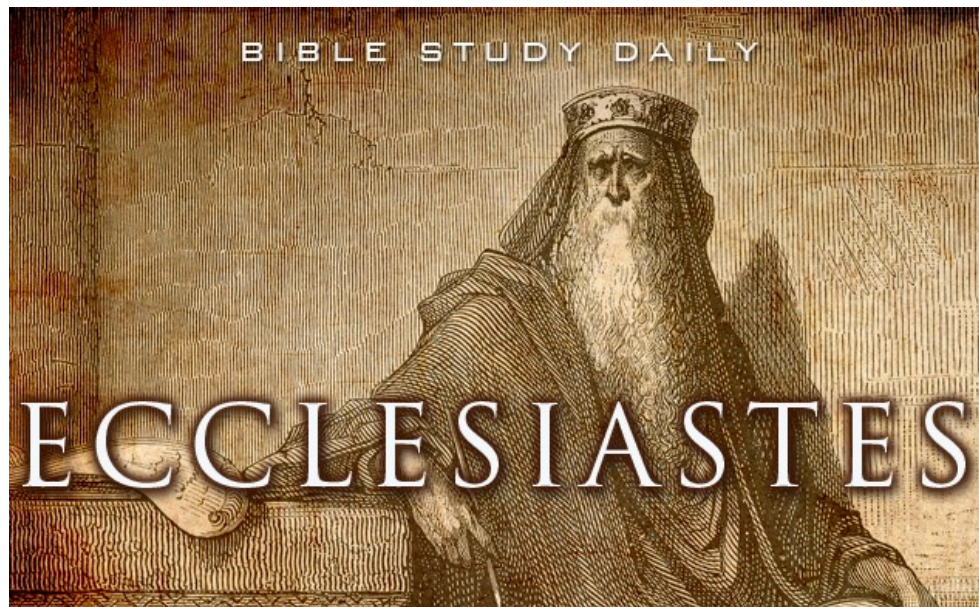




# BIBLE STUDY DAILY



This document contains the introduction to the book of Ecclesiastes as well as my study notes for the book.



## Name

The title “Ecclesiastes” comes from a Latin transliteration of the Greek translation of the Hebrew Koheleth which means “Gatherer,” but is most often translated as “Teacher” or “Preacher.”

## Author

The author of Ecclesiastes is not directly identified in the book. Ecclesiastes is generally ascribed to Solomon, who was the accepted author up until the 1700’s in the enlightenment era. During this time linguistic arguments were put forth that some wording and grammar were not in use until the time of the Babylonian captivity. However, the internal evidence describing a king in Jerusalem of great wisdom, wealth, who sought out pleasure, had many servants, and completed great building campaigns fits Solomon perfectly (and no one else).

## Genre

Poetry

## Literary Form

Wisdom Literature

## Time Frame


Dating the book Ecclesiastes with precision is difficult due to the debate over authorship. If Solomon was indeed the author it was likely written towards the end of his life around 930 B.C. However, if it was written by an unknown ‘teacher’ it had to have been completed by 250-200 B.C.

## Emphasis

The emphasis of Ecclesiastes is on the futility of everything that does not last (knowledge, wealth, possessions, power, and religious zeal), while man should fear God and enjoy the time he has in this life.

## Outline

- God and the Futility of Life (1:1-2:26)
- Time and Eternity (3:1-22)
- Society (4:1-16)
- Religion (5:1-6:12)
- Wise Sayings (7:1-29)
- Wisdom as Prudence (8:1-10:20)
- Invest in Life (11:1-110)

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- Aging and Death as Teachers (12:1-8)
  - The Teacher's Objectives (12:9-14)

# What I Noticed Today (Ecclesiastes 1-4)

## Ecclesiastes 1

Ecclesiastes 1 is focused on God and the futility of life.

Note: The author refers to himself as “Teacher,” using the Hebrew word Qoheleth which means “assembly leader.” The word is used only seven times in the Old Testament and all of them are here in Ecclesiastes.

In verses 2-11 Solomon expresses in poetical form his belief in the futility of life on earth (under the sun). Nothing ever really changes and life is fleeting.

In verses 12-18 the Teacher (Solomon, King of Israel in Jerusalem) describes his futile search for wisdom. He is not saying the pursuit of knowledge or wisdom is wrong, only that no matter how much wisdom a man might attain, he still cannot understand God.

## Ecclesiastes 2

Ecclesiastes 2 is also focused on God and the futility of life.

Solomon continues his expression of the futility of life by explaining that he tried to find meaning in life through pleasures (drinking wine v. 3, achievements vv. 4-6, possessions vv. 7-8). But regardless of the form of pleasure, and he tried them all, he considered them all to provide no satisfaction and to be futile in that they were all temporary (vv. 9-11).

In verses 12-17 Solomon considers wisdom, folly, and madness. He concludes that wisdom is better than folly because it keeps a man from making the poor decisions that a fool tends to make. He still considers it all futile, however, because ultimately, nothing achieved by a wise man lasts forever, any more than the achievements of a fool.

In verses 18-26 Solomon focuses on the emptiness of work that is directed solely at achieving wealth. Ultimately everything he built will have to be left to someone else and one never knows whether that person will be wise or a fool (vv. 18-20). He expresses frustration at having to work hard and then give some of the proceeds over to someone who has not worked (vv. 21-22). Solomon concludes that work should be enjoyed, because it honors God, and is pleasing in his sight (vv. 24-26).

## Ecclesiastes 3

Ecclesiastes 3 is focused on the nature of time, injustice, and death.

Solomon’s poem about an occasion and time for every activity under heaven is recounted in verses 1-8. He lists a total of 15 “a time to...” couplets in which he mentions a positive thing and a negative thing: birth/die, plant/uproot,



kill/heal, etc.).

In verses 9-15 Solomon considers the work that God has given man during the time God has given us. It is God's gift to man to eat, drink, and enjoy the temporary nature of life because only what God does will last forever.

In verses 16-17 Solomon expresses frustration that there is injustice in places where there should be justice (courts).

In verses 18-22 Solomon concludes that these injustices are a test from God so that we will recognize that apart from God we are like the animals who die and turn to dust.

## Ecclesiastes 4

Ecclesiastes 4 is focused on society.

In verses 1-3 Solomon restates his concern that people who are oppressed by corruption are unable to live their lives the way God intended.

In verses 4-8 Solomon examines the foolishness of working solely in the pursuit of riches. He describes this as futile.

In verses 9-12 Solomon states that friendship is important because friends work together, help each other, and protect each other.

In verses 13-16 Solomon compares two kings and the fleeting nature of their power. One king was poor in his youth but is now older and foolish. The second king is young and replaces the older king but eventually he also becomes old and foolish. Solomon is again illustrating his point that even kings come and go; one is replaced by another.

# What I Noticed Today (Ecclesiastes 5-8)

## Ecclesiastes 5

Ecclesiastes 5 has two primary themes: a warning against making impulsive vows to God and the potential for corruption in government.

In verses 1-7 Solomon warns against making rash vows to God and then not fulfilling those vows. Two issues are apparent: some people make rash vows thinking they will impress God with their vow, but then think they can avoid fulfilling the vow. If you make a promise to God you need to keep it!

In verses 8-9 Solomon expresses his frustration at the oppression of the poor that exists in governments.

In verses 10-20 Solomon provides seven reasons why the pursuit of wealth is futile:

- Pursuing wealth is futile because you never have enough (v. 10).
- Pursuing wealth is futile because you attract people who only want your money (v. 11a).
- Pursuing wealth is futile because once you've acquired it, all you can do is look at it (v. 11b).
- Pursuing wealth is futile because you worry about losing it (v. 12).
- Pursuing wealth is futile because you're likely to take on high-risk investments and lose it all (v. 13-14).
- Pursuing wealth is futile because when you die you can't take it with you (v. 15-16).
- Pursuing wealth is futile because it can take all your time and keep you from enjoying life (v. 17-20).


## Ecclesiastes 6

Verses 1-6 continue Solomon's discussion of the futility of pursuing wealth. He says while God may bless someone with riches they may not take the time to enjoy life and ultimately they die and pass on their wealth to someone else. It doesn't matter how long you live if you don't experience happiness.

In verses 7-12 Solomon suggests the fundamental truths of life are already known and the pursuit of additional knowledge will not change the ultimate condition of man.

## Ecclesiastes 7

In verses 1-13 Solomon contrasts the good with the bad and the wise with the



foolish. Ultimately, wisdom is the best inheritance and knowledge the best protection. So when you are blessed with prosperity, be joyful and at all times accept whatever God has given us.

In verses 15-18 Solomon is not suggesting that a little sin is ok. Rather, a zeal for righteousness that steals one's joy is wrong. Both the extremely righteous person and the foolish person perish.

In verses 19-22 Solomon reminds us that we should be forgiving and patient with others because we all have sinned.

In verses 23-29 Solomon is not suggesting that women are more sinful than men, but that men are able to understand men and have strong friendships with men more than they are able to fully understand women (even their wives).

## Ecclesiastes 8

Solomon addresses several topics in Ecclesiastes 8: the importance of obedience to the king, the need to fear God, and the inability of man to understand the ways of God.

A wise person understands the importance of being obedient to the king (leaders), as well as the right time and way to approach the king (vv. 1-9)

Solomon struggles with the evil that comes even to those who are righteous. Wicked people rise to power (v. 9), they are honored in public (v. 10), they avoid the punishment that is due them (v. 11), and the wicked enjoy success while the righteous suffer (v. 14). God will, however, call the wicked to judgment and bless the righteous (vv. 13-14), so Solomon suggests we enjoy the days God gives us (v. 15). Ultimately, God is in control and man will never fully understand all that God has done (v. 16-17).

# What I Noticed Today

## (Ecclesiastes 9-12)

### Ecclesiastes 9

The focus of chapter 9 is on enjoying the life God has given us and on the uncertainty of the future.

In verses 1-10 Solomon says the same fate (death) awaits us all; the rich and poor, as well as the wise and fool. Thus, says Solomon, it is best to enjoy the life God has given us. Whatever work we find to do, do it with all our strength because there is no work, wisdom, knowledge, or planning in the grave.

In verses 11-18 Solomon examines the limitations of wisdom and the unpredictable nature of life. Solomon notes that circumstances in life are often beyond our control; sometimes the swiftest runner loses and sometimes the strongest army loses. Time and chance happen to all. Solomon recalls a poor wise man who saved a city surrounded by a strong army, yet the poor man's wisdom was forgotten. A calm leader is better than a leader who rules by force and a wise leader is better than having a large army.

### Ecclesiastes 10

The poetry section that begins in 10:1 and continues through 10:4 is focused on how a small mistake by a fool can bring ruin and outweigh other's wisdom. Verse 3 refers to left and right. In the ancient world, the right referred to skillfulness, while left referred to clumsiness and ineptness. A calm man can reduce a ruler's anger and restore peace.

In verses 5-11 Solomon uses figurative language to describe wise behavior that due to timing may not bring success. A fool is appointed to a high position while the wise man remains in a lowly position. A slave that rides a horse while the prince walks on the ground. A man digs a pit but falls into it. A man breaks through a wall and is bitten by a snake, etc.

In verses 12-17 Solomon suggests that a wise counselor speaks only what he knows but a foolish one speaks about things he doesn't even understand. He says that a nation's (or business) success depends on the quality of its leaders with an emphasis on the leaders being wise.

In verses 18-20 Solomon gives three proverbs that deal with living a pleasant life: one must work and attend to things that are a priority (fixing the roof on the house), have some money to provide for necessities, and to be respectful and careful when dealing with those in authority.

### Ecclesiastes 11





The focus of Ecclesiastes 11 is on making wise investments and is written as poetry.

Verses 1-2 do not refer to charity but to making investments. Specifically, to overseas investments (bread on the surface of the waters) that make a return on our investment (after many days). The investments should be diversified (a portion to seven or even eight).

In verses 3-5 Solomon expands on the rationale for diversifying investments.

In verse 6 Solomon exhorts the reader to work hard on more than one venture because you don't know which will succeed.

In verses 7-10 Solomon shifts focus to a recognition of our mortality and the importance of living well. Rejoice in your years but fear God knowing that God will bring you to judgment. Solomon's advice was emphasized and repeated for the young man.

## Ecclesiastes 12

Ecclesiastes 12 is primarily a group of metaphors describing the effects of old age and our eventual death.

Solomon exhorts the young man to remember his Creator and to enjoy his youth while he can. The days of adversity refer to the days when a person is older and feebler. The sun and light are darkened refer to the works of creation. When the guardians of the house trembles refer to the hands that tremble as we age. Strong men who stoop refers to the bent posture of the aged. Women who grind refers to our teeth (women ground grain), and they had no dental care to protect their teeth. Ones who watch through windows refers to our eyes. All the daughter's songs grow faint refers to our hearing being diminished in old age. Almond tree blossoms refer to white/gray hair. The grasshopper loses its spring and the caper berry loses its effect refers to impotence.

Solomon closes with an epilogue in verses 9-14. He states that as the Teacher he weighed, explored, and arranged proverbs as a means of teaching knowledge to others. His refers to the proverbs being like goads (goads were sharp sticks used to poke and direct sheep). Even though the proverbs are intended to provide knowledge and wisdom. Solomon warns that endless study tires the body and the ultimate piece of wisdom is to fear God and keep His commands because God will judge every good and bad thing.