

Ecclesiastes

SECTION OUTLINE ONE (ECCLESIASTES 1)

The Teacher declares that everything is meaningless. He begins reviewing his search for meaning, and his first conclusion is that wisdom is futile.

- I. THE MAN (1:1, 12): The author introduces himself as King David's son—presumably Solomon—and notes that he once ruled over Israel.
- II. THE MISSION (1:13, 16)
 - A. **His quest** (1:13): Solomon devotes himself to searching out the purpose of life.
 - B. **His qualifications** (1:16): Because of his great wisdom and power, Solomon feels he possesses the necessary credentials to conduct this search.
- III. THE MADNESS (1:2-11, 14-15, 17-18): A preliminary investigation quickly reveals some bitter truths about life.
 - A. **No real purpose** (1:2-7, 14, 17): Life is futile and meaningless.
 - B. **No new thing** (1:9-10): History merely repeats itself.
 - C. **No cure** (1:15): What is wrong cannot be righted.
 - D. **No lasting honor** (1:11): The dead are quickly forgotten.

SECTION OUTLINE TWO (ECCLESIASTES 2)

Solomon tries to find meaning through various things.

- I. THE KING'S DELUSIONS (2:1-10): Solomon travels down many roads in his search for peace and purpose. This includes:
 - A. **Pleasure** (2:1-2)
 - B. **Alcohol** (2:3)
 - C. **Great building projects** (2:4a)
 - D. **The planting of vineyards** (2:4b)
 - E. **The creation of beautiful parks with exotic trees** (2:5-6)
 - F. **The accumulation of possessions, including:**
 1. *Human slaves* (2:7a)

2. *Herds and flocks* (2:7b)
3. *Silver and gold* (2:8a)
4. *Gifted musicians* (2:8b)
5. *Beautiful concubines* (2:8c)

G. A universal reputation (2:9)

H. Total indulgence (2:10)

II. THE KING'S CONCLUSIONS (2:11-26)

A. The bitter truth (2:11-23)

1. *What Solomon finds* (2:11-16)
 - a. Everything is useless and empty (2:11).
 - b. Everyone must eventually die (2:12-16).
2. *What Solomon fears* (2:17-23): He realizes that in most instances the achievements of good men are left to fools.

B. The better truth (2:24-26): Be content with what you have, and enjoy your work!

SECTION OUTLINE THREE (ECCLESIASTES 3)

Solomon views life from a human perspective and from God's perspective.

I. EARTHLY EVENTS FROM A HUMAN PERSPECTIVE (3:1-14, 22)

A. The categories (3:1-8): There is a proper time for all events.

1. *To be born and to die* (3:2a)
2. *To plant and to harvest* (3:2b)
3. *To kill and to heal* (3:3a)
4. *To tear down and to rebuild* (3:3b)
5. *To cry and to laugh* (3:4a)
6. *To grieve and to dance* (3:4b)
7. *To scatter and to gather* (3:5a)
8. *To embrace and to turn away* (3:5b)
9. *To search and to lose* (3:6a)
10. *To keep and to throw away* (3:6b)
11. *To tear and to mend* (3:7a)
12. *To be quiet and to speak* (3:7b)
13. *To love and to hate* (3:8a)
14. *To wage war and to pursue peace* (3:8b)

B. The conclusions (3:9-14, 22)

1. *The ultimate truth* (3:9-11, 14): God—and God alone—can separate time from eternity.
2. *The "until-then" truth* (3:12-13, 22): Enjoy both your work and the fruits proceeding from it.

II. EARTHLY EVENTS FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE (3:15-21)

- A. **What God has done** (3:15): He has supervised all past actions.
- B. **What God now does** (3:18-21): He tests people so that they can see they are no better than animals.
- C. **What God will do** (3:16-17): He will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked.

SECTION OUTLINE FOUR (ECCLESIASTES 4)

Solomon continues his observations about life.

I. THE WRETCHED THINGS IN THIS LIFE (4:1-8, 13-16)

A. **The people Solomon finds** (4:1, 4-8)

1. *The oppressed poor* (4:1)
2. *The selfish rich* (4:4, 7-8)
3. *The lazy fool* (4:5-6)

B. **The pessimism Solomon feels** (4:2-3, 13-16)

1. *Concerning life and death* (4:2-3)
 - a. It is better to be dead than living (4:2)!
 - b. It is best never to have been born (4:3)!
2. *Concerning prisoners and potentates* (4:13-16)
 - a. It is better to be a poor but wise youth with a prison record than to be a rich but foolish king (4:13-16a)!
 - b. However, in the final analysis, it matters little who and what one is (4:16b).

II. THE WORKABLE THINGS IN THIS LIFE (4:9-12)

A. **Two are better than one** (4:9-12a).

1. *If one falls, the other can help* (4:10).
2. *If one is cold, the other can provide warmth* (4:11).
3. *If one is attacked, the other can defend* (4:12a).

B. **Three are better than two** (4:12b): A triple-braided cord is not easily broken.

SECTION OUTLINE FIVE (ECCLESIASTES 5)

Solomon observes humanity.

I. HUMAN WORDS (5:1-7)

- A. **Be cautious in making a vow** (5:1-3).
- B. **Be committed in keeping a vow** (5:4-7).

II. HUMAN WICKEDNESS (5:8-12)

- A. **Our injustice** (5:8-9): This can be seen from the poor person to the king on the throne.
- B. **Our greed** (5:10-12): The more people receive, the more they desire.