

TITLE: INTRODUCTION TO WISDOM FOR DEVELOPING A GOD-CENTERED PHILOSOPHY FOR LIFE

MESSAGE: #1 in the series on Ecclesiastes, message one in chapter one

DATE: April 19, 2009

TEXT: Ecclesiastes 1:1-18

THEME: Wisdom for forming – creating – developing a God-centered, Christ-centered, Bible-centered philosophy for life – a Christian world view.

INTRODUCTION:

1. The pulpit schedule for 2009 – Wisdom literature
 - a. Wisdom for the Family – The Life of Solomon - completed
 - b. Wisdom for Daily Living – The Proverbs – in process
 - c. Wisdom for Marriage – The Song of Songs – in the fall on Wednesday nights
 - d. Wisdom for Developing a Philosophy for Life – Ecclesiastes- now starting
 - e. Wisdom for Suffering – Job – this Summer/Fall
 - f. Wisdom for Worship – The Psalms – Next year
2. This book answers the question, “Where can we find meaning in the world? Or life?”
3. There are some people who foolishly believe that this book should not be in the Bible.
4. This is one of the most puzzling books of the Bible.
5. Noted French scholar and author Jacques Ellul said, “I have read, meditated on, and prayed over Ecclesiastes for more than fifty years. It has perhaps given me more, spoken to me more, than any other” book. He wrote a book on Ecclesiastes, which was the capstone of his writing.
6. Theologian R.C. Sproul states that this book was instrumental for him coming to Christ. He heard Ecclesiastes 11:3 about the tree that fell in the woods to decay and he saw himself, “lying on the floor of the forest having fallen . . . and rotting and disintegrating.”
7. Thomas Wolfe believed that “Ecclesiastes is the greatest single piece of writing I have ever known, and the wisdom expressed in it the most lasting and profound.”
8. Some of stated that Ecclesiastes is the most misunderstood book in the Bible.
9. Jerome believed the book promoted asceticism and Luther was quite critical of the book. Even Voltaire, used passages from the book to support his philosophical views.
10. There are statements in the book that make it clear that we cannot fully know the mind of God and that man’s understanding about life is limited. This tension is demonstrated in the book.
11. The point is that life is meaningless apart from God. Life does not make any sense.
12. Joy does not come from what you do but comes from a relationship with God.
13. Solomon is going to work hard at illustrating the folly of finding fulfillment apart from God.
14. The meaninglessness of life. Should we enjoy life? Should we have a sober view of life? Should we take our own life?
15. This book, by some, has been deemed as the strangest book in the Bible.
16. Ecclesiastes is called the “thinking man’s book.”

A. THE NAME OF THE BOOK – THE TITLE

1. The English title of Ecclesiastes has been handed down from the Septuagint via the Vulgate (Liber Ecclesiastes). It means “one who calls an assembly.”
2. The Greek title derives from the name of the speaker of the book, who calls himself ekklesiastes. This Greek name is a translation of the Hebrew Qoheleth.
3. Qoheleth is not a proper name, but rather a nickname of sorts. The name literally means “one who assembles” or an “assembler.” The feminine participle is used to emphasize that this is a vocational name rather than a proper name. The English translations translate the name/title as “the Preacher” and “the Teacher,” both of which are misleading. This English title assumes that the “Preacher” has assembled a group to hear his message. (Longman 1-3)
4. Book written in Jerusalem by King Solomon in his latter years. The author writes as an old man. He describes a lifetime of accumulating wealth, and in chapters 11-12 he writes as one beginning to experience the onset of old age. He writes for young men who might learn from his experiences (11:9; 12:1; cf. Proverbs 1:8).
5. Preacher occurs seven times
6. King – preacher
7. Ecclesiastes is the Latin translation of the Hebrew name Qoheleth sometimes written Kohelet. The word itself means “one who assembles a group” and implies that it is referring to a teacher gathering his pupil’s to hear his teachings. We are Solomon’s students.
8. Read William Kaiser on Ecclesiastes – he believes Solomon is the author.
9. Solomon had it all but his life ended in meaninglessness. He departed from God and experienced the vanity of life – the futility and the emptiness.
10. What a book written by the King of Israel in Jerusalem to disseminate amongst his citizens. He has some explaining to do.

B. AUTHOR

1. The author is an old and repentant Solomon who looks back over his life, particularly the period after his apostasy from the Lord (I Kings 11:1-13). The author is the King of Israel.
2. The superscription in the first verse defines the author as the “son of David, king in Jerusalem.”
3. The book describes a king who had fantastic wealth.
4. In I Kings 8 there is an intentional link to the chosen acronym Qoheleth. The story of the dedication of the temple uses the verbal root qhl quite often in reference to Solomon gathering people to hear his speech. He is seen in I Kings as the “Assembler.”
5. Gregory Thaumaturgos (A.D. 213-270), a disciple of Origen, wrote an early paraphrase of the book writes, “Solomon, a king more honored and a prophet wiser than anyone else, speaks to the whole assembly of God.”
6. The Jewish Targum suggests that Ecclesiastes fills the gap in the life of Solomon after his apostasy. It is his return to orthodoxy at the end of his life.
7. Longman does not believe Solomon is the author – but some teacher who identifies with Solomon written before the Maccabean revolt. (Longman 1-7)

8. Solomon has been considered the author by both Christians and Jews until the rise of historical criticism in the 18th and 19th centuries. Then Solomon's authorship was questioned. Many think it is a post-exilic work.
 - a. Reasons for this is the Hebrew is very unusual.
 - b. Apparent Aramaisms.
 - c. Possible Persian words: *pardes* and *pitgam*
9. Solomon "beloved of the Lord"
10. The Preacher – gathered Kingdom to hear
11. Wisdom used fifty times. Classified as Wisdom literature.
 - a. Kings – Gospel of Solomon
 - b. Song of Solomon – Acts of Solomon
 - c. Proverbs – Epistles of Solomon
 - d. Ecclesiastes – Revelation of Solomon
12. Solomon's counterpart to father's Psalm 51
13. History silent regarding Solomon's confession and return to the Lord.
14. "*Old...will not depart.*" (Proverbs 22:6).
15. The author claimed to be greater than anyone who lived in Jerusalem before him (2:9).
16. It appears that in 2:1-11 that Solomon is his statement of repentance.
17. The requirements of 1:1 can only be fulfilled by Solomon. This settles it.
18. There are parallels in the book and similarities in what both say about Solomon's wisdom (I Kings 3:12).
19. The Jewish interpretation was that Solomon was the author.
20. In 1644, Hugo Grotius was the first interpreter who definitely advanced the idea that the book is not to be ascribed to Solomon.
21. Reasons the author is Solomon
 - a. Ecclesiastes 1:16 with I Kings 3:12 (showing Solomon's unrivaled wisdom).
 - b. Ecclesiastes 2:4-10 with I Kings 5:27-32.
 - c. Ecclesiastes 2:4-10 with I Kings 7:1-8 (showing Solomon's unsurpassed wealth).
 - d. Ecclesiastes 2:4-10 with I Kings 9:17-19 (showing Solomon's huge retinue of servants).
 - e. Ecclesiastes 2:4-10 with I Kings 10:14-29 (showing Solomon's extensive building projects).
 - f. Ecclesiastes 7:20 with I Kings 8:46 ("There is no man who does not sin.")
 - g. Ecclesiastes 7:28 with I Kings 11:1-8 (not a God-fearing woman among a thousand).
 - h. Ecclesiastes 12:9 with I Kings 4:32 (showing Solomon to be weighing, studying and arranging proverbs).
22. Solomon also wrote Psalms 72 and 127
23. In 1:12 it speaks about all the kings before him. There was only one king – David, but if you include the line of Canaanite kings who preceded Solomon in Jerusalem, such as Melchizedek, Adonizedec and Araunah the issue is resolved.
24. The book was written after Solomon's apostasy.
25. 28 times Solomon uses the name Elohim in the book.
26. The book has a missionary flavor – a broad appeal to mankind.
27. The fear of the Lord ties in with Deuteronomy 4:10. To fear is to believe; to fear is the attitude of obedient faith.

C. CANONICITY

1. Josephus mentions that the book “contains hymns to God” along with Psalms, Proverbs and Canticles.
2. Fragments of Ecclesiastes were found at Qumram. Four pieces of an Ecclesiastes manuscript were found in 1954 at Qumram. These contained portions of Ecclesiastes 5-7. These portions were the same as the MT. When we read Ecclesiastes, we read a book in the form in which it left the author’s hand.
3. Ecclesiastes was accepted as being canonical in the mishnaic tractate *Baba Bathra* (14b-15a)
4. The Jewish council of Jamnia (A.D. 90) often regarded as the council that closed the Hebrew canon.
5. Christians such as Melito of Sardis, Eiphanium, Origen and Jerome explicitly call it canonical.
6. The book is read during the week of Tabernacles – the whole purpose of life is to know and fear God.
7. The Book of Ecclesiastes forms one of the five Megilloth (rolls or scrolls).
8. Use a picture of the Dead Sea and scrolls. The Hebrew Masoretic Text illustrate the importance of the find. The fragments had to be at least several hundred years old – 150 to 250ish B.C.
9. There was a Jewish debate about the book. The more conservative school of Rabbi Shammai rejected the book, while the more liberal school of Rabbi Hillel approved the book. Shammai’s school thought the book consisted of contradictions and that some of the views were heretical (11:9; Numbers 15:39).
10. By 10th century AD the book was used by the Jews in their reading schedule for the Feast of Tabernacles.
11. SOS in his youth, Proverbs in his prime and Ecclesiastes in his old age.
12. The book was found in the Christian community in their canonical lists.
 - a. The first occurrence was that of Melito of Sardis (died about 190 AD)
13. The book is in the LXX – third century BC Greek translation.

C. THEME – MESSAGE

1. No permanent happiness apart from God
2. Warning – life without Christ is vanity
3. Do not waste your youth and life
4. Wise but fell (Moses, David, Peter) just before Peter is something, looks like MK cannot figure who that might be
5. The theme of the book appears in the prologue: “Meaningless! Meaningless! Everything is Meaningless!”
6. Why is life so frustrating?
7. The book is developing a God-centered worldview, a Christian philosophy for life. Man is accountable to God.
8. God is mentioned 40 times in the book, and six times he spoke of the fear of God (3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12-13; 12:13).
9. Work, wisdom, righteous living, enjoyment is worthless apart from a relationship with God. The book presents the wisdom for developing a biblical, God-centered philosophy for life.

10. The author basically is telling his son, “Life is hard, and then you die.” Then he tells his son what is most important – the meaning of life.
11. Wisdom books theme of “fearing God” and cross-referencing (Proverbs 26:27 and Ecclesiastes 10:8; Proverbs 30:4; Job 38:1-7). Fear God in Proverbs 1:7, 29; Job 29:29; Ecclesiastes 12:13).
12. Even the structure of the book is to frustrate you from an outlining view point.
13. The style of the book is elusive until you come to the last two verses – then it all makes sense, or at least most of it.
14. He looks at life from two viewpoints, from natural man’s to God’s.
15. In many ways this is a companion book to Job.
16. Creation theology provides a strong context for the theology of Qoheleth. Much of the book is rooted in Genesis:
 - a. Man is to live in companionship (Genesis 1:27; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9).
 - b. Man is given to sin (Genesis 3:1-6; Ecclesiastes 7:29; 8:11, 9:3)
 - c. Knowledge has God-given limits (Genesis 2:17; Ecclesiastes 8:7; 10:14)
 - d. Life involves tiresome toil (Genesis 3:14-19; Ecclesiastes 1:3; 2:22)
 - e. Death is inevitable for all mankind (Genesis 3:19, 24; Ecclesiastes 9:4-6; 11:8)
 - f. Order and regularity of nature are God’s sign of blessing (Genesis 8:21-9:17; Ecclesiastes 3:11-12)
 - g. Life is a “good” gift from God (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31; Ecclesiastes 2:24, 26; 3:12-13; 5:18).

LITERARY STYLE

1. Hard to determine what sections are prose and what sections are poetic.
2. Many devices are employed in the book including the “better saying” (4:3,6, 9), the metaphor (7:26), the example story (9:14-15), the comparison (11:5), the rhetorical question (2:19, 25), the autobiographical narrative (2:1-11), the woe saying and benediction (10:16-17), and the admonition (7:9).
3. The author uses word plays, anaphora – deliberate repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of a verse, 3:1-8, hyperbole (6:3, 6), and rhyme (10:11).
4. The structure of the book is very complex.
5. There seems to be a couple of possible allusions to Genesis 3:19 where it speaks of returning to the dust (3:20; 12:7). This would not be surprising since Solomon wanted to underscore the brevity and transitory nature of life.
6. The New Testament never directly quotes Ecclesiastes, but it seems that the apostle Paul alludes to the book in Romans 8:20. In Romans 8:20, the Greek word used *mataiotes* is the same word used in the Greek OT for the Hebrew word “hebel.” Paul speaks of the creation being subjected to futility when man chose to live life apart from God. He focuses on the inability of creation to attain the goal for which it is originally designed. When humanity sinned, God subjected creation to the curse of futility and decay. Solomon is giving us the effects of sin and the fall of mankind. We are under a curse which includes meaninglessness. Our hope is only in Christ and a relationship with Him.
7. There was one point in the life of Christ where He experienced sin and its effects and consequences and that was on the cross. He cries out that God had forsaken Him. He was experiencing at the moment a life apart from God – a sin cursed life, without God.

8. The book never uses the covenant name of God, Yahweh. This may underscore the aim of the book to be used as an evangelistic tool with those who have not yet entered into a covenant relationship with God through the shed blood of Christ.
9. IN the Bible you have history, law, wisdom, prophecy, gospel, epistle, and poetry. What type of literature is Ecclesiastes. It is prose and poetry, but largely personal, observational. It is autobiographical in nature and observational. It is actually a framed autobiography with a prologue (1:1-11) and an epilogue (12:8-14). The autobiography is from 1:12 to 12:7.
10. Poetry is seen associated with the proverbs in the book (1:15, 18; 7:1-14). The most famous poem is 3:1-8.
11. There is a refrain: “eat, drink and be merry – it is a gift of God” (2:24; 3:12-13; 3:22; 5:18-19; 8:15; 9:7-9).

OUTLINE USING THE REFRAIN – Kaiser’s outline

- PART I 1:2 to 2:26
 PART II 3:1 to 5:20
 PART III 6:1 to 8:15
 PART IV 8:16 to 12:14

D. OUTLINE

1. Introduction 1:1-1:11
2. #1 Sermon 1:12-3:15
3. #2 Sermon 3:16-5:20
4. #3 Sermon 6:1-8:13
5. #4 Sermon 8:14-12:7
6. #5 Sermon 12:8-14
7. The enjoyment theme is repeated (2:24-26; 5:18-20; 8:15-17; 11:7-10 as concluding the arguments of four major sections.

OUTLINE – A three-part book

1. 1:1-11 Framework – Prologue
2. 1:12-12:7 Autobiographical Introduction – Monologue on the meaning of life
3. 12:8-14 Framework – Epilogue

OUTLINE – GAEBELEIN

- I. THE MEANINGLESSNESS OF NATURE, WISDOM, AND WEALTH (1:2-2:23)
 - a. The Theme: All is frustration (1:1-3)
 - b. The frustration in nature and history (1:4-11)
 - c. The frustration in wisdom (1:12-18)
 - d. The frustration of unlimited wealth (2:1-11)
 - e. The Ultimate frustration: Death (2:12-23)
- II. THE DIVINE ORDER OF LIFE (3:24-3:22)
 - a. Daily Life to be Enjoyed (2:24-26)
 - b. God’s Plan for living (3:1-8)
 - c. The Pieces of the Whole (3:9-15)
 - d. The Consequences of Mortality (3:16-22)

- III. THE FRUSTRATION OF POLITICS (4:1-16)
- IV. THE FRUSTRATION OF LIFE (5:1-7:29)
 - a. Quiet before God (5:1-7)
 - b. Money and Mortality (5:8-20)
 - c. The Unfulfilled Life (6:1-9)
 - d. What is Good? (6:10-12)
 - e. Practical Advice for Daily Living (7:1-14)
 - f. Moderation Commended (7:15-22)
 - g. Bad Relationships (7:23-29)
- V. LIFE IN VIEW OF DEATH (8:1-9:18)
 - a. The Inevitability of Death (8:1-14)
 - b. Life to be enjoyed (8:15-9:10)
 - c. Uncertainty and Inequity (9:11-18)
- VI. PROVERBS (10:1-20)
 - a. Wise relationships (10:1-7)
 - b. Wise planning (10:8-11)
 - c. Wise speech and thought (10:12-20)
- VII. WISDOM FOR THE FUTURE AND THE PRESENT (11:1-10)
 - a. The uncertain future and present behavior (11:1-6)
 - b. The certain future and the present behavior (11:7-10)
- VIII. THE FRUSTRATION OF OLD AGE (12:1-8)
- IX. EPILOGUE (12:9-14)
 - a. The Credibility of the Author (12:9-12)
 - b. The Conclusion of the Matter (12:13-14)

OUTLINE BY GARRETT

1. Introduction (1:1-2)
2. On time and the world (1:3-11)
3. On wisdom (1:12-18)
4. On wealth (2:1-11)
5. On wisdom (2:12-17)
6. On time and the world (3:1-15b)
7. On Politics (3:15c-17)
8. On death (3:18-22)
9. ON politics (4:13-16)
10. On Religion (5:1-7)
11. On Politics (5:8-9)
12. On wealth (5:10-6:6)
13. Transition (6:7-9)
14. On wisdom and death (6:10-7:4)
15. Transition (7:5-6)
16. On wisdom and politics (7:7-9)
17. Transition (7:10)
18. On wisdom and wealth (7:11-14)
19. On wisdom and religion (7:15-29)
20. Transition (8:1)

21. On politics (8:2-6)
22. Transition (8:7-8)
23. On Theodicy (8:9-9:1)
24. Transition (9:2)
25. On death and contentment (9:3-10)
26. Transition (9:11-12)
27. On politics (9:13-10:17)
28. Transition (10:18-20)
29. On Death and Contentment (9:3-10)
30. Transition (9:11-12)
31. ON politics (9:13-10:17)
32. Transition (10:18-20)
33. On wealth (11:1-6)
34. On death and contentment (11:7-12:7)
35. Conclusion (12:8-14)

OUTLINE BY DONALD GLENN

- I. Introduction: the futility of all human endeavor apart from God (1:1-11)
 - a. Title (1:1)
 - b. Theme (1:2) the futility of human effort
 - c. General Support: the futility of human effort demonstrated from nature (1:3-11)
 - i. Thesis: No ultimate profit in human labor if you die (1:3) – Work cannot keep you from the grave or give you eternal life
 - ii. Proof: Ceaseless, wearisome rounds (1:4-11)
- II. The Futility of Human Achievement empirically demonstrated (1:12-6:9)
 - a. Personal observations on the futility of human achievement (1:12-2:17)
 - i. Futility of human achievement shown by personal investigation (1:12-15)
 - ii. Futility of human wisdom shown by personal reflection (1:16-18)
 - iii. Futility of pleasure-seeking shown by personal experience (2:1-11)
 - iv. Futility of a wise lifestyle shown by reflection on death (2:12-17)
 - b. The futility of human labor empirically demonstrated (2:18-6:9)
 - i. Labor fruits may be squandered by someone else (2:18-26)
 - ii. Labor cannot alter God's immutable, inscrutable providence (3:1-4:3)
 - iii. Labor is often motivated inappropriate incentives (4:4-16)
 - iv. Labor's fruits may sometimes not be enjoyed (5:1-6:9)
- III. The Limitations of human wisdom Empirically demonstrated (6:10-11:6)
 - a. Introduction: everything is immutably and inscrutably foreordained (6:10-12)
 - b. Man cannot fathom the plan of God (chapters 7-8)
 - i. Man's ignorance of the significance of adversity and prosperity (7:1-14)
 - ii. Man's ignorance of the significance of righteousness and wisdom (7:15-29)
 - iii. Man's ignorance of the enigma of divine retribution – chapter 8
 - c. Man does not know what will happen (9:1-11:6)
 - i. No one knows what will happen to him (9:1-10)
 - ii. No one knows whether his wisdom will succeed (9:11-10:11)
 - iii. Criticism is risky in view of one's ignorance of the future (10:12-20)

- iv. Work diligently despite ignorance of the future (11:1-6)
- IV. Conclusion: live joyously and responsibly in the fear of God (11:7-12:14)
 - a. Call to live joyously and responsibly (11:7-12:7)
 - i. Enjoy life because the darkness of death is coming (11:7-8)
 - ii. Enjoy life in your youth remembering that God will judge (11:9-10)
 - iii. Live responsibly in your youth for old age and death are coming (12:1-7)
 - b. Final advice in view of the futility of all human endeavor (12:8-14)
 - i. Reiteration of the theme: the futility of all human endeavor (12:8)
 - ii. The peculiar authority of this book (12:9-12)
 - iii. Final advice: Fear God and keep His commandments (12:13-14)

E. KEYWORDS

1. *"Vanity"* thirty-nine times – something without substance – transitory in nature- that which quickly passes away – vapor (concretely) breath – see it in cold – gone
2. *"Under the sun"* twenty-nine times – earthly, earthbound, natural sphere, temporal (draw horizontal line) heavenly realities, values, perspective
3. *"Heart"* frustration strikes at the heart
4. The book presents some very sophisticated and interesting imagery. The twin towers of the book are 3:1-8 and 12:1-7. The first deals with a highly structured poem on the different seasons of life. The second, he creates three metaphor clusters in order to paint a picture of old age and death.
5. The comprehensive nature of the book is seen with Solomon's references to the city, cultivated fields, gardens, the temple, a house, a bed chamber, courts of justice, seats of power, and battle.
6. The preacher is interested in the main areas of life – wealth, power, religion, social relationships, work and pleasure.

F. INTERPRETATION

1. The New Testament never directly quotes Ecclesiastes. There is a significant allusion to the book in Romans (8:18-21). The word "frustration" in the phrase "the creation was subjected to frustration" is the word used in the Greek OT to translate the motto word of Ecclesiastes, "meaningless." Ecclesiastes describes life apart from God's redeeming love. Life "under the sun," that is, a life apart from heavenly realities, apart from God is meaningless. He captures the despair of a world without God.
2. The author is preoccupied with death, because he sees nothing beyond that point. He wrote from the vantage point of no hope.
3. It is Jesus Christ who redeems us from vanity, from meaningless, who gives us purpose.
4. Funny allegorical interpretation of the book
 - a. The listeners were to eat and drink – this turned into an admonition to partake of the Lord's body and blood in communion.
5. Ambrose finds a reference to the Trinity in the three-strand cord of 4:12.
6. The author is writing about the meaningless life – the life lived apart from God. The author is on a search for the meaning of life. How to make sense of life!
7. The source of the author's anguish relates to two common problems that man faces: death and the inability to control and know the appropriate time to do anything. The author is struggling with timing issues. Chapter three is a key chapter addressing timing

issues. You put the two concepts together of death and timing and the point is that we don't even know the time we are going to die. We know for certain that we are going to die, but we don't know when.

8. Solomon is struggling with the question, why work so hard all your life to simply die and then to leave all you earned to some worthless person or even a person you do not know. It just doesn't make any sense.
9. The author knows that the end of the story is death. Death seems to ruin everything.
10. The theology of the book – it seems that life is full of challenges and then you die. His theology seems very pessimistic. It appears to be a song of skepticism until the last chapter.
11. The book follows the structure of Job in that the story is sad and unanswered until the last chapter. Then does it all make sense! The positive teaching of books come out in the end.
12. The “Fear God” passage in 12:13-14, reminds the reader of Proverbs 1:7 and the wisdom tradition.
13. Epicurean – “*fear God,*” not land of an Epicurean
14. Two perspectives – outlooks on life – will alternate
15. Human perspective: perspective – viewpoint – two eyes
 - a. man's
 - b. temporal – forty years
 - c. earthly
 - d. natural man
 - e. carnal man
 - f. life apart from God and His purpose
 - g. see life through man's eyes
16. Divine perspective:
 - a. God's
 - b. eternal – forever
 - c. heavenly
 - d. saved man
 - e. spiritual man
 - f. life filled with God – His purpose
 - g. see life through God's eyes
 - h. Where Christian growth takes place
17. Depending on which perspective you take – will determine the quality of life you will live. Life is vain apart from God. Life is full, rewarding, meaningful with God and obedience. The sooner you learn this, the better off you will be.
18. The book is evangelistic in nature. It creates a vacuum that only the cross can satisfy and fill.
19. The pessimism of the book
 - a. There is the endless motion that we see brings about no real change and no real profit.
 - b. Everything that happens seems to be predetermined, but no one can comprehend what will happen to him. Hence life is an enigma and a waiting on fate.
 - c. The theory that retribution always overtakes wickedness is an illusion and is contradicted by experience.

- d. Death is the universal negation of all values.
- 20. The book is filled with the fear of death. Some have suggested that this book is the low point of the Bible. “In the Book of Koheleth the Old Covenant digs for itself its own grave” (Delitzsch).
- 21. It is written by a thinker who is caught in the tensions of life.
- 22. When God is introduced the “under the sun” terminology drops out and the teacher speaks of the joy of man.
- 23. This is an essay in apologetics. It defends the life of faith in a gracious God by pointing to the grimness of the alternative.
- 24. Ecclesiastes urges its readers to recognize that they are mortal. They must abandon all illusions of self-importance, face death and life squarely, and accept with fear and trembling their dependence on God.
- 25. Recognition of personal mortality leads necessarily to three conclusions:
 - a. All pretence of pride must be abandoned.
 - b. Life should be enjoyed for what it is – a gift of God.
 - c. The most important point is that one must revere God. Which implies a dependency on God.
- 26. The book is a collection of reflections on creation and the fall.

I. THE QOHELETH – THE PREACHER

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

1. Word studies:
 - a. “words” 1697 דבַר 'D' dabar {daw-baw'}
 - b. “Preacher” 6953 קוֹהֵלֶת, ה, ח, טוֹ qoheleth {ko-heh'-leth}
 - Meaning:** 1) collector (of sentences), preacher, public speaker, speaker in an assembly, Qoheleth
 - Origin:** fem. of act part from 06950; TWOT - 1991c; n m
 - Usage:** AV - preacher 7; 7 (1:1, 1:2, 1:12; 7:27; 12:8, 12:9, 12:10)
2. Royalty – he had everything, he sampled everything life had to offer.
3. Not a proper name. It occurs three times in the beginning and three times in the end and one time in the middle.
4. Only Solomon was the son of David who reigned in Jerusalem.
5. A lifetime of experimentation, highest position in the land, wealth.
6. Built temple, palace, 700 wives, 300 concubines, sensual pleasure.
7. Peace, united nation.
8. Wisdom, knowledge – picture of millennium – zenith of Israel.
9. The Qoheleth is a term that designates a man “who assembles a group, that is, a congregation; one whom we should call a preacher.”
10. This verse acts like the title page for the book.
11. This is the opening line of an eleven-verse section that prepares the reader for what follows in the authors’ autobiography. The idolatry in his life did not satisfy and only magnified the emptiness of his life.
12. The location of the author is in Jerusalem.
13. The Royal Preacher. He is trying to repair the dishonor he has brought to God and certainly wants the assembled audience not to follow his meaningless pursuit.
14. His lineage, his dignity, his function.

15. The office of the preacher. The word Preacher is in the feminine which is how the Hebrew works to designate an office.
16. Reasons that this Solomon

II. THE QUIRK – THE PROBLEM

(1:2) Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.

1. Word studies:
 - a. “vanity” - 1892 לב, ה, hebel {heh'bel} or (rarely in the abs.) lbeh ;
 habel {hab-ale'}
Meaning: 1) vapour, breath 1a) breath, vapour 1b) vanity (fig.) adv 2) vainly
Origin: from 01891; TWOT - 463a; n m
Usage: AV - vanity 61, vain 11, altogether 1; 73
2. Waste of time
3. No point – purpose
4. Life is completely meaningless, completely meaningless! Everything is meaningless! NO doubt the author’s conclusion – everything is meaningless. It is composed with a series of superlatives. Everything is transitive and hence lacks substance. The Lord means breath, vapor. Everything is temporary.
5. The word is used 32 times outside the Book of Ecclesiastes
 - a. In 13 passages it describes idols. Describing the uselessness and meaninglessness of idols. In this context the transitive meaning of the word is not in view.
 - b. There are passages that describe the temporariness or transitive nature of something (Psalm 62:9, Isaiah 30:7, “false “ in Proverbs 31:30.
 - c. The word is more often used to describe meaningless than temporary.
 - d. Here the meaning is meaningless. He leaves nothing out. He cannot find meaning in anybody or anything. The author will prove his point in his autobiography where he is searching for meaning “under the sun.” This is a pursuit apart from a relationship with God.
6. Satan would like you to think that your life does not count, that you are useless and everything you do as a believer is meaningless. He would like us to say, “What’s the use?”
7. The transience of life makes it meaningless.
8. Illustration of “song of songs.” The supreme song! The Holy of holies – the supreme place – the most holy spot on the earth. “heaven of heavens” and “servant of servants.” The supreme servant!
9. He will qualify this statement of meaningless by the phrase “under the sun” from the perspective of a human life being lived apart from God.
10. The issue then can be stated, “Is there meaning to life?” If yes, how do you find meaning in life?
11. Meaningless – utterly. This is the problem the unsaved person faces.
12. Five times – “*vanity*.” Four of those times Solomon uses a two-fold repetition of a Hebrew superlative construction
13. Vanity in the superlative. We are living in a world of futility, vanity and frustration.
14. Man chose to become man-centered and man-directed vs. God-centered and God-directed.

15. *“The creature was made subject to vanity”* (Romans 8:20). This quality of life did not exist before the fall. Abel – vanity. *“For what is your life? It is even a vapour”* (James 4:14).
16. *“Vanity”* - the word can be translated “futility” or “meaningless.” It can also mean a fleeting vapor. The context will determine its meaning. Absurdity. It has a full range of meaning. Transitory in nature and therefore has no lasting value.
17. Immediately Solomon confronts us with the bleak reality that life apart from God is meaningless. Solomon blasts into the topic. He is very intense.
18. Five times he uses the word “vanity” – that is emphatic, that is intense.
19. Over 35 times in Ecclesiastes the word “meaninglessness” or vanity is used. Life is devoid of meaning apart from God.
20. This verse will be repeated in 12:8 at the end of the book, acting as part of the frame.
21. Solomon has the position and the resources to do some pretty serious exploring. He was extremely intelligent, his literary output was prodigious. His knowledge of nature was encyclopedic.
22. His global theses is that “all is hebel.” This word is used 37 times in the book. It is the identical name for Abel in Genesis 4.