

The Book of Ecclesiastes

This book is the inspired record of one man's search (Solomon) for peace and purpose in this world apart from the Person of God.

I. THE QUEST-MAN'S PROBLEMS STATED (ECCLESIASTES 1-2).

Even before he starts the search, Solomon has doubts. In his opinion: Everything seems so futile (1:2).

Generations come and go, but it seems to make no difference (1:4).

No man seems satisfied, regardless of what he has seen or heard (1:8).

History merely repeats itself--absolutely nothing new ever occurs under the sun (1:9-10).

One hundred years from now everything will have been forgotten, regardless what occurs today (1:11).

Was life truly this way everywhere? Could a wise and healthy man, by searching the length and breadth of the land, find peace and purpose? Solomon would try. This he diligently did by drinking deeply at the wells of the following:

- A. Human wisdom (1:16-18).
- B. Pleasure (2:1-3). (See also 8:15.)
- C. Alcohol (2:3).
- D. Great building projects (2:4).
- E. Beautiful gardens and parks (2:4-6).
- F. Personal indulgences (2:7).
- G. Sex (1 Ki. 11:3).
- H. Massive wealth (2:7-8).
- I. International reputation (1 Ki. 10:6-7).
- J. Music (2:8).
- K. Literature (1 Ki. 4:32).
- L. Natural science (1 Ki. 4:33).
- M. Military power (1 Ki. 4:26; 9:26).

II. THE DIGEST MAN'S PROBLEMS STUDIED (ECCLESIASTES 3-10).

After completing an exhaustive (and doubtless exhausting) journey, Solomon returns home (4:1) and contemplates his travels. He concludes the following about life apart from God:

- A. It is utterly futile (2:11).
- B. It is filled with repetition (3:1-8).
- C. It is permeated with sorrow (4:1).
- D. It is grievous and frustrating (2:17).
- E. It is uncertain (9:11-12).
- F. It is without purpose (8:15).
- G. It is incurable (1:15).
- H. It is unjust (7:15; 8:14; 9:11; 10:6-7).
- I. It is on the level of animal existence (3:19).

III. THE BEST MAN'S PROBLEM SOLVED (ECCLESIASTES 11-12).

Solomon concludes that even with God, life is a mystery, but apart from him it becomes a horrible nightmare. Therefore, it is best if man:

- A. Finds God early in his life (11:9-10; 12:1-2).
- B. Fears God throughout his life (12:13-14).