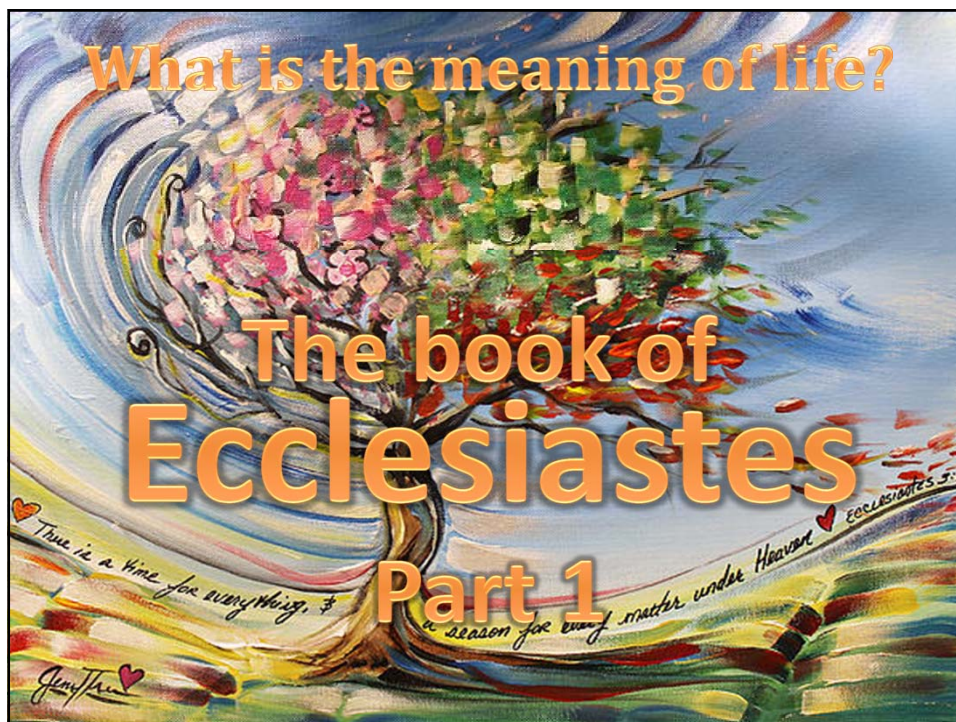


WHAT THE  
**B**IBLE  
Is ABOUT

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Is ABOUT

**4** SESSION FOUR



"Why shouldn't things be largely **absurd, futile, and transitory**? They are so, and we are so, and they and we go very well together."

Philosophy Professor George Santayana  
Harvard University, 1889-1912

“There is **no reason to suppose** that a **man’s life** has any more meaning than the life of the humblest insect that crawls from one annihilation to another.”

English Professor Joseph Wood Krutch  
Columbia University, 1937-1952

### The book of Ecclesiastes

- The most **outrageous** book in the Bible.
- It **sounds like** a Chinese fortune cookie...
- ... but has a very **contemporary message**:
  - **Fatalism**
  - **Existentialism**
  - **Chauvinism**
  - **Hedonism**
  - **Cynicism**
  - **Pessimism**
- A man reached the end of his life **disappointed, disillusioned, depressed**.
- **“I saw”** – these are his observations. (But God doesn’t see life as Solomon sees it.)

## What did Solomon see when he looked?

Among other things, Solomon saw:

- **injustice** to the poor (Ecclesiastes 4:1-3)
- **crooked politics** (Ecclesiastes 5:8)
- **incompetent leaders** (Ecclesiastes 10:6-7)
- **guilty people free** to commit more crime (Ecclesiastes 8:11)
- **materialism** (Ecclesiastes 5:10)
- a **desire** for “the good old days” (Ecclesiastes 7:10)

Makes one wonder if Solomon has been around on his Harley this week to spot those things.



## Terminology

קֹהֵלֶת	<i>qoheleth</i>	H6953	preacher, speaker in an assembly, debater
קֶהָל	<i>hebel</i>	H1892	vapour, breath, vanity (emptiness)
יִתְרוֹן	<i>yithrown</i>	H3504	profit, gain, advantage, surplus
עֲמָל	<i>amal</i>	H5999	toil, trouble, labour, mischief, worry
רָע	<i>ra</i>	H4751	evil, wickedness, mischief
ἐκκλησία	<i>ekklesia</i>	G2258	assembly (as in citizens assembled together)

## Solomon's term for God

"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."  
(Deuteronomy 6:5)

יהוה  
Yĕhovah

אלהים  
'elohiym

**Elohim** ("God" in the English Bible) is the Mighty God, the glorious God of **creation** who exercises sovereign power.

**YHWH** ("LORD" in the English Bible) is the God of the **covenant**, the God of revelation who is eternally self-existent and yet graciously **relates Himself to sinful man**.

Since Solomon is dealing exclusively with what he sees "under the sun" (i.e., the Creation"), he consistently uses *Elohim*.

## Is life worth living?

**NO!** Life under the sun is **not** worth living:

- the **monotony** of life (1:4-11)
- the **vanity** of wisdom (1:12-18)
- the **futility** of wealth (2:1-11)
- the **certainty** of death (2:12-23)

Love **not** the world,  
**neither** the things that  
are in the world.

1 John 2:15

The blessing of the Lord  
makes one **rich**, and He  
adds **no sorrow** with it.

Proverb 10:22, NKJV

To everything  
Turn, turn, turn  
There is a season  
Turn, turn, turn  
And a time to every purpose under Heaven

A time to be born, a time to die  
A time to plant, a time to reap  
A time to kill, a time to heal  
A time to laugh, a time to weep

To everything  
Turn, turn, turn  
There is a season  
Turn, turn, turn  
And a time to every purpose under Heaven

A time to build up, a time to break down  
A time to dance, a time to mourn  
A time to cast away stones  
A time to gather stones together

To everything  
Turn, turn, turn  
There is a season  
Turn, turn, turn  
And a time to every purpose under Heaven

A time of love, a time of hate  
A time of war, a time of peace  
A time you may embrace  
A time to refrain from embracing

A time to gain, a time to lose  
A time to rend, a time to sew  
A time to love, a time to hate  
A time of peace, I swear it's not too late

Songwriters: PETE SEEGER  
© Universal Music Publishing Group



### Ecclesiastes Chapter 1

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 profit has a man from all his labour In which he toils under the sun?
4. One generation passes away, and another generation comes; But the earth abides forever.
5. The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, And hastens to the place where it arose.
6. The wind goes toward the south, And turns around to the north; The wind whirls about continually, And comes again on its circuit.
7. All the rivers run into the sea, Yet the sea is not full; To the place from which the rivers come, There they return again.
8. All things are full of labour; Man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, Nor the ear filled with hearing.
9. That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun.
10. Is there anything of which it may be said, "See, this is new"? It has already been in ancient times before us.

## Ecclesiastes Chapter 1

11. There is no remembrance of former things, Nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come By those who will come after.
12. I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.
13. And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised.
14. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind.
15. What is crooked cannot be made straight, And what is lacking cannot be numbered.
16. I communed with my heart, saying, "Look, I have attained greatness, and have gained more wisdom than all who were before me in Jerusalem. My heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge."
17. And I set my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also is grasping for the wind.
18. For in much wisdom is much grief, And he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

## Ecclesiastes Chapter 2

1. I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure"; but surely, this also was vanity.
2. I said of laughter--"Madness!"; and of mirth, "What does it accomplish?"
3. I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom, and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the sons of men to do under heaven all the days of their lives.
4. I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards.
5. I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.
6. I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove.
7. I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me.



## Ecclesiastes Chapter 2

8. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, and musical instruments of all kinds.
9. So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me.
10. Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, For my heart rejoiced in all my labour; And this was my reward from all my labour.
11. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done And on the labour in which I had toiled; And indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun.
12. Then I turned myself to consider wisdom and madness and folly; For what can the man do who succeeds the king?--Only what he has already done.
13. Then I saw that wisdom excels folly As light excels darkness.
14. The wise man's eyes are in his head, But the fool walks in darkness. Yet I myself perceived That the same event happens to them all.

## Ecclesiastes Chapter 2

15. So I said in my heart, "As it happens to the fool, It also happens to me, And why was I then more wise?" Then I said in my heart, "This also is vanity."
16. For there is no more remembrance of the wise than of the fool forever, Since all that now is will be forgotten in the days to come. And how does a wise man die? As the fool!
17. Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind.
18. Then I hated all my labour in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me.
19. And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labour in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity.
20. Therefore I turned my heart and despaired of all the labour in which I had toiled under the sun.

## Ecclesiastes Chapter 2

21. For there is a man whose labour is with wisdom, knowledge, and skill; yet he must leave his heritage to a man who has not laboured for it. This also is vanity and a great evil.
22. For what has man for all his labour, and for the striving of his heart with which he has toiled under the sun?
23. For all his days are sorrowful, and his work burdensome; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity.
24. Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labour. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God.
25. For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I?
26. For God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in His sight; but to the sinner He gives the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to him who is good before God. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.

## Three tests

- Life
  - Enjoyment (2:1-3)
  - Employment (2:4-11)
- Death
  - Wisdom (2:12-27)
  - Wealth (2:18-23)
- He accepted life (2:24-26) CONCLUSION

### **Ecclesiastes 3 – Everything Has Its Time**

1. To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven:
2. A time to be born,  
And a time to die;  
A time to plant,  
And a time to pluck what is planted;
3. A time to kill,  
And a time to heal;  
A time to break down,  
And a time to build up;
4. A time to weep,  
And a time to laugh;  
A time to mourn,  
And a time to dance;
5. A time to cast away stones,  
And a time to gather stones;  
A time to embrace,  
And a time to refrain from embracing;
6. A time to gain,  
And a time to lose;  
A time to keep,  
And a time to throw away;
7. A time to tear,  
And a time to sew;  
A time to keep silence,  
And a time to speak;
8. A time to love,  
And a time to hate;  
A time of war,  
And a time of peace.

### **To overcome monotony in life (3:1:5-9)**

1. Look up (3:1–8). God orders time.
  2. Look within (3:9–14). Eternity is within your heart.
  3. Look ahead (3:15–22). Death comes to all.
  4. Look around (4:1–5:9)
    - In the courtroom (4:1-3)
    - In the Marketplace (4:4-8)
    - On the highway (4:9-12)
    - In the palace (4:13-16)
- Enjoy life (3:12–15, 22)*

### Ecclesiastes 3 - The God-Given Task

<sup>9</sup> What profit has the worker from that in which he labours? <sup>10</sup> I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied. <sup>11</sup> He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.

<sup>12</sup> I know that nothing *is* better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, <sup>13</sup> and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labour—it *is* the gift of God.

<sup>14</sup> I know that whatever God does,  
It shall be forever.  
Nothing can be added to it,  
And nothing taken from it.  
God does *it*, that men should fear before Him.

<sup>15</sup> That which is has already been,  
And what is to be has already been;  
And God requires an account of what is past.

### Ecclesiastes 3 - Injustice Seems to Prevail

<sup>16</sup> Moreover I saw under the sun:

*In* the place of judgment,  
Wickedness *was* there;  
And *in* the place of righteousness,  
Iniquity *was* there.

<sup>17</sup> I said in my heart,

“God shall judge the righteous and the wicked,  
For *there is* a time there for every purpose and for every work.”

<sup>18</sup> I said in my heart, “Concerning the condition of the sons of men, God tests them, that they may see that they themselves are *like* animals.” <sup>19</sup> For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all *is* vanity. <sup>20</sup> All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust.

### **Ecclesiastes 3 - Injustice Seems to Prevail**

<sup>20</sup> All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust.

<sup>21</sup> Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to the earth?

<sup>22</sup> So I perceived that nothing *is* better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that *is* his heritage. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?

### **Two chapters where God enters: Chapter 3**

- A Time (God comes into the book).
- It's a poem, with rhythm, a song about time, but most important part is after poem when it goes back to prose, "God orders our times."
- It's only that we have lows that we have highs.
- De Valente (DV) God willing.
- There can be a pattern to life. Our times are in His hand and He will decide (based on interaction with us. He repents (Moses)).

### Chapter 12 presence of God

- Remember God, fear Him, and study His way to live. Ecclesiastes tells you where you finish up if you don't discover His way to live.
- That if you don't understand the meaning of life from heaven's angle and from the angle of the next world, you'd finish up a disillusioned, disappointed, depressed person saying, "Well, the whole lot was pointless, where has it got me?"
- "Whatever we do in the Lord, our labour is not in vain." 1 Corinthians 15:58

### Chapter 4. Life just isn't fair

In the courtroom (4:1-3)

In the Marketplace (4:4-8)

On the highway (4:9-12)

In the palace (4:13-16)

*Enjoy life* (3:12–15, 22)

## Ecclesiastes 4

<sup>1</sup> Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun:

And look! The tears of the oppressed,  
But they have no comforter—  
On the side of their oppressors *there is* power,  
But they have no comforter.

<sup>2</sup> Therefore I praised the dead who were already dead,  
More than the living who are still alive.

<sup>3</sup> Yet, better than both *is he* who has never existed,  
Who has not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

## Ecclesiastes 4 - The Vanity of Selfish Toil

<sup>4</sup> Again, I saw that for all toil and every skillful work a man is envied by his neighbor. This also *is* vanity and grasping for the wind.

<sup>5</sup> The fool folds his hands  
And consumes his own flesh.

<sup>6</sup> Better a handful *with* quietness  
Than both hands full, *with* toil and grasping for the wind.

<sup>7</sup> Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun:

<sup>8</sup> There is one alone, without companion:  
He has neither son nor brother.  
Yet *there is* no end to all his labours,  
Nor is his eye satisfied with riches.  
*But he never asks,*  
“For whom do I toil and deprive myself of good?”  
This also *is* vanity and a grave misfortune.

## Ecclesiastes 4 - Fear God, Keep Your Vows

<sup>5</sup> Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil.

<sup>2</sup> Do not be rash with your mouth,  
And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God.  
For God *is* in heaven, and you on earth;  
Therefore let your words be few.

<sup>3</sup> For a dream comes through much activity,  
And a fool's voice *is known* by *his* many words.

<sup>4</sup> When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it;  
For *He has* no pleasure in fools.  
Pay what you have vowed—

<sup>5</sup> Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.

<sup>6</sup> Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger *of God* that it *was* an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands? <sup>7</sup> For in the multitude of dreams and many words *there is* also vanity. But fear God.

## 3 warnings about the value of life

1. Don't Rob the Lord (5:1–7)
2. Don't Rob Others (5:8–9)
3. Don't Rob Yourself (5:10–20)



## Ecclesiastes 5 - The Vanity of Gain and Honor

<sup>8</sup> If you see the oppression of the poor, and the violent perversion of justice and righteousness in a province, do not marvel at the matter; for high official watches over high official, and higher officials are over them.

<sup>9</sup> Moreover the profit of the land is for all; *even* the king is served from the field.

<sup>10</sup> He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver;  
Nor he who loves abundance, with increase.  
This also *is* vanity.

<sup>11</sup> When goods increase,  
They increase who eat them;  
So what profit have the owners  
Except to see *them* with their eyes?

<sup>12</sup> The sleep of a labouring man *is* sweet,  
Whether he eats little or much;  
But the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep.

<sup>13</sup> There is a severe evil *which* I have seen under the sun:  
Riches kept for their owner to his hurt.

<sup>14</sup> But those riches perish through misfortune;  
When he begets a son, *there is* nothing in his hand.

<sup>15</sup> As he came from his mother's womb, naked shall he return,  
To go as he came;  
And he shall take nothing from his labour  
Which he may carry away in his hand.

<sup>16</sup> And this also *is* a severe evil—  
Just exactly as he came, so shall he go.  
And what profit has he who has laboured for the wind?  
<sup>17</sup> All his days he also eats in darkness,  
And *he has* much sorrow and sickness and anger.

<sup>18</sup> Here is what I have seen: *It is* good and fitting *for one* to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for *it is* his heritage. <sup>19</sup> As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labour—*this is* the gift of God. <sup>20</sup> For he will not dwell unduly on the days of his life, because God keeps *him* busy with the joy of his heart.

**Next Week - 3 of life's mysteries**

1. Riches Without Enjoyment (6:1–6)
2. Labor Without Satisfaction (6:7–9)
3. Questions Without Answers (6:10–12)