

Ecclesiastes Pt. 1

Life under the Sun: birth, toil, and death

November 24, 2025

Read Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

We are going to spend two Sundays looking at the Book of Ecclesiastes. The author of the book is trying to provide the answer to the question *What is the meaning of life?* or *What is the meaning of life under the Sun?* He does it by employing poetic language, full of repetitions, metaphors, emotions. He depicts the life under the Sun as miserable for those who defy God, and gives hints of hope and joy to those who fear God.

1. First things first: authorship of the Ecclesiastes and its literary structure:
 - Traditionally, Solomon is viewed as the author of Ecclesiastes.
 - Son of David (1:1)
 - king over Israel in Jerusalem (1:12) – after Solomon's death, Jerusalem was no longer in the nation of Israel, it was the capital of the southern kingdom of Judah
 - *Qoheleth* Hebrew title for the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes
 - Outline of the book (adopted from John Currid's commentary):
 - **1:1-11 The Problem.** All things are fleeting and temporary. What is the meaning of life?

- **1:12-3:13 The Quest** Solomon examines his own life experiences and life situations. The result: a despair. God is sovereign over everything
- **3:14-7:29 The Objections** Solomon deals with the usual objections to the truth that God is Sovereign over all of His creation
- **8:1-11:10 Practical advice** (to the believer)
- **12:1-14 Conclusion**
- **Inclusio 1:2 and 12:8**
- Themes repeated throughout the book:
 - *Vanity of Vanities* – (Middle Eastern form of superlative) we try to find the meaning of life in work, wealth, power, wisdom, fame, children. Apart from God all these are fleeting, vanity, meaningless, chasing after the wind (hebel)
 - *Under the Sun* life in the fallen world
 - *this is God's gift to man* – 2:24; 3:12-14; 5:18-19; 8:15; 9:7-9

2. How does the Preacher describes the life under the Sun?

- He speaks of the world being affected by sin: everything is crooked (1:15), it cannot be made straight
- Everything a man does under the Sun is affected by the curse which followed the original transgression in the garden
- Pursuit of self indulgence, wisdom, collecting “goods” through toil – all done under the Sun is but vanity and chasing after the wind (2:11)
- All men and women living under the Sun are going to die:
 - both wise and foolish will die in the same way – 2:14-17
 - man dies in the same way and the beasts – 3:18-19
 - nothing we accomplish under the Sun can transcend our death – 5:15

How should we react to the Book of Ecclesiastes? Two audiences: friends of God and enemies of God:

- For the friends of God – remember that God is sovereign over all of His creation, rejoice in His gifts
- For the Christians – *set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth* Colossians 3:1-2; compare Eccl. 5:2
- For the enemies of God – the Book of Ecclesiastes serves as a pre-evangelistic text
 - showing the utter futility of life “under the Sun” drives one to desperation in hope of turning to God
 - example *The Rich Young Ruler* – Matt. 19:16-23
 - God is the only One who can make *crooked straight* – Luke 3:4-6