

ECCLESIASTES

1. Background Information

A) What does Ecclesiastes mean?

B) Who wrote Ecclesiastes?

> Solomon is the likeliest candidate (Ecclesiastes 1:1, 12)

The experience of the author would line up with Solomon

His great wisdom and wealth (1 Kings 3:5-13; Ecclesiastes 1:16)

His foolish departure from God (1 Kings 11:1-4; Ecclesiastes 2:10-11)

C) When was Ecclesiastes written?

> Given the above scenario, Solomon wrote this book near the end of his life

2. An Overview of the Book

A) Key words and phrases

> Vanity appears some 34 times (Ecclesiastes 1:2)

> Under the sun appears some 30 times (Ecclesiastes 1:3)

> Chasing after the wind appears some 9 times (Ecclesiastes 1:14)

B) The clear conclusion (Ecclesiastes 12:9-14)

> Fear God and keep His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13)

> A time of future judgment of the way we lived our lives is inevitable (Ecclesiastes 12:14)

C) If there is no “Grand Story” in history then all of our lives are meaningless

> But if there is a “Grand Story” – Creation / Fall / Redemption / Consummation, then our lives are significant now and forever

3. Important Themes

A) From our limited perspective it is sometimes impossible for us to see the value of wisdom

> This was a major theme in the book of Job

> This is true in Ecclesiastes

Wisdom is to be preferred above folly as walking in the light is to be preferred to walking in the darkness. (Ecclesiastes 2:12-14)

If this life is all that there is then there is little distinction between wisdom and folly
Both the fool and the wise die and are forgotten (Ecclesiastes 2:15-16)
Everything that you work for will be left to someone else (Ecclesiastes 2:17-20)
Are we any different than the animals? (Ecclesiastes 3:18-22)
It would be better if we weren't even born (Ecclesiastes 6:3-6)

B) The things of this world – an ethically neutral concept, are unable to give ultimate satisfaction

> The pursuit of meaning “under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:12-15)

Wisdom and knowledge (Ecclesiastes 1:16-18)

Laughter and mirth (Ecclesiastes 2:1-2)

“Counterfeit” substances (Ecclesiastes 2:3)

Great possessions (Ecclesiastes 2:4-9)

Physical pleasure (Ecclesiastes 2:10)

> The conclusion (Ecclesiastes 2:11)

C) The things of this world can be good (Ecclesiastes 2:24-25; 3:12-14, 22; 5:18-20; 8:15; 9:7-10)

> The worldview of the wise embraces God's good gifts now

4. The life of Jesus Christ epitomizes the vanity of life under the sun

A) Jesus lived His life in perfect “wisdom”

B) Jesus gave up opportunities for power and greatness in this life

> Satan's temptation (Luke 4:5-8)

> The crowds' desire to make Him king (John 6:14-15)

C) Jesus didn't seek to save His own life

> His purpose in going to Jerusalem (Mark 10:32-34)

> His response in the Garden (Matthew 26:39; 47-54)

> His response to Pilate (John 19:6-11)

D) Jesus died at the age of 33 a disappointing failure!

> He wasted His life Or did He?

Something about a resurrection changed everything

When we view our lives through the lens of “under the sun” there is a certain fatalism that renders us hopeless

When we view our lives through the lens of “resurrection” everything changes (Rom 8:18-25)

