would go away!*” **Money is not a magic cure for every problem** a person has and Solomon tells us two reasons why:
 - a. *Increase of money = increase of problems:*
 - b. *The increase is short lived:*
3. Vs. 12 **Serenity**: Solomon says that the laborer sleeps better than the rich man. In other words **money can't buy peace of mind!** One person put it this way; “*It's good to have the things money can buy provided you don't lose the things money can't buy!*”
4. Vs. 13-15 **Security**: **Money can't provide lasting security.** Solomon says that this is an “evil sickness”. People depend upon money for security but in the end there are far too many ways that it can not bring us security.

A British writer named Joseph Addison of the late 1600's wrote that there were three great essentials to happiness in this life that everybody needed. Solomon however, who wrote 935 before Christ, gives us the same three plus one in the first 9 verses.

- **Something to have** *Finances*

- **Someone to love** *Family*
- **Something to do** *Field*
- **Something to hope for** *Future*

V.) Chp. 7:1-9:18 Wisdom and the world!

Next Solomon looks at the Spirit of God working through the Word of God as a great benefit but only if, as Solomon showed us:

- we desire to be **changed**
- want to **see the truth**
- want to **spare ourselves a lot of problems**
- want to **start living**

But just because we see our flesh and recognize that we have some big battles against our old nature doesn't make growth automatic. Why? Well Solomon showed us last week we:

- **Resist God's method**
- **Reject God's plan**
- **Refuse to see our pride**
- **Unresponsive to our sin**

Solomon then says that situations and circumstances are not good indicators of where a person is spiritually. Because "*everything occurs alike to all*". Then Solomon gives us five inward things that were good spiritual health indicators.

- **Joy**
- **Faith**
- **Purity and power**
- **Faithful**

- **Consistent**

VI.) Chp. 10:1-12:8 Cures for the curse!

This section Solomon speaks of the benefits of wisdom.

VII.) Chp. 12:9-14 Now That's wisdom!

We come to the final exam, or as Solomon says, "*the conclusion of the whole matter*".

The final exam that has three answers that we need to pass to graduate into heaven:

- a. **Fear God**: The word means to reverence which Webster's dictionary defines as "*profound adoring awed respect*". Ray Stedman uses an acronym to explain its meaning:
 - “F” = Faith, as any "*adoring awed respect*" has to come from a place where you believe that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.
 - “E” = Experience of His grace. We won't adore Him unless we have personally experienced His mercy and grace at the cross.
 - “A” = Awe at His majesty. This deals with just the wonder of the character and nature of God who reveals Himself through His creation as well as His Word.
 - “R” = Resolve to follow Him. Without the “R” all you have is “fea”. All the above cause us to desire to allow God to change us.
- b. **Keep His commandments**: Simply put there is not true love without loyalty! **Folks, the measure of a person's life is not its duration but rather its dedication!** That's where we will see if a person lives what they believed.
- c. **Turn in you paper**: "*For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.*" The final part of the test is based

upon how you are living. We are all going to have to turn in our papers in which He will be the Judge. Our fellow classmates may think that we are real smart but the Lord will way every secret thing.

The aim of God and His Word towards our life is not reformation it is transformation.