



Ecclesiastes 1

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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Ecclesiastes 1.

(A brief overview of the main topics).

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

Ecclesiastes is a brilliant book that gives an overall view of human life on earth, but in having said that, a spotlight should be shone upon the truth that there will always be individual exceptions and contradictions to the general laws that apply to the collective observations of the human population as a whole. God has designed the universe this way so that no human whether righteous or wicked can find out their future or know what will happen to them tomorrow (Eccles. 7:14). Ecclesiastes contains reflections of an elderly man called, "the Preacher" as he considers questions concerning meaning in life. The Preacher looks back and sees the futility and brief, passing of life and its meaningless (i.e. the vanity of it) even if it is spent chasing after the good things this life can offer, including wisdom, work, pleasure, and wealth, the Preacher comes to this conclusion because no matter how satisfying these things maybe for a time death is certain to end this satisfaction and the enjoyment of them. The sentiment of the following two verses echo throughout the book:

- By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return (Gen. 3:19).
- The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit (the life) returns to God who gave it (Eccles. 12:7).

The book concludes that only by living life with reverence and holy respect toward God the Creator and doing-good to others does life make sense. This is because those who live in this manner can enjoy God's good gifts on earth and will be delivered from death to eternal life and rewarded for the good, they have shown toward others.

Vanity: the word vanity comes from the Hebrew word (*hebel*). From Strong's Concordance it means emptiness, something fleeting and short lived and carries the idea of something being transient, brief and passing or of something unsatisfactory and meaningless.

The Preacher: based on the following words of verse one:

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

And the following words of chapter two:

- I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. ⁵I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. ⁶I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. ⁷I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. ⁸I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines, the delight of the children of man. ⁹So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem (Eccles. 2:4-9).

It is traditionally accepted by most that "the Preacher," is Solomon during the tenth century B.C.

NOTE: for information of people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

- **Ecclesiastes 1:1-18** ¹ The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. ² Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity. ³ What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? ⁴ A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. ⁵ The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises. ⁶ The wind blows to the south and goes around to the north; around and around goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns. ⁷ All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they flow again. ⁸ All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. ⁹ What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. ¹⁰ Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already in the ages before us. ¹¹ There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be among those who come after. ¹² I the Preacher have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. ¹³ And I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom all that is done under heaven. It is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. ¹⁴ I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind. ¹⁵ What is crooked cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted. ¹⁶ I said in my heart, "I have acquired great wisdom, surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before me, and my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge." ¹⁷ And I applied my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind. ¹⁸ For in much wisdom is much vexation, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN TOPICS

The Preacher being old in age and most likely near to death ponders the meaning of life and asks the question: "What is gained by all man's work?" since it all seems to be vanity for the following reasons:

Creation continues: from generation to generation, earth remains forever, the sun rises and goes down, to rise again, the wind blows around the circumference of the world and returns, all the streams run to the sea, but the sea is never full while human life comes and returns to the dust and the grave.

The lack of contentment: the eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing nor is the heart content with what one has.

Nothing changes: what has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done again.

Nothing is new: concerning human behaviour there is nothing new under the sun.

All things are forgotten: there is no remembrance of former things, nor, will there be any remembrance of later things yet to be by those who will come after.

Human nature and sin: what is crooked (in human nature) cannot be made straight, and what is lacking cannot be counted.

All is vanity: the more knowledge and wisdom one gains the more they realize and are aware that all is vanity (i.e., brief and passing away) because everything goes on the same and all men and women end up in the grave so what is the gain? (This is why the preacher says he who increases knowledge increases sorrow).

A PERSONAL NOTE

I am an older man about to retire from work and fully understand the truth of the Preachers words. A young man has already been appointed to replace me, I will be forgotten and things will continue as they always

have. This is the cycle of life, we come into this world, we grow and blossom for a moment and we pass on and another takes our place and the cycle of life continues from generation to generation. The world could be likened to a garden of flowers, the seed gives life, beautiful flowers of brilliant colours and multitudes of different shapes and sizes grow, they radiate wonder and joy for a moment then wither and die, but a new seed, sprouts, grows and takes its place and the garden continues on as it always has.

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

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