

A Book about Nothing that Means Everything Ecclesiastes

Study of Ecclesiastes > Word MEANINGLESSNESS > repeated **40** times

Heb *hebel*= **meaningless**, Fleeting, empty, vanity, futility, Puff of Air: **Nothing**

REPETITION = THEME of Book > A Book about NOTHING

Important TOPICS: Wisdom, Pleasure, Attainment, Religion ALL NOTHING!!!

v. 2 "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless!
Everything is meaningless."

v. 14 I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are
meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

After 12 Chapters about NOTHING > He CONCLUDES his THESIS –

"Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Everything is meaningless!"

Ecclesiastes 12:8

1. The Search in Ecclesiastes

SEARCH IS There ANY MEANING to LIFE? > Is there more than NOTHING?

a. Profitable Search?

v. 3 What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun?

Any GOOD BUSINESS PERSON > Primary Concern: BOTTOM LINE

FAIR QUESTION > World where MONEY is TIGHT, NEEDS are GREAT

Will THIS IDEA > Spin DOWN the TANK or RISE to the TOP?

Words LABOR and WORK > used **30** X's Eccl > DREARY DUTY of MAN

All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too
is meaningless.

Ecclesiastes 2:23

ENDLESS TASKS: Washing DISHES Done! – then One More from Other Room
 PAVING STREETS – Waiting in Traffic – NEXT YEAR – Paving SAME Street!
 Seems like Just FINISHED MONTHLY Reports > already ANOTHER MONTH!
 Oldest SON was JOURNALISM MAJOR > Dropped it > Asked him WHY?
 ‘As soon as you WRITE a NEWS STORY it becomes OLD NEWS!’
 My REPLY ‘I know FEELING // PREACHING a SERMON...Another Sunday!’

Wd for GAIN > only used in Eccl. from WORLD of BUSINESS > **10 X's** in Eccl
 Word GOES BEYOND > Finance to FULFILLMENT > Complete Satisfaction

YOU may be RICH > And at SAME TIME – DESPERATELY EMPTY

POOR Man goes to Cupboard to Look for FOOD > NOTHING There!

RICH Man goes to Cupboard FULL of Food and says NOTHING Looks Good!

Jesus ASKED – What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?
 Mark 8:36

b. Precise Search

v. 13,16,17 I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven...I thought to myself, "Look, I have grown and increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge." Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind.

FINDINGS of a DEEP THINKER > Not the Thoughts of LIGHT-WEIGHT
 NOT find NOTHING because he was NOT LOOKING > EARNEST SEEKER

2 Strong ACADEMIC WORDS v. 13 > SEEK / Study and EXPLORE

SEEK – Search the ROOTS of the MATTER > like DOCTORAL Research

EXPLORE – Examine all sides > ACTIVE EXPERIMENTATION

I said, "I am determined to be wise" - but this was beyond me. Whatever wisdom may be, it is far off and most profound - who can discover it? So I turned my mind to understand, to investigate and to search out wisdom and the scheme of things

Ecclesiastes 7:23-25

Hebrew Title of Book: from first sentence of book - "*the words of Qoheleth.*"

QOHELET Not name **TITLE** // *Qahal* = Assembly, Congregation

Qohelet = 'the gatherer or assembler' INFERS = One who SPEAKS to Assembly

English > Assumption gathered people to Teach: 'The Teacher' or 'Preacher' Ray

Steadman > 'The Searcher' / Derek Kidner > 'The Professor'

Greek Title: Ecclesiastes = Assembly / Gk. wd for CHURCH - 'EKALLESIA'

In 12 Chapters he Examines Many Important Subjects

Life, Success, Sex, Religion, God, Philosophy, Government, Justice

and the Conclusion is Always the Same: Meaningless

He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs. The Teacher searched to find just the right words

Ecclesiastes 12:9-10

c. Painful Search WORLD in GRIP of DEADENING MONOTONY

vs. 5-8 The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again. All things are wearisome, more than one can say.

CIRCLE of SUN – CIRCUIT of WIND – Evaporative CYCLE of WATER
 ROUND & ROUND it ALL GOES > GOING NOWHERE > DOING NOTHING

HUMAN DESIRE > is NEVER SATISFIED – PAINFUL RESTLESSNESS

v. 8 The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing.

vs. 13,14 What a heavy burden God has laid on men! I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

WORLD’S Reasoning – More Power, Popularity, Possessions = PEACE

Of making many books there is no end, and *much study wearies the body*. 12:12

v.18 with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief

The more you understand, the more you ache.

J. Moffatt

Style and Choice of Words > Global Search > Not a ‘Jewish’ book

God not called by Covenant name “Yahweh,” but “Elohim“ (Creator God)

NO References to Old Testament heroes like Abraham or Moses

No ref to Law of Moses, Temple of God, Jewish Priesthood, Blood Sacrifices

Book for Whole World, All Peoples “under the sun” or “under heaven” 30 X’s

During DEPRESSION in USA > Brilliant PHILOSOPHY Prof OUT of WORK

Traveled Country w/ HOBOS > Sneaking BOXCARS of RAILROAD Trains

DARK NIGHT Snuck FREIGHT CAR > FELL into DEEP SLEEP, Exhausted

Train CLACKING down TRACK > Woke > Discovered in Box Car with SHEEP

Train for OMAHA > Biggest SLAUGHTERHOUSE for SHEEP in USA

NEXT DAY WOULD arrive, SHEEP Clubbed, Dragged SLAUGHTER

SHEEP Sound ASLEEP > Full Stomach, Dry, Warm > IGNORANT of FATE
 FEARFUL Philosopher > Understood Dangers of Tomorrow > NO SLEEP at All
 Sometimes IGNORANCE is BLISS > What DON'T KNOW will NOT HURT

d. Paradoxical Search

Why is Man /CROWN of Creation so IMPOVERISHED? SHORT, Passing Life

v. 4 Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever.

We REMEMBER MOUNTAINS > Forget MEN supposed to RULE OVER them
 WIND: STRENGTH to STRENGTH > WOMEN grow FRAIL & FORGOTTEN
 MAN looks TEMPORAL, CREATION seems ETERNAL, Good Die Young

FIRE DESTROYED many Homes my Homeland Southern California this Week

People ORDERED to EVACUATE – Most DID – Few FOUGHT for Houses

IRONY willing to DIE for THINGS – HOUSE in LA worth MILLIONS \$\$

GREATER IRONY – Worth more than YOU!

v. 11 There is no remembrance of men of old, and even those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow.

“The land is for the one who comes after” a Tigrigna proverb from Eritrea

e. Partial Search

At close of LIFE of SCIENTIFIC STUDY: I have been paddling in the shallows of the great ocean of knowledge. Sir Isaac Newton

TELESCOPES on mtn MAUNA KEA Hawaii, Largest WORLD > Bigger, Bigger
 NO SOLUTIONS > No FINAL CONCLUSIONS from Findings in DEEP SPACE

They can SEE BEYOND SUN > NO Ultimate Answers > Just MORE Questions

v. 14 I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

ALL peoples “under the sun” or “under heaven” or “on earth”

LIMITED Horizon Line of HUMAN Search, HOPE beyond our RADAR Screens

Throughout his twelve chapters the author argues one main point – it is incredibly difficult for us as human beings to gain a grasp of life that will take us beyond futility.
David Allan Hubbard

2. The Searcher in Ecclesiastes

a. Example

Intro of Ecclesiastes is intentionally similar to opening words of Proverbs

“The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel” Proverbs 1:1

“The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem” Ecclesiastes 1:1

Young king Solomon, humbly prayed for wisdom: Proverbs Reveal God’s answer

He (Solomon) spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. He described plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish.

1 Kings 4.32,33

Author of Eccl. clear ref to Solomon > BUILDING on STATUS of Solomon

Solomon: Stopped at NOTHING > NO LIMIT to his BUCKS or his BRAINS

Solomon: Widely known as the WISEST and RICHEST man in WORLD

If Solomon could not find meaning in things of this world, who could?

b. Author? Human: Unknown / Primary: God the Holy Spirit

1) What gain would Solomon get by not naming himself?

One of greatest kings of Israel / Name NEVER occurs in entire Book

2) Time frame of writing does not fit Solomon

“I, the Teacher, *was* king over Israel in Jerusalem” Ecclesiastes 1:12

Solomon died while he was the ruler of Israel

Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. Then he rested with his fathers and was buried in the city of David his father. 1 Kings 11:42-43

3) Powerlessness of the author does not sound like Solomon

Author Laments OPPRESSION of POOR & ABUSES of Ruling RICH

If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied, do not be surprised at such things; for one official is eyed by a higher one, and over them both are others higher still. The increase from the land is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields
Ecclesiastes 5:8-9

It would be quite strange for the king to be protesting against himself!

Solomon could have done something! His power over Israel was absolute.

4) No Biblical evidence of Solomon’s repentance

Eccles. Words of one who CAME BACK TO GOD > we can Hope Solomon did

Sadly BIBLE gives No Record of Solomon’s REPENTANCE, APOSTATE?

Solomon is famous example behind book of Eccl > but NOT Author

c. Presentation

FINAL Version Eccl: Critique of Qohelet Unknown EDITOR > 2 Human Authors

Words of Qohelet > 1.12 through 12.8 > Heart of Book

Searcher in Ecclesiastes NOT an ATHEIST > IS a God >> CANNOT Know Him
 God is in heaven and you are on earth Ecclesiastes 5:2

<p>1.1-11</p> <p>Qohelet's Viewpoint Introduced</p>	<p>1.12 – 12.8</p> <p>Words of Qohelet Searcher '<i>under the sun</i>'</p>	<p>12.9-14</p> <p>Summary and Critique <i>Looking to The Son</i></p>
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Qohelet's MESSAGE: **'Life is full of troubles and then you die!'**

BALANCED View of Eccl > READ Whole BOOK of Eccles and WHOLE BIBLE

He reaches the same conclusion as all the wise men of the Bible, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. But Qohelet plans to bring us to that point last of all, when we are desperate for an answer. Derek Kidner

3. The Strategy we learn from Ecclesiastes

Most Books in Bible > God's Message TO World > KNOW, STUDY, BELIEVE

Eccles: God's Message ABOUT the WORLD > Secular THOUGHTS & IDEAS

a. Listen to the World

IF we want to SPEAK to the WORLD > FIRST we must LISTEN TO THEM

When Moses sent them (*twelve Israelite spies*) to explore Canaan... "*See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? What kind of towns do they live in? Are they unwalled or fortified? How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there trees on it or not?*" Numbers 13:17-20

God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom was *greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East*, and *greater than all the wisdom of Egypt*. He was wiser than any other man, including *Ethan the Ezrahite-wiser than Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol*. And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations. ...Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom. 1 Kings 4:29-34

Thus Solomon KNEW Ideas of 'East, Egypt, Ethan, Heman, Calcol, Darda' ANALYZED and EXCEEDED their Thoughts > His WISDOM from GOD Himself
Perhaps some themes of Ecclesiastes are from these royal 'evangelistic' talks

BOY JESUS > Learned HOW to LEARN before HE TAUGHT...

...they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, *listening to them and asking them questions*. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. Luke 2.46,47

For, *as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears*, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Philippians 3.18

A Favorite vs. of APOLOGIST Francis Schaeffer > Heard him Preach it

When Asked what if had ONE HOUR to Share Gospel with UNBELIEVER?

Spend 45 Minutes EXPLORING / EXPOSING their FALSE BELIEF SYSTEM

Paul > Talked about People of WORLD > FREQUENTLY and with FEELING

STUDYING Ecclesiastes > REVIEW of World's THINKING > LISTEN Well!

ANCIENT Book Speaks with CRISP RELEVANCE to the 21st Century

Qohelet('s)...book is in reality a major work of apologetic...addressing the general public whose view is bounded by the horizons of this world; he meets them on their own ground, and proceeds to convict them of its inherent vanity...His book is in fact a critique of secularism and secularized religion. G.S. Hendry

b. Love the World

Ecclesiastes 12 Chapters CHALLENGING Ideas > NOT ‘isn’t that NICE!’

NOT – “Everyone is ENTITLED to their OWN BELIEFS”

NOT – “Whatever YOU THINK is RIGHT, MUST be RIGHT”

BIBLICAL RESPONSE ...speaking the truth in love Ephesians 4:15

FIRST LISTEN to WORLD > Then LOVE ENOUGH to OFFER CRITIQUE

Although there is an important place for ‘dialogue’ with men of other faiths... there is also need for ‘encounter’ and even ‘confrontation,’ in which we seek both to disclose the inadequacies and falsities of non-Christian religion and to demonstrate the adequacy, truth, absoluteness and finality of the Lord Jesus Christ. John Stott

AFTER Listening to QOHELET for 12 Chs, Book Ends RIGHTEOUS CRITIQUE

Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man.” Ecclesiastes 12:13

(In) Ecclesiastes... We face the appalling inference that nothing has meaning, nothing matters under the sun. It is then that we can hear, as the good news which it is, that everything matters – ‘for God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.’ Derek Kidner

“Qohelet’s speech is a foil, a teaching device, used by a second wise man in order to instruct his son (12:12)...(Qohelet’s) speeches are torn down and demolished in the end.” Tremper Longman III

Example of APOSTLE PAUL in THESSALONICA

Paul...reasoned with them from the Scriptures... explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise... Acts 17.2,3

Gk. REASONED > Same root word for DIALOGUE > INTERACTION

PROVING = lit. PLACE BESIDE > i.e. COMPARING 2 Viewpoints

WHY do we BELIEVE THIS? And WHY do we NOT BELIEVE THAT?

Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age?
Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 1 Corinthians 1:20

4. Exceeding the Wisdom of Solomon

If this biblical book does not unhinge you a bit, you didn't read it right...if you conclude that all things considered this book fits comfortably alongside of all the other biblical books, you didn't read it right. John Stevenson

a. Beyond the Sun

v. 9-10 ...there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one can say, "Look! This is something new"? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time.

NOT Saying NO NEW INVENTIONS > Nothing NEW in HUMAN HEART
SAME Dissatisfaction – RESTLESSNESS – DOUBT – UNCERTAINTY

TEEN CAVE Man > BANGING on SMOOTH Rock with JAW BONE of Dinosaur
CAVE MAMA “QUIET, Bang SOFTER Gronk!– TOO NOISY”

MY MOTHER > Yelling QUIET Mark! TURN DOWN your RECORD-PLAYER
MY WIFE > Shouting to SONS – MP3's are TOO NOISY!!

IF you THINK Something is REALLY NEW > You have a SHORT MEMORY!

Speaking to ATHENIAN PHILOSOPHERS, APOSTLE PAUL said...

Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious... I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Acts 17:22

CHAPTER 12

12.13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man.

ALMOST IMPATIENT EXASPERATION > FINALLY we get THE TRUTH!

Here's what you REALLY SHOULD KNOW! > Ultimate Conclusion

WORLD should KNOW > 1. GREATNESS of God and 2. WORD of God

FEAR GOD Phrase Used Several Times by QOHELET, How DEFINED?

1. RAGING TERROR: Fright before Powerful, Dangerous, Unpredictable Deity

2. REVERENT TRUST: Biblical, HOLY AWE before Great & Gracious God

KEEP COMMANDS > Qohelet never SAYS THIS

Fear > ESTABLISH a Right Relationship with God

Commands > MAINTAIN that Relationship

F aith in One True God

E xperience the Grace of God

A we before the Majesty of God

R esolve to Follow and Obey God

WHOLE DUTY > Most IMPORTANT Thing UNDER THE SUN

The book ends on a strong orthodox note, one that is in keeping with the dominant teaching of the rest of the OT...It is correct to characterize the book as positive and orthodox, while maintaining the dubious nature of Qohelet's own thinking....Jesus Christ is the ultimate answer to Qohelet's conclusion of meaninglessness under the sun.

Tremper Longman III

Great SEARCH of QOHELET > Meaning, Purpose, Reality, Truth > VALID

WE Need ALL Qohelet TRIED to FIND > Cannot BLAME him for SEARCHING

Similar SEARCH of all WORLD'S RELIGIONS > Find God by being GOOD

Fundamentally ONLY 2 Religions on Earth >

1. Very Big, Diverse, Many Labels, Books, Leaders, Traditions, Rituals

ONE over-riding theme “I can do something to please God, make God accept me”

Then the Buddha addressed all the monks once more, and these were the very last words he spoke: "Behold, O monks, this is my last advice to you. All component things in the world are changeable. They are not lasting. Work hard to gain your own salvation."
www.buddhanet.net

MUSLIMS still Pray for the Soul of Muhammed to be SAVED > No Assurance

If the Leader of the Religion not SAVED > What hope for other Billion Followers?

2. Narrow Way – Road Hard – Few Find it > “I have no perfection to offer God”

My ONLY HOPE before God is MERCY and GRACE

Find JESUS who ALONE is GOOD > Receive MERCY and GRACE

MERCY – God does NOT give us what we DESERVE

GRACE: God DOES give us what we DO NOT DESERVE > ALL Things

All things are yours whether...the world or life or death or the present or the future
 - all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God. 1 Corinthians 3:21-23

b. Salvaging the Broken

Believing European FRIEND > KAZAKH Friend followed Jesus, then QUIT

Euro: ‘Can we at least meet and read a book together?’ / Kazak: YES!

MET regularly and READ Ecclesiastes > Chapter by Chapter

At First KAZAKH Man SAW HIMSELF > Agreed with his FUTILITY, MISERY

Midway thru BOOK > K man ‘That GUY is CRAZY’ – There is Meaning, Hope

KAZAKH returned to FOLLOWING JESUS

v. 15 What is twisted cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted.
 No SALVAGING the BROKEN > No STRAIGHTENING the TWISTED
 Impossible UNDER the SUN > Must LOOK Beyond SUN, Out of THIS WORLD

HISTORY still has SOME SURPRISES! God has some NEW THINGS Planned
 ANGELS told Bethlehem SHEPHERDS on CHRISTMAS NIGHT...

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.
 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord...
 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."
 Luke 2:10-14

Jesus: "now one greater than Solomon is here" Matthew 12:42

ONE thing in World is TRULY NEW > God the SON > Life is NEW in HIM

IF you remain UNDER THE SUN you will end with NOTHING

Cannot SEE BEYOND the SUN > Limited KNOWLEDGE of this HORIZON
 IF you reside IN the SON you will end with EVERYTHING...ETERNALLY NEW

You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until the find their rest in
 You. Augustine

KNOW a HEAVENLY FATHER > not Blind Chance > CONTROLS our LIFE
 TRACE His HAND of BLESSING thru LIFE and IN SCRIPTURE
 BIGGEST Event on GOD'S CALENDAR > Sending of HIS SON

...when the *time had fully come*, God sent his Son... Galatians 4:4

Biggest RED LETTER DAY in HISTORY > Jesus CAME

Came as MASTER of GOD'S TIME CLOCK > Event

Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. *"The time has come,"* he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Mark 1:14-15

Qohelet speaks TENTATIVELY and with UNCERTAINTY

Jesus speaks CONFIDENTLY and TRIUMPHANTLY....this WILL HAPPEN!

Jesus: "The man who loves his life *will* lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world *will* keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also *will* be. My Father *will* honor the one who serves me ...Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world *will* be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, *will* draw all men to myself."

John 12:25-33

He is ETERNAL GOD > Knows BEGINNING and END > Sees BEYOND SUN

NOT Controlled by TIME – as we are HIS who CONTROLS Time –

At TIME HE CHOOSES Will Stand HERE Again on Earth – Bring Time to Close

REWARD those WAITING and WATCHING for HIS COMING

I trust in you, O LORD; I say, "You are my God." My times are in your hands.

Psalm 31.14,15

Ecclesiastes 1

1:1 The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem:

2 "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."

3 What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun? 4

Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. 5 The sun rises

and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises. 6 The wind blows to the south

and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. 7 All

streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come

from, there they return again. 8 All things are wearisome, more than one can say.

The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing. 9 What has been

will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under

the sun. 10 Is there anything of which one can say, "Look! This is something new"?

It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time. 11 There is no

remembrance of men of old, and even those who are yet to come will not be

remembered by those who follow.

12 I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. 13 I devoted myself to study

and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. What a heavy burden God

has laid on men! 14 I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of

them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

15 What is twisted cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted.

16 I thought to myself, "Look, I have grown and increased in wisdom more than

anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of

wisdom and knowledge." 17 Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom,

and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the

wind.

18 For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more

grief.

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