

Two Year Bible Trek  
Week 48  
Week 48 – Ecclesiastes 1-12

**Key Concepts:** the two main concepts in Ecclesiastes are that all is vanity, meaning that life is ultimately meaningless, and that because of this people should enjoy themselves.

**Stories:** Ecclesiastes offers us a main thesis (all is vanity), then some proof, a fruitless search for meaning, then reflections on the following ideas: death robs us of all we know and create, the direction of one's life cannot be understood or changed, injustice and oppression will be judged, the importance of companionship on our journey, the importance of religious ritual, that money will not bring happiness, and that it is good to eat, drink and enjoy life. This is followed by some proverbs, then more reflections including; that moderation in life is good, that the meaning of life is hidden, that retribution does not always come to the wicked in this world, and that life is to be enjoyed. Then we have more proverbs, and a final admonition to remember God.

**Brief Summary:** There are several main themes which run throughout this book. These include:

All is vanity: this is perhaps one of the most depressing thoughts in scripture. The writer focuses on the reality that sooner or later we all die. Thus whatever we seek including wealth, sex or fame are all fleeting and will be lost. "What does a person gain by her toil at which she toils under the sun? A generation comes and a generation goes" (1:2-3); "...since one fate comes to all, to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and to the evil..." (9:2).

Life has no real meaning: This theme is linked to the previous one. Because we will lose everything to time and we cannot see the future then life cannot have any lasting meaning. Even though people seek some meaning in life they will not find it because everything is predetermined. "For man does not know what is to be, for who can tell him how it will be" (8:7). Thus it is better to be dead than alive. "And I thought the dead who are already dead, more fortunate than the living who are still alive" (4:2).

There is beauty in the moment: Even though there is no meaning to life, there is great beauty in each of the passing moments of life. This theme is centered in the famous lines of chapter 3, "For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven; a time to be born and a time to die..." (3:1-2), "God has made everything beautiful in its time" (3:11). This idea gives the reader at least a bit of hope that even though there is injustice and meaninglessness in the world, in each moment one can find something to appreciate and enjoy.

Enjoy the moment: Because there is no meaning, but there is beauty in every moment, then one ought to enjoy all of the moments that one is given. "...that it is God's gift to humanity that everyone should eat and drink and take great pleasure in their toil" (3:13), "In the day of prosperity be joyful..." (7:14).

Great wisdom and great wealth do not make the situation any better: All the education and wealth cannot change the situation...we still die and lose everything. "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth, with gain; this also is vanity" (5:10) "...and much study is a weariness of the flesh"(12:12).

1. What do you think of his view that all is vanity?
2. Why do you work for a better future for yourself or others?
3. How does a Christian view of life now and later affect how you read this book?