

Ecclesiastes

Summary

The eternal question for all ages and all people could be summed up simply as, "What is the meaning of life?" The book of Ecclesiastes tackles this question head on. The title of the book comes from the Hebrew word, *qopheleth*, which means assembling, or office-bearer. When translated from the Greek word, *ekklesiastes*, we end up with modern translations such as "the preacher," "the speaker," "the philosopher," or "the teacher." Though the book is bleak at times and offers a unique perspective on a long life filled with mistakes and little fulfillment, there is hope for those who fear God (Ecclesiastes 8:12, 12:13) and follow the path of true wisdom (Ecclesiastes 9:17-18).

Author

The author introduces himself as "the Teacher" at the beginning of the book with the added description, *son of David, king in Jerusalem* (Ecclesiastes 1:1) which leads many to attribute the book to King Solomon. However, the authorship of Ecclesiastes is still debated by scholars. We know the book is told from the king's viewpoint toward the end of a life in which he has experienced every kind of luxury and privilege.

Date

Ecclesiastes may have been written in Solomon's time probably toward the end of his reign in tenth century BC.

Primary Characters

The king, presumably Solomon, at the end of his life (Ecclesiastes 1-12)

Man (mortal human man or woman) who toils "under the sun," (Ecclesiastes 1-12)

Historical Moments

King Solomon's Reign (Ecclesiastes 1-12)

Major Theological Themes

God's Permanence - Nothing of this world will last; only God offers permanence. All the material things of this world will eventually fade, but God is eternal.

God's Immensity - God is bigger than we can fathom, and although His plans may at times appear chaotic to us, He has ordered our days.

Lessons Learned Through Ecclesiastes

Material Things Do Not Last - The futility of life lived under the sun without God leads to nothing but disillusionment. Humans cannot achieve anything of lasting significance on their own. Even the wisest and richest man on earth, King Solomon, learned this lesson toward the end of his life. As a man, King Solomon had every possible pleasure and luxury. Yet at the end of his life, he realized that these things were fleeting compared to a relationship with Almighty God.

God Is in Charge - Everything has a time and place that is appointed by God. Life is unpredictable, but putting God at the center of everything will lead to a life full of purpose and meaning.