

Ecclesiastes: Introduction

Read Ecclesiastes 1 – 2

Our study of wisdom literature brings us to a book that is, by some standards, one of the oddest in the Bible: Ecclesiastes.

The author is not named, but several passages strongly imply that it is King Solomon. He also wrote most of Proverbs, which we just studied. Solomon's authorship would put the book in the 900's B.C.

The book suggests a picture of an old man looking back on his life. Here's a summary of his reflections:

- Nothing in life satisfies.
- Life is riddled with injustice.
- Death renders all of life meaningless. Its specter hovers over every second of our existence. If in the end everything fades to blackness, does anything really matter?
- In a number of passages, the author says that the best you can do in life is to enjoy what you've got while you've got it. Take the gifts God gives you, be grateful, and make the best of them. But since all of life is meaningless, even this advice rings hollow.

Of course, the author is exactly right. If we're hurtling toward nothingness, does it really matter how we get there? If there is no existence or meaning beyond this life, why not simply enjoy it while it lasts?

Ecclesiastes apparently comes from perhaps the wealthiest and certainly the wisest man that ever lived (1 Kings 3:12). That makes its bleakness and brutal honesty even more gripping. This man enjoyed the very best of material blessings, yet found them all empty.

Human life is indeed futile, unjust, empty, and meaningless...apart from the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That makes this odd book of Ecclesiastes an important prequel to the marvelous events of the New Testament. It strips away all our false gods and thus shines our light of hope on Jesus Christ alone. And in turn, the reality of Jesus Christ transforms the message of Ecclesiastes into truth that is glorious and life-affirming.