

A LOOK AT THE BOOK ECCLESIASTES

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AUTHOR AND DATE

The author's style and the details concerning his life fit those of Solomon.

The book claims to have been written by the son of David who was king over Jerusalem.

References to his wisdom, wealth, pleasure, and building exploits also fit Solomon best.

Solomon was accepted as author by Jewish Talmudic and Christian tradition, until Luther.

Assuming that Solomon wrote it, the book would have been written between 971 and 931 B.C.

BACKGROUND

Solomon's success

Israel's expansion

Solomon's wisdom--people came from everywhere to hear him

Against this background of expansion, prosperity and success, Solomon wrote concerning the futility he felt with life.

PURPOSE AND THEME

Key expressions: "vanity" and "under the sun."

Solomon speaks as one who has tried everything and found that life and all it offers is futile.

Satisfaction will NEVER be found in wealth, pleasure, knowledge, work, social relationships, nor anything else this world offers us.

"Life is a series of meaningless cycles, filled with inequities and injustice, which lead to death."

Futility exists while man sees life from the perspective "under the sun."

The basis for true satisfaction and for a meaningful life *isn't under the sun!*

It's found in the God of the universe, Who controls and surpasses the sun.

TRUE SATISFACTION IS FOUND IN SEEKING AFTER AND OBEYING GOD.

When life is seen as a gift from God, to be lived in submission to His revealed will, then life takes on meaning and can be fully enjoyed. 12:1, 13

Based on this premise, the purpose of the book seems to be to warn the young to realize this early in life and to seek Him first.

If they want to enjoy life fully, they can lay aside the normal human goals and seek God.

Then, and only then, they will learn what it is like to really live.

ORGANIZATION

The major thesis is revealed in the prologue (1:1-11) and epilogue (12:9-14)

The premise is developed through its two major sections:

Proofs of life's futility (1:12-6:12) based on his own experience (1:12-2:26) and his observation of life in general (3-6)

Principles for living in a futile world, on the basis of his previous conclusions (7-12:8).

ECCLESIASTES

“Everything is empty and meaningless . . . under the sun!”

Ralph Porter

PROLOGUE 1:1-11	PROOF OF THE FUTILITY OF LIFE 1:12-6:12		PRINCIPLES FROM THE FUTILITY OF LIFE 7:1-12:8	EPILOGUE 12:9-14
	From Personal Experience 1:12-2:26	From Personal Observa- tion 3:1-6:12		
Author 1:1	Futility of striving after wis- dom 1:12-18	Futility of life 3	Proper priorities for life 7:1-14	Teacher's activity 12:9-11
Theme 1:2	Futility of striving after plea- sure 2:1-3	Inequality of life 4	Avoidance of extremes 7:15-22	Teacher's advice 12:12
Illustration 1:3-7	Futility of striving after trea- sure 2:4-11	Insincerity of religion 5:1-7	Relationship to government 8:1-15	Teacher's admonition 12:13-14
Conclusion 1:8-11	Futility of wisdom and folly 2:12-23	Unprofitableness of wealth 5:8-20	Enjoyment of life 8:16-9:12	
	Conclusion 2:24-26	Frustration of man 6	Pursuit of wisdom 9:13-12:8	