



WEEK 24: Ecclesiastes Overview

Main Point: “I have thought deeply about all that goes on here under the sun... Here now is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands” (Ecclesiastes 8:9; 12:13).

Writer: “These are the words of the Teacher (**Preacher**), King David’s son, who ruled in Jerusalem” (Ecclesiastes 1:1). That suggest Solomon. So do other clues: The writer is wise, has lots of wives, and talks about receiving treasures from foreign leaders. But many Bible experts say his choice of certain Hebrew words sound s like they’re coming from 400-600 years after Solomon’s time. The disconnect would be a bit like Romeo catching sight of Juliet in the distant moonlight and declaring, “Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight! She’s a bad mama jama.” Perhaps an editor revised Solomon’s original work, some Bible experts speculate, the way Bible translators have updated the 400-year-old Shakespearean English of the King James Version. Or maybe someone else wrote the book, giving Solomon the credit. The reverse of plagiarism, this was a common way of honoring someone in ancient times. Many students of the Bible, however, prefer the traditional tradition: that Solomon wrote this book. They argue that translating ancient words is a tricky business, especially since the Jews used shorthand, skipping the vowels. Even with vowels, many given Hebrew words could have a variety of meanings.

Date: If Solomon wrote it, he did so in the 900s BC.

Location: Israel

Key Themes of the book of Ecclesiastes

- **The Vanity of Life (Ecclesiastes 1:1-11)**
- **The Grief of Wisdom (Ecclesiastes 1:12-18)**
- **The Vanity of Pleasure (Ecclesiastes 2:1-11)**
- **The Seasons of Life (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8)**
- **The Value of Practical Wisdom (Ecclesiastes Ch. 7)**
- **The Whole Duty of Man (Ecclesiastes 12:9-14)**

Where’s Jesus in the book of Ecclesiastes?

The Teacher considers all to be meaningless. Could this be the result of outside of the context of the Kingdom of God? I believe so. God’s original plan for humanity was a that of a Kingdom purpose. We were created in the image of God (our Creator and King) and told to “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:28). These are words of a King issuing an assignment to those He’s entrusted to rule in His stead. This was our life before the fall. Yet after sin entered the hearts of humanity, we were subject to the “frustration of a fallen

world” as Lawrence Neisent describes it in his ¹blog. Frustration that appears to be the result of being stripped of one’s heavenly authority, citizenship, and purpose due to a blatant act of treason in the Garden of Eden.

This sense of meaninglessness continues to be man’s conclusion until a Man from Nazareth comes and announces that it’s time that everyone changes their mind. Jesus said “Repent,” meaning change the way you think, “for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17). It’s at this moment that Jesus reintroduces meaning back into the heart of humanity. He reminds us of the purpose of our existence—to live as both citizens of the Kingdom and children of the King. By His coming, dying, and rising, we are freed of the penalty of our sin and restored to our rightful place in the Kingdom if we would believe in Him. Could this be the reason why Gospel of the Kingdom is such *good news*. I believe so. The Kingdom is the missing link between humanity and the reason for our existence. However, without it—without the Kingdom, without the King... life remains just as Solomon saw it: meaningless.

In his conclusion, Solomon narrows all of life’s focus down to two things: “Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man’s all” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). This is commonly referred to as the *Duty of Man*. And I agree. Yet, this also stands out to me as kingdom language. In a kingdom, it’s the expectation for every one of the citizens of a kingdom that they would fear him and obey his law. The word used for fear in the Hebrew means to fear or be afraid; morally to revere (to show devoted deferential honor to: regard as worthy of great honor). This is the proper way to treat a king. More importantly it’s the only way one should treat the King of Kings. Therefore, Solomon’s conclusion is the appropriate recipe for Kingdom living.

References

¹ Jesus in Ecclesiastes: Eternal Purpose by Lawrence Neisent // <https://destinyokc.com/blog/2015/12/4/jesus-in-ecclesiastes>