

Ecclesiastes 9

A Doorway or a Dead End?

How can we SHARE our FAITH with those that have No Knowledge of Bible?
Question we face in CHINA AND You face INCREASINGLY in California?

This morning Step into Book needs very little Pre-Requisites for Interpretation

As we Open our Bibles to Ecclesiastes > Bar for Understanding is Set Low

Nothing about Abe, Moses, David, Paul, or Jesus, even Covenants, Law, Temple
Started Preaching thru Ecclesiastes in BJ 2009 – Atheistic Uni Prof just happened to
Respond to Friends many invitation to Church and showed up THAT SUNDAY
Came Back every Week as Moved Thru 12 Chapters > Stayed for Trek thru LUKE!

“The Bible is God preaching.”

J. I. Packer

Ecclesiastes is UNUSUAL and RARELY Heard SERMON

More Comfortable w/ Preaching of Paul, Promises of Jesus, Pictures of the Prophets

Hard to Handle this Sermon > Banner Headline: *Everything is MEANINGLESS!*

Hebrew = HEVEL – Like SMOKE that SLIPS thru our FINGERS

Ecclesiastes sounds like a crazed man downtown. He smells like he hasn't bathed—
looks like it too—and as we pass by he won't stop glaring at us and beckoning to us
that our lives are built on illusions, and that we are all going to die. So, most of us
choose to get our lunch at a different shop on a less dreary corner of town.

Zack Eswine

Opinions are like NOSES, Everyone has One!

As I stick my Nose into Ecclesiastes – SNIFF OUT 2 VOICES – Contrasting Ideas

1.1-11 Qohelet's Viewpoint Introduced	1.12 – 12.8 Words of Qohelet Searcher '<i>under the sun</i>'	12.9-14 Summary and Critique <i>Looking to The Son</i>
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Perhaps 1 Author / Writes from 2 Perspectives or 2 Human Authors COMPILED?

So, FINAL Version of Book > Critique of Qohelet by an Unknown EDITOR

Words of Qohelet > 1.12 through 12.8 > Heart of Book

Qohelet > Older Man SEEN Much of Life > Yet...Still Searching for its KEY

Qohelet not NAME but TITLE > '*ONE who GATHERS the ASSEMBLY*'

Gather to TEACH? to QUESTION? Gather to MOAN Life's UNCERTAINTY?

I call him SEARCHER – The PHILOSOPHER – maybe The WHINER!

Qohelet's message is a foil, a teaching device, used by a second wise man who tears down and demolishes his speeches in the end
Tremper Longman III

As Step into Chapter 9 > A Message for All People Under the Sun

Male/Female, Young/Old, Rich/Poor, Gay/Straight, Academic/Illiterate

1. Random Acts of Cruel Coincidence under the Sun

a. Unstoppable Power

"We are prompted by our own ills to contemplate the good things of God."

John Calvin

Life got QOHELET Thinking about GOD – Not SURE if - He or She - is GOOD

Feels like COG in GEARS of God's MACHINE – Grinding Power Unstoppable

vs. 1,2 But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God. Whether it is love or hate, man does not know; both are before him. It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath.

Wheels of God's Machine GRIP All People Under Sun – Religious or Rebellious

v. 11 Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all.

LAST Month w/ Best Friend – Since HS, College, Seminary – Pastor 40 yrs

Retired Last Yr @ 60 – 4th Stage Cancer > Why His Work End? Why Mine ON?

RELIGIOUS or RUNNING from God > LOAN of your Life WILL BE Collected

b. Unknowable Person > Qohelet's God, Him, Her, or It -- is Cruel & Distant
Searcher in Ecclesiastes NOT an ATHEIST > IS a God >> CANNOT Know Him

God is in heaven and you are on earth

Ecclesiastes 5:2

Word Meaningless Occurs many More times than the word God in Ecclesiastes

vs. 1,2 Whether it is love or hate, man does not know; both are before him... It is the same for all

Qohelet has ISLAMIC Theology – ALLAH is Fully Sovereign, Far-Away & Scary!

ELOHIM – Creator / TRANSCENDENT – Far Away –/ Not YHWH of Covenant

Life not UNFOLDING PROVIDENCE > UNEXPLAINABLE PUNISHMENT

v. 3 an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all.

There is NO CHANCE of KNOWING PLAN or PURPOSE of this God

vs. 11,12 *time and chance happen to them all...*For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.

c. Unescapable Place

v. 10 ...in Sheol, to which you are going

Just ONE THING Certain about TIME > IT WILL END! VERY SOON!

vs. 3-6 ...Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun.

No Justice UNDER THE SUN > Beyond the Sun?? Cannot be NOT SURE

FRUSTRATED with the UNKNOWABILITY of it ALL

"We've all got the same air in our lungs," the Teacher observes. "So what finally is the difference when a man dies as opposed to a deer? On the one side of the highway is a carcass of road kill, on the other side a fatal car wreck. Both the deceased critter and the deceased driver have lost their breath. So what's the difference?"

Scott Hoezee

2. Running After Life's Chances

'Human history . . . [is] the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy.'

C. S. Lewis

THIS – Would make GOOD SUMMARY for the WOES of QOHELET

During Brief DASH between Date of Birth & Date we Die >> Many Opportunities

God gives JOY - Not ALL Pleasure is GUILTY – Some can be GODLY

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights...”
James 1.17

a. Libations

v. 7 Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.

SIMPLE Pleasures of Eating & Drinking can NUMB the MEANINGLESSNESS

In China & CA - Go to MALL & SHOP, Shop, Shop till you DROP, DROP, DROP

“Gather ye rosebuds while ye may. Old time is still a flying. And the same flower that smiles today, tomorrow will be a dying.”
Robert Herrick

Like Mick Jagger @ 75 still Singing “I Can’t Get No Satisfaction...but I try...”

b. Liberty

v. 8 Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head.

White Garments – DRESS Up clothes of Ancient Near East

War Hero Returns, Slave Set Free, Priest offers Redemption

Oil of Gladness --- SMELLING Good and Looking Good in a HOT CLIMATE

c. Love

v. 9 Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.

Modern GLOBAL Leader who has BUCKS and BABES like Solomon said...

My attention span is short...instead of being content when everything is going fine, I start getting impatient and irritable. For me the important thing is the getting, not the having.
Donald Trump

Jim in Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn > Could NOT believe the Bible
Bible SAYS Solomon was Wisest man in World AND he had 700 Wives
Jim Never could See how those Two Things went Together!

d. Labor

v. 10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

"Sheol > Hebrew = Grave, Place of Dead, Humans and Animals – NO ESCAPE
Down in Lowest Parts of Earth - No Light, Remembrance, Praise of God, No Sound

Money fails in the end. Five minutes after you are dead someone else will have your money...All you live for, the accumulated wealth of a lifetime, everything you dreamed about, every cent you ever saved, every investment, all of it gone forever...After a rich man dies, people often say, "How much did he leave?" The answer is always the same: He left it all.
Ray Pritchard

So GOOD GIFTS of Life are DIVERSIONS, but will NOT Delay the Final DAY
Popular Tract: "God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life" *Really?*

Life is Brief INTERVAL Between DELIVERY ROOM and the CEMETARY

So, why is this Book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible??

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

Ecclesiastes - God's Message ABOUT WORLD > FALLEN, FOOLISH, FUTILE

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?... Numbers 13.17-20

God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight...*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

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

More we HEAR the WORLD, More our HEARTS BREAK for the WORLD

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

God gave us TWO EARS & just ONE MOUTH – To Listen Well before Speaking
World NOT inclined to LISTEN to CHURCH – Speak WISELY & WINSOMELY

Philip 3.18 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

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

3. Resting our Hearts in the Son

Q. Great Knowledge but Still Lost and Hopeless – Under the Sun, Meaningless

Hear 2nd Voice at End of Book...

The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. Ecclesiastes 12.13

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

At bottom we can find the axiom of 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

Chapter 9 ends with HINT of a SAVIOR...

vs. 14-15 There was a little city with few men in it, and a great king came against it and besieged it, building great siegeworks against it. But there was found in it *a poor, wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city*. Yet no one remembered that poor man.

Jesus is POOR MAN who thru His ABSOLUTE POVERTY Saved the WORLD

God placed this Short Book in LIBRARY of 66 Books > All 66 Point to HIM

On Easter Afternoon Jesus found some His own Disciples who were Not Listening..

Reminds Slow & Foolish Disciples that He is the SUBJECT of All Scripture

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself..."everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Luke 24.27

a. We can Remain in the Son while still Under the Son

All SAME life Experiences > Xtian has Faithful TRAVELING PARTNER

Another great WISDOM Book of SCRIPTURE is the Book of JOB

Even if NEVER Read Bible – Probably heard of SUFFERINGS of JOB

One TERRIBLE Day Job LOST his FAMILY, FORTUNUES, and his FUTURE

I can COMPLETELY IDENTIFY with his WIFE who in her DESPAIR said...

Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die." Job 2.9

But God gave Job GRACE and the Eye of FAITH to See ABOVE the SUN...

"...Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips. Job 2.10

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Colossians 3.1-4

We can Remain in the Son while still Under the Son!

This is my Father's World, Oh Let me Ne'er Forget

That tho the Wrong seems Oft' so Strong, God is the Ruler Yet!

b. We can be Raised Above the Sun through the Son

Like all People under the sun – Christians will DIE Too!

But Christians DIE in the LORD – We have One who Died & Rose FOR US

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”
John 11.25,26

Bible calls Death for the Christian > Blessed > Falling Asleep > Risen with Christ

“Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”...thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.
1 Corinthians 15.55-58

MARTHA got the RIGHT ANSWER, and I Pray YOU will TOO....!

She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”
John 11.27

DEATH for UNBELIEVER – DREADFUL Anticipation LAKE of FIRE

For all who TRUST in Christ it is DOORWAY – He is THE DOOR

ENTER Presence of God THRU Him into Eternal, Abundant Life – Now & Forever

Wake Up from BLESSED SLEEP in the Presence of the LORD

We can Remain in the Son while still Under the Son

We can be Raised Above the Sun through the Son

Look BEYOND the Sun into the Pages of Scripture into the Face of the Son

Ecclesiastes 9.¹ But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God. Whether it is love or hate, man does not know; both are before him.² It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath.³ This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.⁴ But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.⁵ For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten.⁶ Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun.⁷ Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do.⁸ Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head.⁹ Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun.¹⁰ Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.¹¹ Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all.¹² For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.¹³ I have also seen this example of wisdom under the sun, and it seemed great to me.¹⁴ There was a little city with few men in it, and a great king came against it and besieged it, building great siegeworks against it.¹⁵ But there was found in it a poor, wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that poor man.