

Old Testament Survey
The Book of Ecclesiastes

Introduction

- The book of Ecclesiastes is found in the section of Scripture known as wisdom literature. While it contains a poetic style, it is not considered a poem (Job).
- Solomon has long been considered the author of Ecclesiastes (1:1; 2:4-9) although the text does not explicitly identify him. There remains serious debate among scholars because of the linguistic style of the Hebrew text.

Qoheleth (Hebrew title of the book as well as the title of the author) means preacher, teacher, or one who calls the assembly.

Song of Solomon (young man); Proverbs (middle aged); Ecclesiastes (old man)

- The overall tenor of the book appears pessimistic, cynical, skeptical, and fatalistic. The key word is “vanity” which carries the idea of meaningless, empty, transitory, or unsatisfactory. The image is that of a breath of the mouth that is short and frail.

1:2-11; 2:10-11

Qoheleth engaged in the pursuit of pleasure, knowledge, labor, wealth, and youth and came to the conclusion that all such pursuits are like chasing after the wind.

- There is no mention of Ecclesiastes in the New Testament.
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The Purpose of Ecclesiastes

1. All human effort to provide any real meaning to our lives is uncertain and unpredictable at best and the only real security is found in God.

“Under the sun” is a key phrase (used 30 times in KJV) describing all that happens in the context of our time here on earth. Nothing here truly satisfies us.

“You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee.”

–Augustine

“There is a godshaped vacuum in the heart of every man, and only God can fill it.”

--Pascal

2. While we utilize reason to understand God, it is by faith that we know Him and live our lives.

We try to understand why things happen and it leaves us feeling frustrated and even angry. We try to use our reasoning to give an answer for what doesn't make sense. Our ability to reason is flawed for two reasons:

- Our fallen nature keeps us from seeing and knowing the truth
 - Our lack of information keeps us from making a correct analysis
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Key Passages

1:1-11

2:10-11

3:1-11

4:9-12

7:1-5

11:9-12:8

12:13 – This passage provides the conclusion of all that Qoheleth has been trying to say.

We live in the tension of not knowing about this life but knowing the One who gives us life.