



My Drift

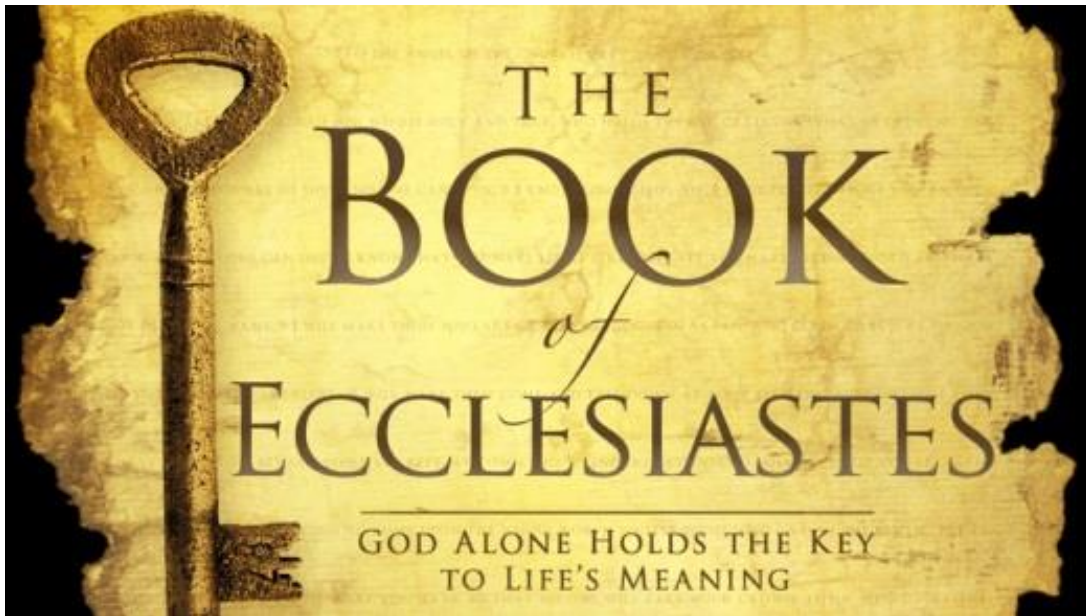
Title: Bible – The Book of Ecclesiastes

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Book of Ecclesiastes



Who Wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes?

The author of Ecclesiastes is not clear, though several verses indicate it was written by King Solomon, son of King David, third king of Israel, and builder of God's First Temple in Jerusalem. However, many scholars believe Solomon did not write the book, both because the linguistic and literary devices used are typical of a later time period and because of allusions to historic events that came after Solomon's time. Scholars often call it "fictional autobiography," where the author assumes the identity of King Solomon and writes as though the author is, indeed, Solomon.

Context and Background of Ecclesiastes

Anyone who's ever questioned the point of life or found themselves in a situation so dull, difficult, or frustrating they uttered, "This, too, is meaningless!" might find a kindred spirit in the writer of Ecclesiastes. Well

known for that often-repeated verse, this 12-chapter book in the Bible's Old Testament is devoted to exploring the meaning of life and why both good and evil befall the innocent and the wicked alike.

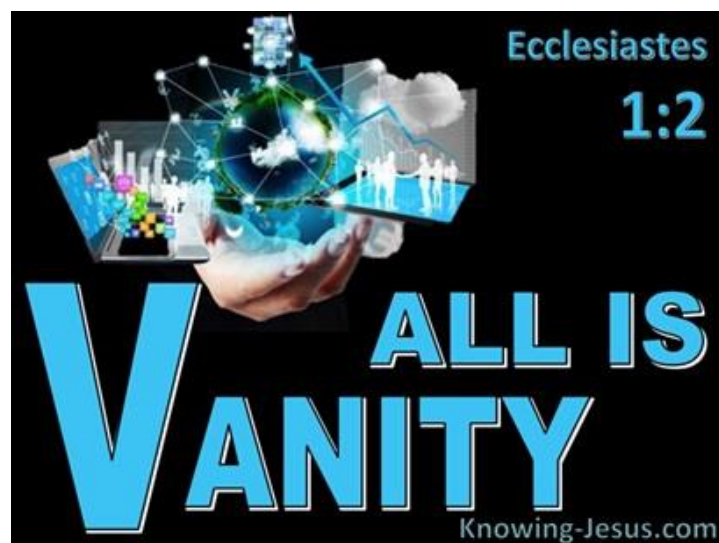
If the book was written by Solomon, it likely would have been penned in the later years of his life, around 940 B.C. More likely, it was written by sages much later, given its historical and linguistic nature, as early as 3 or 5 B.C. and possibly later. The intended audience was the people of Israel from the standpoint of a wise, respected, and much-beloved teacher.

Main Theme and Purpose of Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes is foremost a study of philosophy for the faithful—about the purpose of life, what it means to be wise versus foolish, why terrible things often happen to the best of people, how to achieve self-fulfillment, and whether it is permissible for God's people to enjoy the simple pleasures in life.

Chapter 1 – The Words of the Teacher

In the first chapter, King Solomon introduces himself as the teacher and speaks about the monotony of life. He declares, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity." Solomon observes the cycles of nature and comments on how the earth remains the same despite the ceaseless efforts of mankind.



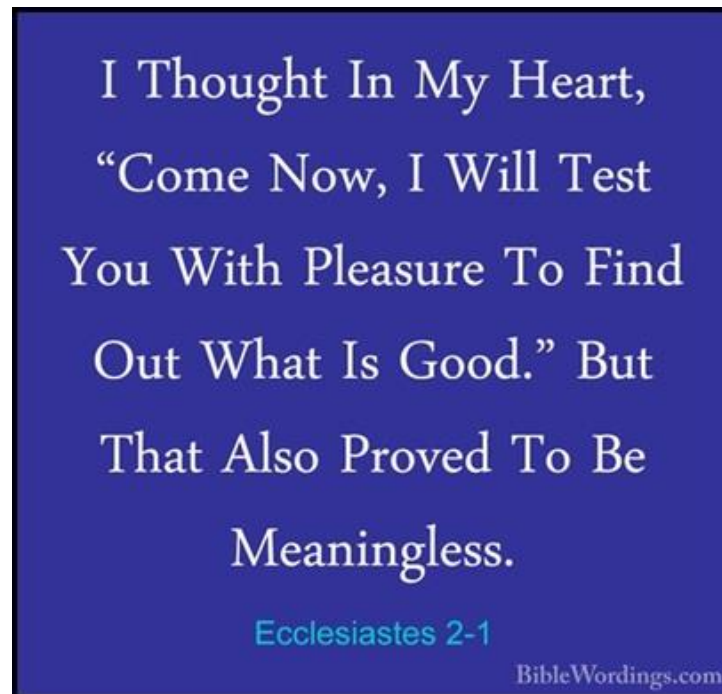
From start to finish, the book of Ecclesiastes declares the utter futility and complete meaninglessness of life without God. Whether it is referring to work or pleasure, wisdom or wealth, power or prestige, entertainment or virility, life or death, ALL is considered futile and worthless when God is excluded from the equation.

The text starts out with a burst of gloom, rife with zingers such as, “‘Meaningless! Meaningless!’ says the Teacher. ‘Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.’ What do people gain from all their labors at which they toil under the sun?” (Ecclesiastes 1:2-3), or “No one remembers the former generations, and even those yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow them” (1:11), concluding Chapter One with, “I have seen all the things that are done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind” (1:14).

Furthermore, Solomon reflects on the pursuit of wisdom. He confesses that, despite all his wisdom and knowledge, it only brought him sorrow and grief. He concludes that the accumulation of knowledge and the pursuit of wisdom are meaningless.

Chapter 2 – The Vanity of Pleasure

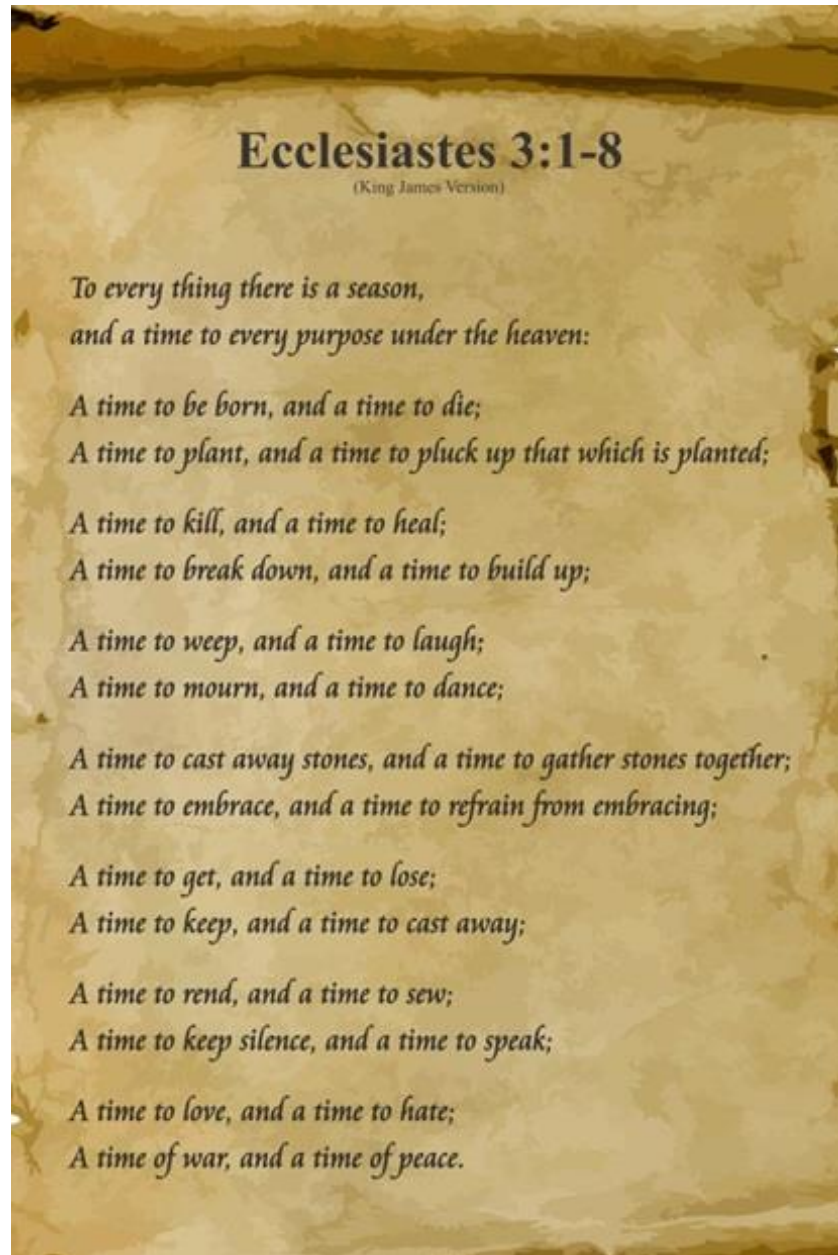
In Chapter 2, Solomon recounts his experiences as he indulged in worldly pleasures. He engages in laughter, wine, grand projects, and accumulates wealth. He surrounds himself with all the pleasures that a king could have yet finds that it all amounts to “chasing after the wind.”



Towards the end of the chapter, Solomon reflects on the limitations of human wisdom. He points out that both the wise and the foolish share the same fate, which is death. Solomon finds no lasting value in wisdom or pleasure as all human efforts and achievements are fleeting.

Chapter 3 – A Time for Everything

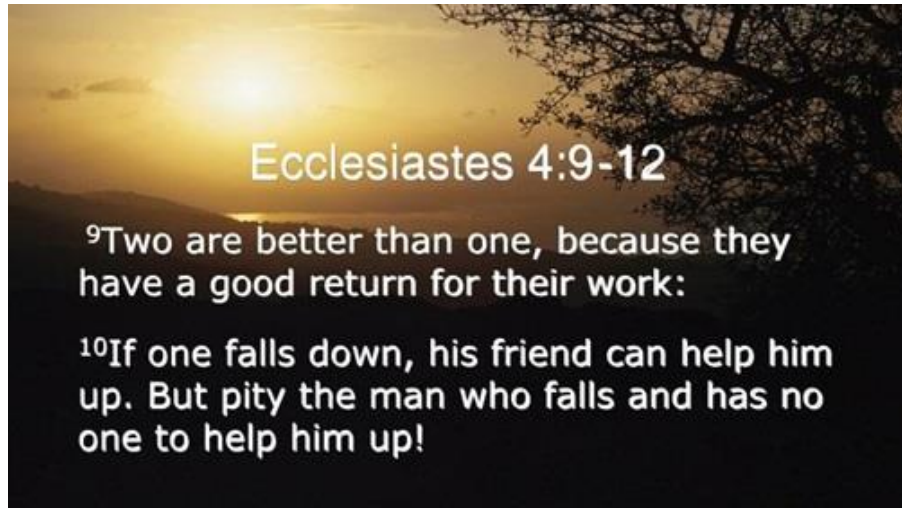
Chapter 3 starts with one of the most famous passages in Ecclesiastes, where Solomon states that there is a time for everything under the heavens. He lists 28 seasons of life, including times to be born, die, plant, reap, weep, laugh, mourn, and dance.



Following this, Solomon discusses the idea of divine justice. He acknowledges the role of God in determining the times and seasons of life. He encourages enjoying the simple things in life and recognizing that they are gifts from God.

Chapter 4 – Oppression, Toil, and Friendships

In this chapter, Solomon considers the tears of the oppressed. He acknowledges the powerlessness of the oppressed and ponders over the dead who are free from the troubles of life. Solomon also reflects on the fruitlessness of labor and striving out of envy or rivalry.



In contrast, Solomon then speaks about the value of companionship. He highlights the benefits of having a friend and the strength that comes from numbers, using the example of a cord of three strands not being easily broken.

Chapter 5 – Fear God

Chapter 5 begins with Solomon advising caution in God's presence. He counsels against making rash vows and encourages speaking less and listening more. He also observes the vanity in amassing riches as one cannot know who will enjoy them after one's death.

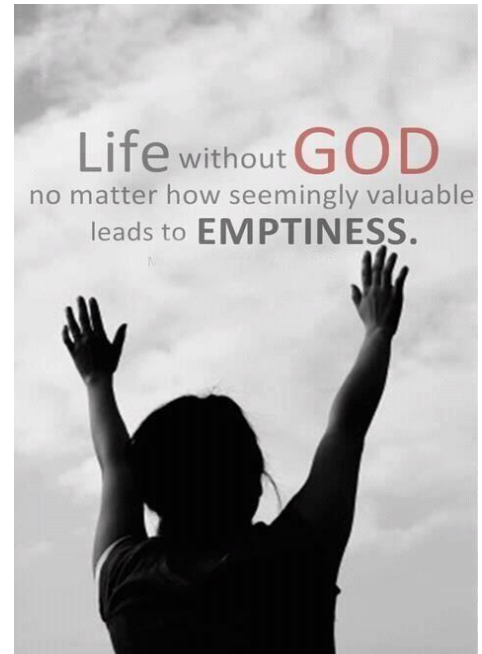


Moreover, Solomon distinguishes between the sleep of a laborer and that of a rich man. The former sleeps sweetly irrespective of the quantity of food, while the latter's abundance doesn't let him sleep. He acknowledges that it is good to enjoy the simple blessings of eating, drinking, and finding satisfaction in work.

Chapter 6 – The Vanity of Wealth

In Chapter 6, Solomon continues to reflect on the vanity of wealth. He talks about a man who has been blessed with wealth, possessions, and honor but lacks the ability to enjoy them. Solomon considers this an affliction and reiterates that wealth doesn't satisfy the desires of the soul.

He also emphasizes the futility of a long life that is not enjoyed or appreciated. He argues that an untimely birth is better than a life lived in darkness and discontent. The chapter closes with Solomon asserting that despite all human efforts to find meaning, they can't fathom what life under heaven is all about.



Chapter 7 – The Value of Practical Wisdom

Chapter 7 opens with Solomon comparing the value of a good name to precious ointment. He speaks about the wisdom that can be gained through reflecting on death rather than frivolously celebrating life. He advises that sorrow can be better than laughter as it refines the heart.

A Good Name Is Better
Than Fine Perfume, And
The Day Of Death Better
Than The Day Of Birth.

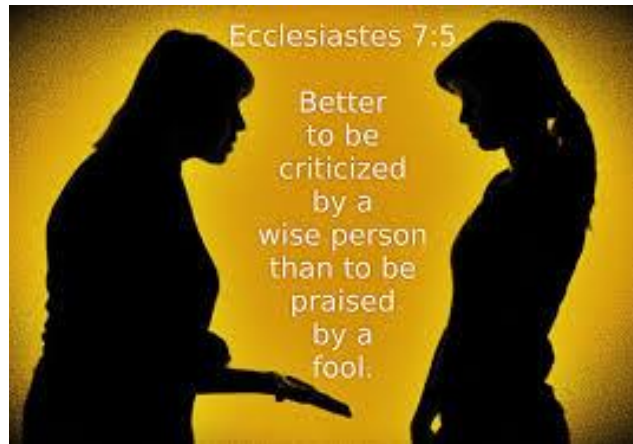
Ecclesiastes 7-1

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The End Of A Matter
Is Better Than Its
Beginning, And Patience
Is Better Than Pride.

Ecclesiastes 7-8

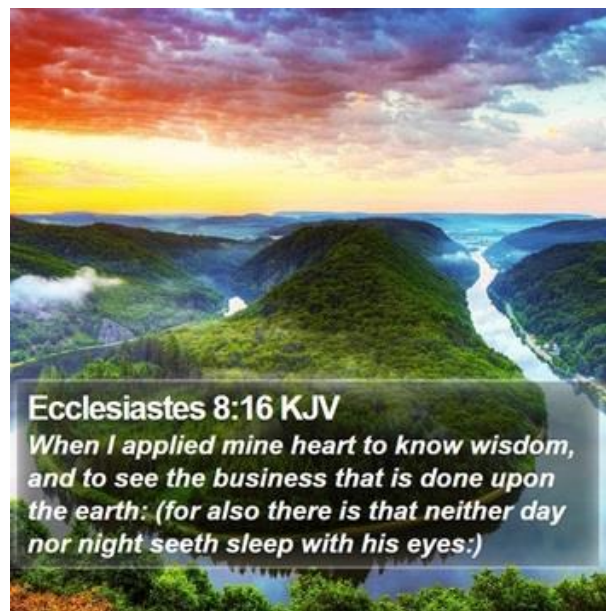
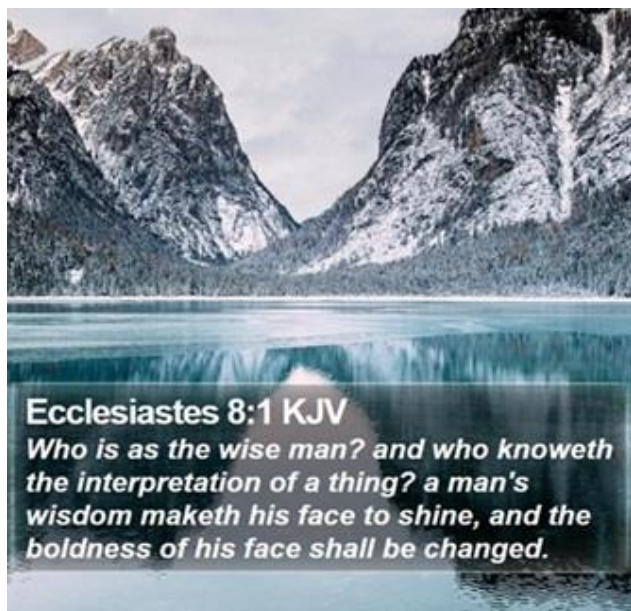
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Solomon also cautions against longing for the “good old days” and highlights the importance of patience over pride. He acknowledges that righteousness and wickedness both have their place, and it’s wise not to be overly righteous or overly wicked. Wisdom, Solomon asserts, provides strength and protection.

Chapter 8 – Obey the King

In the eighth chapter, Solomon talks about the wisdom of obeying the king’s command. He discusses the wise heart knowing the proper time and procedure for every matter. He encourages patience and acknowledges that no one can predict when hard times will come.



Furthermore, Solomon observes that while wickedness may seem to go unpunished, in the long run, it’s still better to fear God. He acknowledges the limitations of human understanding and wisdom, as people cannot fully grasp God’s work or comprehend what will happen in the future.

Chapter 9 – Enjoy Life with the One You Love

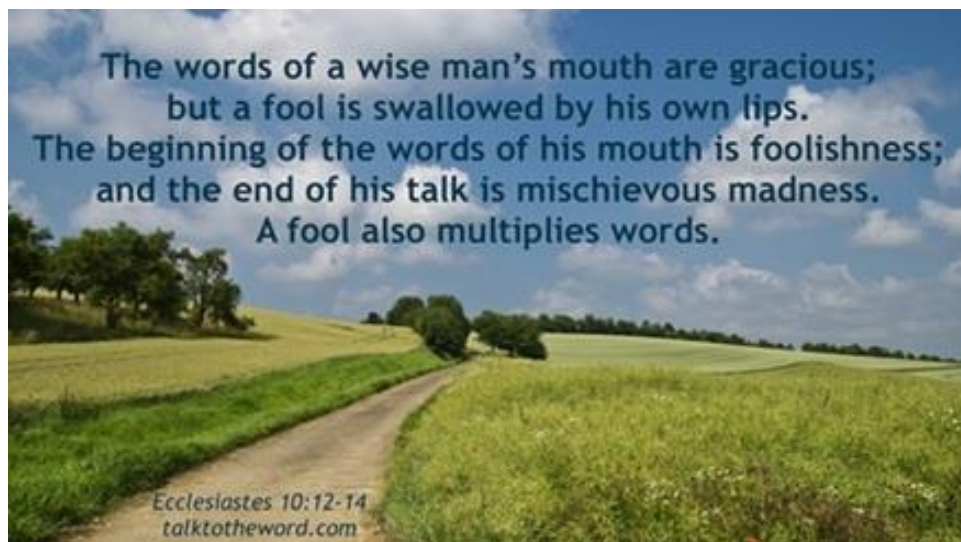
Chapter 9 begins with Solomon reflecting on the common destiny shared by the righteous and the wicked, which is death. He emphasizes the finality of death and encourages the living to live fully because the dead know nothing.



Solomon then urges readers to enjoy their lives and find satisfaction in their toil as these are gifts from God. He also advises enjoying time with loved ones. The chapter concludes with a story of a small city saved by the wisdom of a poor man, yet the man's wisdom was quickly forgotten.

Chapter 10 – The Pitfalls of Folly

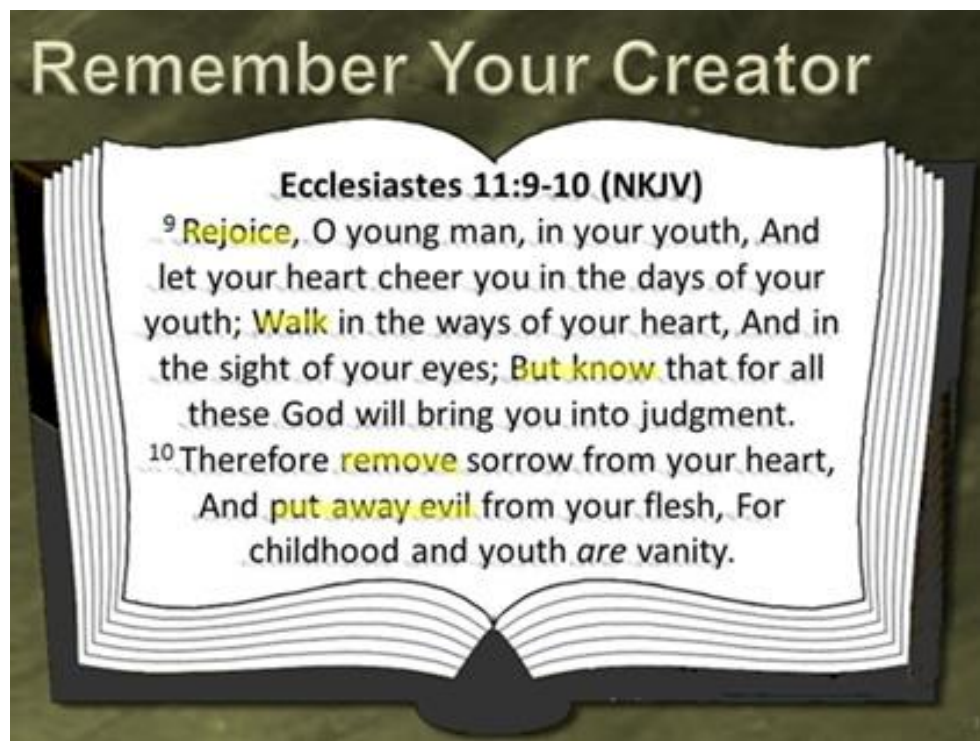
In Chapter 10, Solomon contrasts wisdom and folly. He explains how just a little folly can overshadow wisdom and honor. He talks about the unpredictability of life and the foolishness of making hasty decisions. He also warns against speaking ill of the king and the dangers of laziness.



Furthermore, Solomon offers practical advice, such as the importance of calmness in resolving issues and the value of wise words. He reiterates that wisdom, though often overlooked, or underestimated, is a valuable asset in handling life's challenges.

Chapter 11 – Invest in Many Ventures

Chapter 11 encourages diversifying investments, akin to casting your bread upon the waters. Solomon uses metaphors to discuss taking risks and being generous, as one never knows what misfortune may occur. He advises not waiting for perfect conditions to take action as those who watch the wind will not sow.

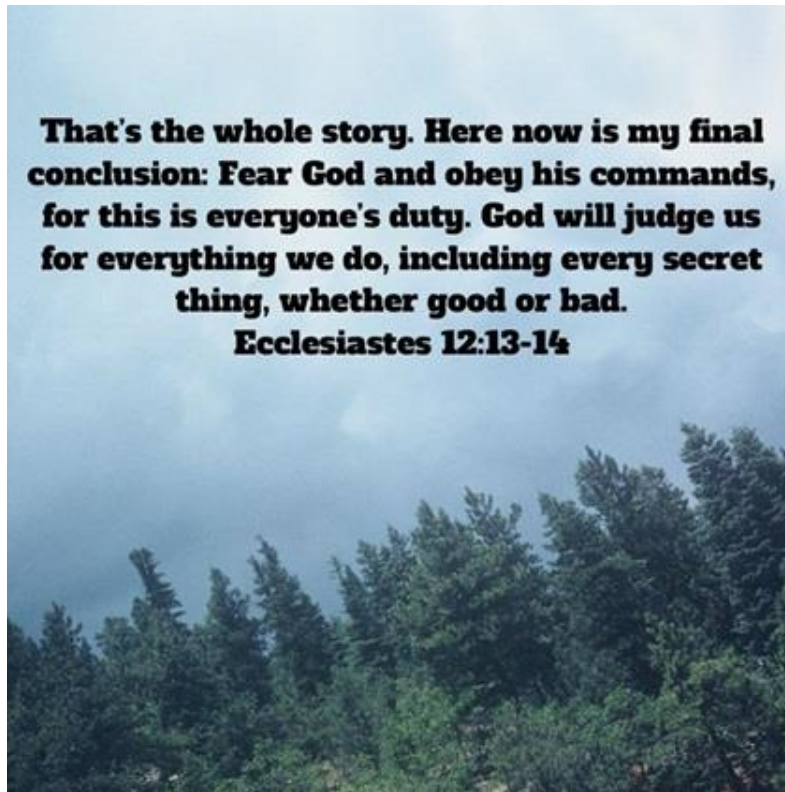


He also speaks to the youth, urging them to be joyful but mindful that God will judge youthful deeds. He advocates for an awareness of the brevity of youth and the importance of remembering the Creator before old age.

Chapter 12 – Remember Your Creator

In the final chapter, Chapter 12, Solomon reminds the reader to remember the Creator in their youth. He uses metaphors to describe the difficulties and ailments of old age. He portrays life's cycle and the eventual return of the human spirit to God who gave it.

As the chapter progresses, Solomon emphasizes the importance of heeding the words of the wise. He concludes the book by reiterating that the essence of human life is to fear God and keep His commandments. The final verses mention that every deed will be brought into judgment, whether good or evil.



With this sobering reminder, the book of Ecclesiastes comes to a close. King Solomon, through a series of reflections, observations, and wisdom-laden advice, paints a picture of life's vanities and the ultimate importance of focusing on God.

What Can We Learn from Ecclesiastes Today?

Today, many people find themselves caught up in the rush of busyness and the onslaught of an endless to-do list. Many find themselves working hard, only to get to the point where they have achieved their long-awaited dreams and still find themselves deeply unhappy. All that chasing—after love, material goods, wealth, security, or fame—is for naught, and they find themselves depressed and desperate for answers. Others have been able to focus on the good and simple pleasures of life, including time in creation and cherished moments with loved ones, only to experience extreme grief, loss, illness, poverty, or other hardship.

Ecclesiastes reminds us that all things good and bad fall under the domain of our Heavenly Father, that we might not understand any of the reasons in our limited human perspective, but we can rest sure in the knowledge that God has a plan. He sees all and knows all, and He is with us through it all. And best of all, there is a time for all—glorious and painful, wonderful and terrible—all part of His plan. As the author writes, “He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart, yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end” (3:11).

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