

Ecclesiastes

Live without reserve, die without regret

Introduction

Who wrote this book? Solomon

- 1) No one else fully matches the description in 1:1-2:23
- 2) Parallels to other descriptions of Solomon (Barrick)
 - a) His *wisdom*—1:16; cf. 1st Kings 3:12
 - b) His *works*—2:4-6; cf. 1st Kings 5:13-18; 7:1-8; 9:17-19
 - c) His *wealth*—2:7-9; cf. 1st Kings 10:14-20
 - d) His *words*—12:9-10; cf. 1st Kings 4:32

When was this book written? Apparently toward the end of Solomon’s life

- 1) Some see the progression through Solomon’s life of *Song of Solomon* to *Proverbs* to *Ecclesiastes*.

What are some of the themes of this book?

- 1) God is referred to @ 40 times (Barrick)

Theological Topic	Ecclesiastes References
God’s sovereign control over man	1:13 (cf. 3:10); 2:26; 3:1 , 11, 14, 18 ; 5:18-20; 6:1-2; 7:14, 26; 8:15; 9:1, 7
God’s providential grace	2:24-26 ; 3:13; 5:18-20; 8:15
God’s eternity	3:11, 14; 12:5, 7
God’s creatorship	3:11, 14; 7:29; 8:16-17; 11:5; 12:1 , 7
God’s perfection	3:14 ; 7:29; 8:16-17; 11:5
God’s justice and holiness	2:24-26; 3:17 ; 5:4, 6; 7:26, 29; 8:2, 12-13; 11:9; 12:14
God’s abode	5:2
God’s omnipresence and omniscience	5:2 , 6; 8:2, 16-17; 11:5 ; 12:14
God’s omnipotence	7:13 ; 11:5
God’s preservation of His saints	7:26 ; 8:12-13
God requires reverential fear	3:14; 5:7 ; 7:18; 8:12-13; 12:1, 13
God requires obedience before sacrifice	5:1 , 4, 7; 8:2; 12:1, 13
God’s Word	12:13

- God’s names Yahweh and Adonai are never used in Ecclesiastes, only Elohim

2) Three foundational spiritual truths (Barrick)

- a) Mankind searches for happiness and enduring substance (2:24; 3:12, 22; 5:18; 8:15; 9:7-9; 11:7-10). Ecclesiastes present mankind with an invitation to enjoy a life ...
 - i) Unparalyzed by life’s uncertainties, enjoy life as God’s gift (11:1-6)
 - ii) Undepressed by life’s shortness, enjoy life as God’s gift (11:9-10)
 - iii) Showing reverence to and serving God in life, enjoy life as God’s gift (12:1-14)
- b) Divine sovereignty and providence characterize human existence on planet Earth (2:26; 3:14; 7:13-14; 8:16-9:1; 11:5)
 - i) We must believe that God is the Creator with whom we cannot trifle (5:2; 12:1)
 - ii) We must accept that God’s world cannot be changed to our liking (3:1-8; 7:13)
 - iii) We cannot extrapolate the future on the basis of the present, because the pattern keeps changing in accord with God’s plan (7:14; 8:17)

- iv) We must believe that God is the Judge and will bring all wickedness into judgment (3:17; 5:6; 8:12-13; 11:9; 12:7, 14)
 - c) The way of wisdom for human conduct requires avoidance of excess.
 - i) Be content with the present (7:10)
 - ii) Be conciliatory (10:12-14)
 - iii) Be cautious (8:1-9; 10:8-11; cf. 7:8-9)
- 3) Three problem truths about humanity (Barrick)
- a) *The uncertainty of time and chance* (9:11-12) demonstrates that man is not sovereign. It appears that **individuals do not control their own destiny**.
 - b) *The endemic and incurable nature of wickedness* (3:16; 4:1; 5:8; 7:7, 20; 9:3) demonstrates that **man is not inherently good**.
 - c) That *death has the final word in any human enterprise* (2:14-16; 3:18-22; 6:3-12; 8:8, 10; 12:1-7) is proof that **mankind is not immortal**.

What is the general outline? (based on Kaiser)

- 1) Embrace God's plan of man's inability—1:1-2:26
 - a) Refrain # 1: Enjoy God's gift of life
- 2) Understand God's all-encompassing plan—3:1-5:20
 - a) Refrain # 2: Live God's gift of life
- 3) Explain and apply God's plan—6:1-8:15
 - a) Refrain # 3: Enjoy God's gift of life
- 4) Removing discouragements to God's plan—8:16-12:14
 - a) Refrain # 4: Fear God with obedience