

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE



RECAP

- ▶ The Wisdom Literature as two points of a single message entitled, "The Good Life According to God's Design"
 - ▶ Living in God's **World**
 - ▶ Proverbs >> The good life is achieved by a person gaining wisdom through the fear of the Lord.
 - ▶ Ecclesiastes >> Life is not as easy as Proverbs makes it sound. It's full of mystery, complexity, & brokenness.
 - ▶ Job >> A physical illustration of the previous two books
 - ▶ Living in **Community**
 - ▶ Psalms >> A person's life is only correctly defined as they relate to God through praise, prayers, & petitions. This is the most important relationship.
 - ▶ Song of Songs >> A celebration of the second most important relationship a person can have: in covenant marriage.
- ▶ Now, let's look at the distinctive of each book:

JOB

Genre: Wisdom • Written by Moses (?) around ???

- ▶ God is the God of **Pain**
- ▶ Summary Verse >> Job 13:15-16 | Though he slay me, I will hope in him; yet I will argue my ways to his face. This will be my salvation, that the godless shall not come before him
- ▶ It is considered that the events of Job took place during the age of Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob (maybe between Genesis 11-12).
- ▶ Job's friends represent all of the views, opinions, & explanations of **suffering** that existed in the ancient world. In the end, only the latecomer Elihu gets closest to the Biblical understanding of suffering.

PSALMS

Genre: Wisdom • Written by Various Authors between 1410-400 BC

- ▶ God is the God of **Praise**
- ▶ The book of Psalms was designed as the prayer book of God's people as they wait for His Messiah & the coming Kingdom.
- ▶ Summary Verse >> Psalm 1:1-2 | Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

- ▶ Psalm **1** & Psalm **2** provide a framework to understand the entire book.

PROVERBS

Genre: Wisdom • Written/Collected by Solomon & Hezekiah between 931 BC & 715-686 BC

- ▶ God is the God of **Prudence**
- ▶ Proverbs invites people to live with wisdom & in the fear of the Lord in order to experience the good life.
- ▶ Summary Verse >> Proverbs 1:7 | The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.
- ▶ According to 1 Kings 4:32, Solomon spoke **3000** proverbs & wrote **1005** songs. Only about 800 of Solomon's proverbs are included in the book of Proverbs, which means that 2300 of his proverbs are not in the book.
- ▶ Proverbs provides detailed instruction for how God's people can live successfully in the **practical** affairs of daily life. Living with wisdom is living with **skill**.

ECCLESIASTES

Genre: Wisdom • Written/Collected by Solomon around 935 BC

- ▶ God is the God of **Purpose**
- ▶ Summary Verse >> Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 | The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.
- ▶ It is generally considered the Solomon wrote Song of Songs in his youthful years, Proverbs throughout His life, & Ecclesiastes late in life.
- ▶ The key word of Ecclesiastes is "vanity," which occurs 37 times in 12 chapters. It means "breath, vapor, or wind". Contextually, it is defined as futile **emptiness** of trying to be happy apart from God.
- ▶ According to the Preacher in Ecclesiastes, you can either live with a worldly perspective (life "under the sun," 1:9) which brings emptiness or you can live from God's perspective (live "above the sun", 2:24) which makes life take on a new & special meaning.

SONG OF SONGS

Genre: Wisdom • Written/Commissioned by Solomon early in his life

- ▶ God is the God of **Passion**
- ▶ Summary Verse >> Song of Songs 8:4 | I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up or awaken love until it pleases.
- ▶ Throughout history, the Song of Songs has been interpreted literally (as a celebration of covenant love) & allegorically (as a love song between Israel & Jehovah or Christ as the church).



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