

ECCLESIASTES

Eccl. 1:1-3

Eccl. 1:1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

2 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all *is* vanity.

3 What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?



This evening we embark on a wonderful, spiritual journey through the Book of Ecclesiastes, known also as “The Preacher.” We will begin with introductory material:

TITLE

❖ The title of this book in the Hebrew text is all of verse 1.

Eccl. 1:1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

Original Word: קֹהֶלֶת

Transliteration: Qoheleth (**Used 7x – all in the Book of Ecclesiastes**)

Definition: "a collector (of sentences)", "a preacher", a son of David

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/6953.htm>

Eccl. 1:1 The words of **the Preacher**, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

2 Vanity of vanities, saith **the Preacher**, vanity of vanities; all *is* vanity. ...

12 I **the Preacher** was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

Eccl. 7:27 Behold, this have I found, saith **the preacher**, *counting* one by one, to find out the account:

Eccl. 12:8 Vanity of vanities, saith **the preacher**; all *is* vanity.

9 And moreover, because **the preacher** was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, *and* set in order many proverbs.

10 **The preacher** sought to find out acceptable words: and *that which* was written was upright, *even* words of truth.

- ❖ This Greek word is related to *ekklesia*, meaning "assembly." "Ekklesiastes" is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *qohelet* that is translated "Preacher" in verse 1.

1 Kings 8:1 Then **Solomon assembled** the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto king Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which *is* Zion.

2 And **all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto king Solomon** at the feast in the month Ethanim, which *is* the seventh month. ...

5 And **king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel, that were assembled unto him**, *were* with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen, that could not be told nor numbered for multitude.

WRITER AND DATE

❖ Solomon, during the last years of his life – (**971-931 B.C.**).

1 Kings 4:29 And **God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much**, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that *is* on the sea shore.

30 And **Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt.**

31 For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about.

32 And he spake **three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.**

33 And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that *is* in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.

34 And **there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.**

PURPOSE

- ❖ This book helps the reader develop a God-centered worldview and recognize the dangers of a self-centered worldview.
- ❖ It does not describe the life of faith or teach what the responsibilities of faith in God are. It also prescribes the limits of human philosophy (cf. 3:11; 8:16-17).
- ❖ **This book refutes intellectual agnostics and educated humanists.** It is a “thinking man’s” book!

GENRE

- ❖ This is a book of Hebrew poetry, specifically, wisdom literature designed to teach the reader. It is also autobiographical, relating the personal experiences of the writer. Thus, it is a combination of poetry and prose.

THEME

- ❖ All is vanity.
- ❖ Life without knowing and doing the will of God is empty of meaning and purpose.

Psa 39:4 LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it *is*; *that* I may know how frail I *am*.

5 Behold, thou hast made my days *as* an handbreadth; and mine age *is* as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state *is* altogether vanity. Selah.

MESSAGE

- ❖ Solomon had everything any person could ever want.
- ❖ Solomon experienced everything any person could ever try.
- ❖ Solomon enjoyed every pleasure anyone would want to experience.
- ❖ Solomon had the most of anything and everything: fame, fortune, and females.
- ❖ Solomon found that temporal pleasures were “all vanity.”
- ❖ Solomon learned that the conclusion is “Fear God” and be obedient to His word and His will.

Eccl. 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:
Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

Psa. 111:10 **The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom:** a good understanding have all they that do *his commandments*: his praise endureth for ever.

Prov. 1:7 **The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge:** *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Prov. 9:10 **The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom:** and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding.

Prov. 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

❖ The major revelations of the book are three:

- First, Ecclesiastes reveals that every human endeavor lacks ultimate value. All is vanity in that sense.

- The second major revelation of this book is that people should live life in the fear of God and enjoy life as much as they can.
- The third major revelation of the book is its statement of what true wisdom is (12:13).

❖ Important implications of the teaching of this book:

- First, conviction results in conduct that produces character.
- Second, to dethrone God is to lose the key to life.

❖ The major lessons of Ecclesiastes are essentially two:

1. Recognize God (fear Him):
2. Rejoice in life (smell the roses).

The Exposition

The first 11 verses of the book introduce the writer, the theme of the book, and a general defense of the assertion that Solomon made in the theme statement (v. 2).

I. THE PREACHER'S SUBJECT, 1:1-11

A. The Preacher, 1:1 (Solomon)

1. What He Was, 1:1a "The words of the Preacher..."
2. Who He Was, 1:1b "...the son of David, king..."
3. Where He Was, 1:1c "...in Jerusalem."

B. The Problem, 1:2-3

1. The Great Quotations, 1:2

Eccl. 1:2 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; **all is vanity.**

Original Word: הֶבֶל

Transliteration: hebel

Definition: vapor, breath

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/1892.htm>

❖ **Verse 2 is an attack upon the philosophy of PESSIMISM.**

Arthur Schopenhauer is known as the philosopher of pessimism, as he articulated a worldview that challenges the value of existence.

Schopenhauer's pessimistic vision follows from his account of the inner nature of the world as aimless blind striving.

Because the will has no goal or purpose, the will's satisfaction is impossible.

The will objectifies itself in a hierarchy of gradations from inorganic to organic life, and every grade of objectification of the will, from gravity to animal motion, is marked by insatiable striving. In addition, every force of nature and every organic form of nature participates in a struggle to seize matter from other forces or organisms. **Thus existence is marked by conflict, struggle and dissatisfaction.**

The attainment of a goal or desire, Schopenhauer continues, results in satisfaction, whereas the frustration of such attainment results in suffering. Since existence is marked by want or deficiency, and since satisfaction of this want is unsustainable, existence is characterized by suffering. This conclusion holds for all of nature, including inanimate natures, insofar as they are at essence will. However, suffering is more conspicuous in the life of human beings because of their intellectual capacities. Rather than serving as a relief from suffering, the intellect of human beings brings home their suffering with greater clarity and consciousness. Even with the use of reason, human beings can in no way alter the degree of misery we experience; indeed, reason only magnifies the degree to which we suffer. **Thus all the ordinary pursuits of mankind are not only fruitless but also illusory insofar as they are oriented toward satisfying an insatiable, blind will.** Since the essence of existence is insatiable striving, and insatiable striving is suffering, **Schopenhauer concludes that nonexistence is preferable to existence.**

<https://www.iep.utm.edu/schopenh/>

2. The Great Questions, 1:3

Eccl. 1:3 What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh **under the sun**?

The expression “**under the sun**” is used **29 times in this book** which focuses upon “earthly,” temporal things.

Col. 3:22 Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God:

23 And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

Conclusion

Psa 39:4 **LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is;** *that I may know how frail I am.*

5 Behold, thou hast made my days *as* an handbreadth; and **mine age is as nothing before thee:** verily every man at his best state *is* altogether vanity. Selah.

6 Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up *riches*, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

7 And now, Lord, what wait I for? **my hope is in thee.**

8 Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish.



9 I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst *it*.

10 Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.

11 When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, **thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man *is* vanity.**
Selah.

12 Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I *am* a stranger with thee, *and* a sojourner, as all my fathers *were*.

13 O spare me, that I may recover strength, **before I go hence, and be no more.**

