

Ecclesiastes

What is the Meaning of Life?

*"Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher.
"Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."* Ecclesiastes 1:2

Welcome

Opening Prayer

The Teacher (1:1)

Who wrote this book? = Some say a later king and descendant of David

Ecclesiastes 1:1 = *The Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem* - Solomon?

What are some clues that have led most to believe that Solomon was the Teacher?

Ecclesiastes 1:12 = He was king over Israel in Jerusalem - Later kings would have said Judah

Ecclesiastes 1:16 = Wisest of those before him - Including David and Mechizedek (Gen 14:18)

Ecclesiastes 2:4-9 = Undertook great projects, many slaves and livestock, great riches

Ecclesiastes 12:9 = He taught others and wrote many proverbs

The Title

Koheleth = Hebrew for teacher of an assembly

Kahal = A gathering or assembly, especially for worship and instruction

Ecclesia = Greek for *kahal* (assembly)

Ecclesiastes = A member of an *ecclesia*

Name given to book in Septuagint = Greek translation of Old Testament around 250 BC

The Problem (1:2-11)

What bothered the Teacher?

Ecclesiastes 1:2 = *Everything is meaningless* - Confused about the meaning of life

Why did this bother him?

Ecclesiastes 1:3 = Work hard all of your life and have nothing to show for it

Ecclesiastes 1:4 = A man's life is fleeting and negligible in the history of the earth

Ecclesiastes 1:5-7 = The earth goes on with or without a man

Ecclesiastes 1:8 = We struggle to understand the things around us and are never satisfied

Ecclesiastes 1:9-10 = *There is nothing new under the sun*

Ecclesiastes 1:11 = A life has no significant impact over all time

Wisdom (1:12-18)

What did the Teacher decide to do to find the meaning of life?

Ecclesiastes 1:12-13, 16 = He pursued wisdom and knowledge

What did he conclude from his pursuit?

Ecclesiastes 1:17-18 = Wisdom isn't the answer and can make matters worse

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Foolish Pleasure (2:1-16)

What did he try next?

Ecclesiastes 2:1-2 = Pleasure and laughter - Also not the answer

What ways did he test this possibility?

Ecclesiastes 2:3 = Drinking and foolishness

Ecclesiastes 2:4-6 = Building things – houses, vineyards, gardens, parks, irrigation

Ecclesiastes 2:7-9 = Great riches – slaves, livestock, money, entertainers, harem

Ecclesiastes 2:10 = Everything his eyes desired

What did he conclude from this pursuit?

Ecclesiastes 2:11 = *Everything is meaningless, a chasing after the wind*

If all is meaningless, is there any difference between living wisely or in foolish pleasure?

Ecclesiastes 2:13-14 (12-16) = Wisdom is better than folly, both are meaningless in the long run

Life Without Purpose (2:17-23)

How did the Teacher feel after considering all he had learned?

Ecclesiastes 2:17 = He hated life because all our hard work is meaningless

What made the situation worse?

Ecclesiastes 2:18-19 = All of his life's work could be wasted by his descendants

What do we achieve from all of the hard work and effort of our lives?

Ecclesiastes 2:22-23 = Just pain and grief and sleepless nights - It's all meaningless

The Purpose of Life (2:24-26)

What positive conclusion did the Teacher make?

Ecclesiastes 2:24-25 = Life is meaningless without God, Life is to be enjoyed with God

Why is a relationship with God so important? = Blessings of wisdom, knowledge and happiness

Ecclesiastes 2:26 = God blesses those who love Him, Others have meaningless lives

What, then, is the purpose of our lives? = ... *which God prepared in advance for us to do*

Ephesians 2:10 = *We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, ...*

God's Plan for Life (3:1-14)

How has the timeless God set things in place for the lives He's given us?

Ecclesiastes 3:1 = *There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven*

What range of times has God given us?

Ecclesiastes 3:2-8 = We are to live life in all sorts of times – good and bad

How are we to understand this life in such a wide range of times?

Ecclesiastes 3:11a = He has made all things beautiful in its time

Are we constrained by these times?

Ecclesiastes 3:11b = No, we have eternity even though we don't understand it

So what are we to do in the times of this life that we know?

Ecclesiastes 3:12-13 = Enjoy the life God has given us - *Be happy and do good*

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Time of Life (3:15-22)

What is frustrating about the freedom that God has given us in this range of time?

Ecclesiastes 3:16 = Life isn't fair; Justice doesn't always win; Wickedness wins at times

Does this mean that God doesn't care?

Ecclesiastes 3:17 = No, God will eventually bring all to judgment

So is it a matter of being patient and waiting for God's justice?

Ecclesiastes 3:19 = No, we have finite lives on this sin-filled earth and won't see it here

Should we focus ourselves on the future time when God's justice will prevail?

Ecclesiastes 3:21-22 = No, we can't see past this life and God wants us to enjoy this life now

Enjoying This Life (4:1-16)

How easy is it to enjoy this life with its range of times?

Ecclesiastes 4:1-3 = The evil and oppression in this sinful world makes this life most difficult

If we are going to enjoy this life through what we do, should we work as hard as we can?

Ecclesiastes 4:4-6 (4-8) = No, find the happy medium between folding hands and two handfuls

Where can we best find enjoyment in this life?

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 = In sharing God's love with one another

Guidelines for Life (5-11)

How does the Teacher begin this section of guidelines for life?

Ecclesiastes 5:1, 7b = *Stand in awe of God* - Fear of God, Turning control over to Him

What guideline does he give about dealing with God that Jesus elaborated?

Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 (Matt 5:33-37) = Keep your promises, or better yet, don't make deals with God

What is a common mistake of people who look at this life as all that they have?

Ecclesiastes 5:10 (8-17) = Chasing after wealth that won't satisfy

How does this differ from those who put their trust in the eternal God?

Ecclesiastes 5:18-20 = God blesses with a peace that enables them to enjoy what they have

Should we work hard and sacrifice things now so we can enjoy things in the future?

Ecclesiastes 6:2, 12 (1-12) = No, enjoy as God blesses you or you may miss your chance

As we put our trust in God, will He make our lives straight and trouble-free?

Ecclesiastes 7:13-14 = We'll have good and bad times in this life; Find joy in all of it

Will it be better if we focus on being as perfect as possible? If not, should we just ignore righteousness?

Ecclesiastes 7:15-18 = Neither - *The man who fears God avoids all extremes*

What should we focus on in our relationship with God if we are to avoid extremes?

Ecclesiastes 8:15 (15-17) = *Enjoyment of life* with God

What are examples of how we are to enjoy the life God has given us?

Ecclesiastes 9:7 = Celebrate each day and enjoy the bounty God has given

Ecclesiastes 9:8 = Value each day as you do the times you get all spiffed up (clothes, hair)

Ecclesiastes 9:9 = Enjoy your time with your spouse and those God has given to you

Ecclesiastes 9:10 (1 Cor 10:31) = Whatever you do, *do it with all your might* - to the glory of God

Ecclesiastes 9:12 = Enjoy today because *no man knows when his hour will come*

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Don't Wait (11:7-12:7)

After a couple chapters filled with proverbs, how does the Teacher wrap things up?

Ecclesiastes 11:8 (7-10) = Enjoy all of your years

Shouldn't we spend our younger years working hard so we can enjoy life in our latter years?

Ecclesiastes 12:1 = No, enjoy them especially in younger years when pleasure is more accessible

Why would later years be *days of trouble ... when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them?"*

Ecclesiastes 12:1-7 = Remember God before troubles of old age

Days of trouble = Problems of old age

Before sun, light, moon, stars grow dark = Before death

Keepers of the house tremble = Elders shake from old age

Strong men stoop = Lean over from age

Grinders cease because they are few = teeth

Those looking through the windows grow dim = Eyes fail

Doors to the street are closed = Constipation

Sound of grinding fades = Eat soft foods

Rise up at the sound of birds = Insomnia

Their songs grow faint = Ears fail

Afraid of heights = Can't reach

Dangers in the street = Tripping hazards

Almond tree blossoms = Grey hair

Grasshopper drags himself along = Once spry, now slow moving

Desire no longer is stirred = No sexual desire

Final Conclusions (12:8-14)

What prompted this entire discussion? = Without God life is meaningless

Ecclesiastes 12:8 = "*Meaningless! Meaningless!*" says the Teacher. "*Everything is meaningless!*"

Why was the Teacher qualified to raise and answer this question?

Ecclesiastes 12:9-10 = He was proven wise and was careful in what he wrote

Should we continue to dig deeper into this question?

Ecclesiastes 12:11-12 = You could, but you won't get much further

What is the bottom line? = Fear of God means giving Him control of our lives (see Proverbs study)

Ecclesiastes 12:13 = *Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man*

Closing Prayer

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under heaven:

a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,

a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,

a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,

a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain,

a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,

a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,

a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.