

VIA EMMAUS:

A CHRIST-CENTERED WALK THROUGH THE BIBLE

Ecclesiastes: To Work Wisely is Futile, To Fear Faithfully is Wise (23)

Introduction

- Qoheleth* Comes from the word for “assembly” (*Qahal*); one who addresses the congregation
- Solomon? Strictly speaking, the book is anonymous, but tradition is Solomon (**1:1**)
- No** (1) ‘son of David’ broader than Solomon; (2) Hebrew language; (3) history (**1:16; 2:7, 9**)
- Yes** What king in Jerusalem supercedes Solomon? (**1:1, 12**); Who had greater wisdom? (**1:16**)
The book comes from God, the Shepherd (12:11)... Solomonic in some fashion!
- Paradoxes Wisdom gives life (**7:12**) AND Wisdom fails to give life (**2:16**)
Death is preferable to life’s trouble (**4:2**) AND Life is better than self-extinction (**9:4-6**)

Contribution to Wisdom

- (1) Affirms Wisdom – 5:2 = Prov 10:19; 5:15 = Job 1:21; 7:1 = Prov 22:1; 8:12 = Prov 1:7
- (2) Adjusts Wisdom – Individual Situations nuances Proverbs (cf. 4:7-8; 5:13-14; 9:13-16)
Proverbs gives wisdom to the simple; Ecclesiastes gives wisdom to the successful

Themes

- (1) **Creation** Aware of the Particulars of Creation and Its Intended Beauty (**3:1-11**)
Creation’s Goodness – food, drink, marriage (**3:12-13; 5:18-20; 7:14; 8:15; 9:7,9**)
Universal Aspect of Creation: Work (**2:10, 24; 3:22; 5:18-20; 9:9-10**)
- (2) **Futility** Work is satisfying but also frustrating (**2:18-23; 4:4**)
The Tragic Effect of the Curse is Seen in Vivid Detail (**1:1-11; cf. Romans 8:20, 22**)
The Vanity of Life Bookends of Ecclesiastes (**1:2; 12:8**), ‘futility’ fills it pages (38x)
The Greatest Futility = Sin & Death (**7:20, 29; cf. 2:14-17; 3:18-21; 6:6**)
Search/Seek/Find (1:13; 2:3; 3:11; 7:14, 24-25; 8:16-17; 12:1) – quest for wisdom
- (3) **Fear God** Creation’s Curse and Mankind’s Futility should prompt fear and repentance
Because exhaustive wisdom is futile: Fear God – *this is Ecclesiastes main point*
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|-----------------|---|----------------------------|
| 3:14 | God is totally sovereign; His works endure | Therefore Fear Him |
| 5:7 | Since God is in Heaven, don’t multiply words | Rather Fear Him |
| 7:14-18 | Prosperity & Adversity come from God | Therefore Fear God |
| 8:12-13 | Despite outwards appearances, the wicked will pay | Fear the Lord |
| 12:13-14 | After all has been said and considered | Fear God & Obey |
| | <i>Why? God will bring every deed into judgment</i> | So Fear |
- (4) **Christ in Ecclesiastes**
Son of David (Matt 1:1)
King who is Greater than Solomon (Matt 2:2; Luke 11:31; Acts 17:7; Rev 17:14; 19:16)
The Wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24-30; Col 2:3)
The One Shepherd (John 10:11, 16)

Introduction: In a Cursed World All is Vain (1:1-11)

This is not the world of Genesis 1-2 – *There is no Sabbath Res (Gen 2:1-3)*

This the world of Genesis 3 – *Everything in a fallen world feels futile (Rom 8:20-22)*

(1) The Futility of Wisdom... Leads Us to Fear God and His All-Wise Judgment (1:12-2:26)

Seeking wisdom and knowledge (1:12-18) – *Knowledge can never satisfy*

Acquiring pleasures, possessions, and accomplishments (2:1-11) – *These things will not last*

Living wisely (2:12-17) – *Death comes to the fool and the wise alike*

Working with wisdom, knowledge and skill (2:18-24) – *Work does not produce rest or prosperity*

Judgment on All Mankind (2:25-26) – *Sinners gather & collect only to give up again (cf. Matt 25)*

Reflection on Time and Eternity (3:1-22)

Seasons of Life *Demonstrates the complexity and the brevity of life*

Eternity Enjoy but do not embrace today (3:11-13); Fear God and rest in Him (3:14)

Judgment Where earthly judgment fails (3:16), God will give perfect justice (3:17)

Without God's revelation, eternity is unfathomable (3:19-22)

(2) The Futility of Position... Teaches Us to Fear God and His Impartial Judgment (4:1-16)

The Oppressor and the Oppressed (4:1-3) – *hyperbolic language teaches us that power is fleeting*

The Tycoon and the Baffoon (4:4-6) – *neither rich/wise nor poor/foolish have rest*

The Lonely and Well-Connected (4:7-12) – *friendship is better than isolation, but neither last*

The Waxing and the Waning (4:13-16) – *Even the popular young leader will age and be replaced*

Fear God and Consider His Judgment (5:1-9)

How to fear God: guard your steps (v. 1a), open your ears (v. 1b), cover your mouth (v. 2-7)

God's judgment is infinitely greater and more exact than man's – ***So Fear God***

(3) The Futility of Work... Teaches Us That True Wisdom is to Fear God (5:10-6:12)

Accumulation of wealth is futile (5:10-17); Possession and enjoyment are not coequal (6:1-2, 7)

The intention of creation was for our joy, not our security and consumption (5:18-20)

The Irony of Wisdom (7:1-29)

Pursue Wisdom: It will give you life (7:11-12; cf. Prov 1-4) – *Wisdom does not come thru comfort*

Possessing Wisdom will not spare you from death (7:14-29) – *Total Depravity (7:20, 29)*

To fear God is better than wickedness and righteousness (7:18)

(4) The Futility of Justice... Forces Us to Fear God and Await his Judgment (8:1-9:18)

Though justice may be delayed (8:11-12) & good may not be rewarded (8:14), FEAR GOD (8:12)

How? Honor authority (8:1-9), Live joyfully, diligently (9:7-10), Walk wisely (9:11-18)

God's sovereign (in)action is beyond our understanding (8:16-17)

God's judgment is sure and death will come to all (9:1-6)

Despite outward appearances, Fearing God Matters → Earthly Futility Leads Us to Fear God

General Observations on the Fallen World & Final Instructions for Living in it (10:1-12:14)

Though the world is unpredictable (9:1-6), wisdom is becoming of those who fear God.

Remember God (12:1). Enjoy life, but take it too seriously, judgment is coming (11:8-9).

Life is short and always leads to death (12:1-8). Joy is fleeting and cannot be trusted.

Thus the way to find happiness is to fear God and live in light of his judgment (12:13-14).