

ECCLESIASTES

The King's Midlife Crisis

AUTHOR	The Teacher, in Hebrew Qoheleth, son of David, king in Jerusalem, 1:1. Tradition says King Solomon. Many scholars think a later writer spoke in his voice. See Who Wrote Ecclesiastes?
DATE	If Solomon wrote it, about 950 to 930 BC, late in his life. Many scholars date it about 450 to 250 BC. Either way, it was being copied by about 175 to 150 BC.
WRITTEN TO	Anyone who has ever asked, What is the point? The book talks to my son, 12:12, and the Teacher talks to young people, 11:9.
KEY VERSE	Ecclesiastes 12:13. Fear God and keep His commandments, because this is the whole duty of man.



THE OLDEST COPY OF ECCLESIASTES

4QQoh a, from Qumran Cave 4, one of the older Bible scrolls found there. It was copied about 175 to 150 BC, and it has parts of Ecclesiastes 5, 6 and 7. A second copy, 4QQoh b, has bits of chapter 1. 4QQoh a is in the Jordan Museum in Amman.

An ancient copy this old means the book was already being copied and read about 150 years before Jesus. Photo Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin, CC BY SA 4.0.

Historical Setting

A king with more money, wisdom and fun than anyone looks back on his life and asks what it was all for. He tries pleasure, work, wisdom, building and money, and finds it all like

smoke. Ecclesiastes is honest about the hard questions: death, unfairness and why good people suffer. In the end it points to God.

What the Teacher Tried

PLEASURE. Laughter, wine, parties and singers, 2:1 to 3 and 2:8. It did not last.
BIG PROJECTS. Houses, vineyards, gardens and pools, 2:4 to 6. Someone else gets them when he dies, 2:18.
MONEY. Silver, gold and herds, 2:7 to 8. Whoever loves money never has enough, 5:10.
WISDOM. He got wiser than anyone, 1:16. The wise man still dies like the fool, 2:16.

The Idiot Proof Summary

The Teacher, a king in Jerusalem, sets out to find what makes life worth living. He tries fun, work, wisdom and wealth, and every road ends with the same word: hevel, smoke or vapor. Death comes to everyone and life is not fair. But again and again he says to enjoy your food, your work and your family as gifts from God. The book ends with the answer: fear God and keep His commandments, because He will judge everything.

Ecclesiastes at a Glance

CH 1 to 2	THE GREAT EXPERIMENT Smoke, smoke; the king tries everything.
CH 3 to 5	A TIME FOR EVERYTHING God's timing, life's unfairness, money.
CH 6 to 8	WHAT IS GOOD? Wisdom, its limits, and life not being fair.
CH 9 to 10	ENJOY THE DAYS YOU HAVE Death comes to all; live well now.
CH 11 to 12	REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR Be generous, enjoy your youth, fear God.

Where Jesus Shows Up

- ECCLESIASTES 1:2** All is futile. Paul says creation was made subject to futility, but it will be set free, Romans 8:20 to 21. Jesus came to give life to the full, John 10:10.
- ECCLESIASTES 2:24** Eat and drink as a gift from God. Jesus told of a rich fool who said, Eat, drink and be merry, and God said his life would be taken that very night, Luke 12:19 to 20.
- ECCLESIASTES 12:11** The words of the wise come from one Shepherd. Jesus said, I am the good Shepherd, John 10:11.
- ECCLESIASTES 1:1** The son of David, king in Jerusalem, could not find the answer under the sun. Jesus said, One greater than Solomon is here, Matthew 12:42.

GOD'S NAMES IN ECCLESIASTES

God, Elohim, 40 times. Yahweh never. Once He is called your Creator, 12:1.

What to Watch for in Ecclesiastes

THE HEART	3:11, 7:2-4, 8:11, 9:3, 11:9-10
ARCHAEOLOGY	2:24, 9:7
NOTABLE	3:1-8, 4:9-12, 9:10, 11:1, 12:1, 12:13
GOD SPEAKING	Words in red are God speaking. Only the words He actually said are red.
BLOODLINE OF CHRIST	Names underlined in red are in the family line of Jesus.

Cool Stuff Most People Miss

38 TIMES

The Hebrew word *hevel*, breath or vapor, shows up 38 times. It is the same word as the name Abel, the brother whose life was short.

TURN! TURN! TURN!

Pete Seeger turned 3:1 to 8 into a song, and the Byrds took it to number one in 1965. It is one of the few hit songs with words almost all from the Bible.

READ AT A FEAST

Many Jews read Ecclesiastes every year at Sukkot, the Feast of Booths, the happiest feast of the year. Joy and honesty go together.

NO RED LETTERS

God does not speak in Ecclesiastes, so there are no red letters. The book names God 40 times, and never by the name Yahweh.

How Does It End?

With the bottom line. After all the smoke, the Teacher lands on solid ground: fear God and keep His commandments, because God will bring every deed into judgment, 12:13 to 14.

BLOODLINE OF CHRIST

1

CHAPTER 1 IN 30 SECONDS

A king with everything sighs: Smoke, smoke, it is all smoke. The sun comes up, goes down, comes up again. The rivers run to the sea and the sea never fills. There is nothing new under the sun, and getting smarter just gives you a headache.

EVERYTHING IS FUTILE

¹These are the words of the Teacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem:

²"Futility of futilities,"
says the Teacher,
"futility of futilities!
Everything is futile!"

³What does a man gain from all his labor,
at which he toils under the sun?

⁴Generations come and generations go,
but the earth remains forever.

⁵The sun rises and the sun sets;
it hurries back to where it rises.

⁶The wind blows southward,
then turns northward;
round and round it swirls,
ever returning on its course.

⁷All the rivers flow into the sea,
yet the sea is never full;
to the place from which the streams
come,
there again they flow.

⁸All things are wearisome,
more than one can describe;
the eye is not satisfied with seeing,
nor the ear content with hearing.

⁹What has been will be again,
and what has been done will be done
again;
there is nothing new under the sun.

¹⁰Is there a case where one can say,

■ **ECC 1:1 [NOTE] THE TEACHER.** The Hebrew name is Qoheleth, one who gathers people together, like a preacher at an assembly. The Greek name Ecclesiastes comes from ekklesia, assembly, the word the New Testament uses for church.

■ **ECC 1:1 [NOTE] SON OF DAVID.** The Teacher never says his name. Jewish and Christian tradition says it is Solomon, David's son. See the Big Question Who Wrote Ecclesiastes? and Solomon's Wisdom and 700 Wives in 1 Kings, p. 7.

■ **ECC 1:2 [NOTE] FUTILITY.** The Hebrew word is hevel, breath or vapor, the same word as the name Abel, Genesis 4:2. It shows up 38 times in this book. The KJV says vanity. See the Big Question Is Life Meaningless?

■ **ECC 1:3 [NOTE] UNDER THE SUN.** The Teacher's catchphrase, 29 times. It means life on earth as we see it, looked at from down here.

"Look, this is new"?

It has already existed
in the ages before us.

¹¹There is no remembrance
of those who came before,
and those yet to come will not be remembered
by those who follow after.

DEBATED THE BIG QUESTION

WHO WROTE ECCLESIASTES?

Solomon or Someone Later?

ECCLESIASTES 1:1 · 1:12 · 1:16 · 2:4 TO 9 · 12:9 TO 10

THE CLUES FOR SOLOMON

The Teacher is the son of David, king in Jerusalem, 1:1. He was wiser than anyone before him, 1:16, and built houses, gardens and pools, with silver, gold, servants and singers, 2:4 to 9. That sounds like Solomon, 1 Kings 3:12 and 4 to 10.

THE CLUES FOR SOMEONE LATER

The book never says Solomon. The Teacher says I was king, 1:12, and all who were over Jerusalem before me, 1:16, though only one king of Israel, David, ruled Jerusalem before Solomon. Many scholars say the Hebrew is like later Hebrew, with Persian words like pardes, park, 2:5, and pitgam, sentence, 8:11. And the book often talks about kings from below, like a subject, 8:2 to 4 and 10:20.

THE LAST WORDS

In 12:9 to 14 someone talks about the Teacher: he taught the people and arranged many proverbs. So at least the ending came from a second voice.

Every View

1 KINGS 3:12 · 4:32 · 11:1 TO 4

VIEW 1: SOLOMON WROTE IT

Jewish tradition and most Christians for many centuries said Solomon wrote it as an old man, looking back on a life that wandered from God, 1 Kings 11:4. Rabbi Jonathan, in an old Jewish writing, said he wrote Song of Songs when young, Proverbs in middle age and Ecclesiastes when old. Some conservative scholars still hold this view.

■ **ECC 1:9 [NOTE] NOTHING NEW.** The saying is famous today because of this verse. Inventions change, but people and their problems stay the same.

VIEW 2: SOLOMON'S WORDS, PUT TOGETHER LATER

The Talmud says King Hezekiah and his company wrote down Proverbs, Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes, Bava Batra 15a. Some say the words go back to Solomon, and later scribes gave the book its final form, which would explain the later Hebrew.

VIEW 3: A LATER WRITER IN SOLOMON'S VOICE

Most scholars today think a wise teacher wrote it about 450 to 250 BC and spoke as Solomon, the wisest and richest king, to test whether wisdom and riches can make life full. In his Table Talk, Martin Luther once said Solomon did not write it himself.

WHAT ALL SIDES AGREE ON

The book is Scripture, and its voice is the life of a king who had everything. Its answer is the same either way: fear God and keep His commandments, 12:13.

WITH WISDOM COMES SORROW

¹²I, the Teacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem. ¹³And I set my heart to seek and explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. What a miserable task God has laid upon the sons of men to occupy them!

¹⁴I have seen all the things that are done under the sun, and have found them all to be futile, a pursuit of the wind.

¹⁵What is crooked cannot be straightened, and what is lacking cannot be counted.

¹⁶I said to myself, "Behold, I have grown and increased in wisdom beyond all those before me who were over Jerusalem, and my mind has observed a wealth of wisdom and knowledge."

¹⁷So I set my heart to know wisdom and madness and folly; I learned that this, too, is a pursuit of the wind.

¹⁸For with much wisdom comes much sorrow,

■ **ECC 1:12 [NOTE] I WAS KING.** Some read the past tense as an old king looking back. Others see a hint that someone is speaking in the king's voice. See *Who Wrote Ecclesiastes?*

■ **ECC 1:13 [TEXT] SET MY HEART.** The Hebrew says *libbi*, my heart, so this Bible says heart here and in 1:17, 7:25, 8:9 and 8:16, like the KJV I gave my heart. Many Bibles say mind. In Hebrew thinking the heart is where you think and decide, so the meaning is the same.

and as knowledge grows, grief increases.

DEBATED THE BIG QUESTION**IS LIFE MEANINGLESS?**

Vapor, Smoke and Breath

ECCLESIASTES 1:2 · 1:14 · 3:11 · 12:8 · 12:13

THE WORD

The key word, *hevel*, shows up 38 times. It means a breath or a puff of vapor, there and then gone. It is the same word as the name Abel, Genesis 4:2, whose life was short. Man is like a breath, Psalm 144:4.

HOW BIBLES SAY IT

The KJV says vanity, from the Latin *vanitas*. Many Bibles today say meaningless. This Bible says futile. Some scholars like vapor or smoke best, because the word is a picture: real, but you cannot hold on to it.

UNDER THE SUN

The Teacher looks at life from down here, under the sun, 29 times. From there, everything seems to slip away. But God is in the book from start to finish: He set eternity in our hearts, 3:11, and He will judge, 12:14.

Every View

ROMANS 8:20 TO 21 · JAMES 4:14 · PSALM 144:4 · JOHN 10:10

VIEW 1: EMPTY WITHOUT GOD

Many Christians read it this way: life under the sun, without God, is empty. The book pushes you to look above the sun. Paul says creation was made subject to futility, but it will be set free, Romans 8:20 to 21.

VIEW 2: SHORT, NOT POINTLESS

Many others say *hevel* means brief and hard to grasp, not worthless. Life is a vapor, James 4:14, so enjoy each day as God's gift instead of trying to control it.

VIEW 3: AN HONEST DOUBTER

Some scholars say the Teacher really did struggle and say dark things, 4:2 to 3, and the voice at the end, 12:9 to 14, frames his words for the reader. The Bible lets a doubter speak honestly.

WHAT ALL SIDES AGREE ON

Nothing under the sun lasts. Money, fun, fame and work cannot fill the heart. Fear

God and keep His commandments, 12:13. Jesus said He came so we can have life to the full, John 10:10.

2

CHAPTER 2 IN 30 SECONDS

The king tries every fun button: laughter, wine, mansions, gardens, gold, singers and a huge staff. He gets it all and feels nothing. Then it hits him: he dies like the fool, and some guy he never met gets his stuff.

THE FUTILITY OF PLEASURE

¹I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy what is good!"

But it proved to be futile.

²I said of laughter, "It is folly," and of pleasure, "What does it accomplish?"

³I sought to cheer my body with wine and to embrace folly—my mind still guiding me with wisdom—until I could see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives.

⁴I expanded my pursuits. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. ⁵I made gardens and parks for myself, where I planted all kinds of fruit trees. ⁶I built reservoirs to water my groves of flourishing trees.

⁷I acquired menservants and maidservants, and servants were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me, ⁸and I accumulated for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I gathered to myself male and female singers, and the delights of the sons of men—many concubines.

⁹So I became great and surpassed all in Jerusalem who had preceded me; and my wisdom remained with me. ¹⁰Anything my eyes desired, I did not deny myself. I refused my heart no pleasure. For my heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labor.

■ **ECC 2:4 [NOTE] THE BUILDER KING.** Houses, vineyards, gardens, pools, servants, herds, silver, gold and singers. It sounds like Solomon's life in 1 Kings 4 to 10.

■ **ECC 2:5 [NOTE] PARKS.** The Hebrew word *pardes* comes from Persian and means a walled garden. The same Persian word went into Greek as *paradeisos*, and that gives us the word *paradise*.

¹¹Yet when I considered all the works that my hands had accomplished and what I had toiled to achieve, I found everything to be futile, a pursuit of the wind; there was nothing to be gained under the sun.

THE WISE AND THE FOOLISH

¹²Then I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly; for what more can the king's successor do than what has already been accomplished? ¹³And I saw that wisdom exceeds folly, just as light exceeds darkness:

¹⁴The wise man has eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness.

Yet I also came to realize that one fate overcomes them both. ¹⁵So I said to myself, "The fate of the fool will also befall me. What then have I gained by being wise?"

And I said to myself that this too is futile.

¹⁶For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise, just as with the fool, seeing that both will be forgotten in the days to come. Alas, the wise man will die just like the fool! ¹⁷So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. For everything is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

THE FUTILITY OF WORK

¹⁸I hated all for which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who comes after me. ¹⁹And who knows whether that man will be wise or foolish? Yet he will take over all the labor at which I have worked skillfully under the sun. This too is futile.

²⁰So my heart began to despair over all the labor that I had done under the sun. ²¹When there is a man who has labored with wisdom, knowledge, and skill, and he must give his portion to a man who has not worked for it, this too is futile and a great evil. ²²For what does a man get for all the toil and striving with which he labors under the sun? ²³Indeed, all his days are filled with grief, and his task is sorrowful; even at night, his mind does not rest. This too is futile.

THE HEART ARCHAEOLOGY NOTABLE

²⁴ Nothing is better for a man than to eat and drink and enjoy his work. I have also seen that this is from the hand of God. ²⁵

For apart from Him, who can eat and who can find enjoyment? ²⁶ To the man who is pleasing in His sight, He gives wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner He assigns the task of gathering and accumulating that which he will hand over to one who pleases God. This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

3

CHAPTER 3 IN 30 SECONDS

There is a time for everything, from being born to dying. God made everything beautiful in its time and set eternity in our hearts. People and animals both go to the dust, so enjoy the work God gives you.

TO EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON

¹ To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven:

² a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot,

³ a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to break down and a time to build,

⁴ a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance,

⁵ a time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones together, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,

⁶ a time to search and a time to count as lost,

a time to keep and a time to discard,

⁷ a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak,

⁸ a time to love and a time to hate,

■ ECC 2:24 [ARCHAEOLOGY] Egyptian songs sung by a harper, copied in tombs and on papyrus for centuries, from before 1300 BC, tell the living to enjoy today because no one comes back, see The Harper's Songs Field Notes box → FIELD NOTES p.8

■ ECC 2:24 [NOTE] NOTHING BETTER. The first of about seven times the Teacher says to enjoy your food, drink and work as a gift from God: 2:24, 3:12 to 13, 3:22, 5:18 to 20, 8:15, 9:7 to 9 and 11:9. See the Big Question Eat, Drink and Be Merry?

■ ECC 3:1 [NOTABLE] Life has seasons. Hard ones do not last forever, and good ones are not wasted.

■ ECC 3:1 [NOTE] A TIME FOR EVERYTHING. 3:2 to 8 is a poem of 14 pairs of opposites. In 1965 the Byrds turned it into a number one song, Turn! Turn! Turn!, written by Pete Seeger.

a time for war and a time for peace.

GOD'S WORKS REMAIN FOREVER

⁹ What does the worker gain from his toil?

¹⁰ I have seen the burden that God has laid upon the sons of men to occupy them. ¹¹

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men, yet they cannot fathom the work that God has done from beginning to end.

¹² I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and do good while they live, ¹³ and also that every man should eat and drink and find satisfaction in all his labor—this is the gift of God. ¹⁴ I know that everything God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it or taken from it. God does it so that they should fear Him. ¹⁵ What exists has already been, and what will be has already been, for God will call to account what has passed.

FROM DUST TO DUST

¹⁶ Furthermore, I saw under the sun that in the place of judgment there is wickedness, and in the place of righteousness there is wickedness. ¹⁷ I said in my heart, "God will judge the righteous and the wicked, since there is a time for every activity and every deed."

¹⁸ I said to myself, "As for the sons of men, God tests them so that they may see for themselves that they are but beasts." ¹⁹ For the fates of both men and beasts are the same: As one dies, so dies the other—they all have the same breath. Man has no advantage over the animals, since everything is futile. ²⁰ All go to one place; all come from dust, and all return to dust.

²¹ Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and the spirit of the animal descends into the earth? ²² I have seen that there is nothing better for a man than to

■ ECC 3:11 [HEART] God has set eternity in the hearts of men. People long for more than this life because God made them that way.

■ ECC 3:11 [NOTE] ETERNITY IN THEIR HEARTS. God made people with a hunger for forever. Nothing under the sun can fill it. Many hear an echo here of Augustine's prayer: our heart is restless until it rests in You.

■ ECC 3:19 [NOTE] LIKE THE ANIMALS. From under the sun, people and animals look alike at death: same breath, same dust. 3:21 asks, Who knows? 12:7 says more. See the Big Question What Happens When We Die?

FIELD NOTES • ARCHAEOLOGY • CONFIDENCE: HIGH

THE HARPER'S SONGS

ECCLESIASTES 2:24 • 3:22 • 9:7 TO 10 • 11:9



A harper sings for the dead man and his wife in the tomb of Inherkhau, Deir el Medina, Thebes, Egypt, about 1150 BC. Public domain.

WHAT THEY ARE

Egyptian songs sung by a harper at a feast, written on tomb walls and on papyrus. Many of them talk about death and tell the living how to live.

HOW OLD THEY ARE

The best known, the song from the tomb of King Intef, is copied in a tomb from about 1340 BC and on a papyrus a little later. The song itself is likely much older. Others are in tombs at Thebes, like this one.

WHAT THEY SAY

In plain words: the bodies of the great are gone, their tombs have fallen, and no one comes back to tell us what it is like. So follow your heart while you live, put on fine clothes and perfume, and make a happy day.

SOUNDS LIKE ECCLESIASTES

Who can bring him to see what will come after him? 3:22. Walk in the ways of your heart, 11:9. Let your garments always be white, 9:8.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT

Some harper's songs answer back and say the land of the dead is good. The Teacher does not party to forget death. He enjoys life as a gift from God and remembers that God will judge, 11:9.

enjoy his work, because that is his lot. For who can bring him to see what will come after him?

later speaks of waking up to everlasting life.

DEBATED THE BIG QUESTION

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE DIE?

What the Teacher Could See

ECCLESIASTES 3:19 TO 21 • 9:5 TO 10 • 12:7

THE VERSES

People and animals have the same breath and go to the same dust, 3:19 to 20. Who knows if the spirit of man goes up? 3:21. The dead know nothing, 9:5. There is no work or wisdom in Sheol, the grave, 9:10. The dust returns to the earth, and the spirit returns to God who gave it, 12:7.

UNDER THE SUN AGAIN

The Teacher is looking from earth. From here, death looks the same for people and animals. The Old Testament says little about what comes next. Daniel 12:2

Every View

DANIEL 12:2 • 2 TIMOTHY 1:10 • JOHN 11:25 • PHILIPPIANS 1:23

VIEW 1: THE VIEW FROM EARTH

Most Christians say the Teacher describes what we can see: the dead have no part in this world any more, 9:6. Later Scripture shows more. Jesus brought life and immortality to light, 2 Timothy 1:10.

VIEW 2: THE DEAD SLEEP

Some, like Seventh day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses, read 9:5 to mean the dead are not aware of anything until the resurrection.

VIEW 3: 12:7 POINTS UP

Many see a hint of more in 12:7: the spirit goes back to God. Paul said he wanted to depart and be with Christ, which is far better, Philipians 1:23.

NOTABLE

SEE ALSO

Every view is laid out in the Big Question What Happens When You Die? in Luke, p. 7.

WHAT ALL SIDES AGREE ON

Death comes to everyone, 9:2. God will judge every deed, 12:14. And Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life, John 11:25.

4

CHAPTER 4 IN 30 SECONDS

Tears of the oppressed, workaholics with no one to leave it to, and a lonely man with no friends. Two are better than one, and a cord of three strands is hard to break. Fame does not last either.

THE EVIL OF OPPRESSION

¹Again I looked, and I considered all the oppression taking place under the sun. I saw the tears of the oppressed, and they had no comforter; the power lay in the hands of their oppressors, and there was no comforter. ²So I admired the dead, who had already died, above the living, who are still alive. ³But better than both is he who has not yet existed, who has not seen the evil that is done under the sun.

⁴I saw that all labor and success spring from a man's envy of his neighbor. This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

⁵The fool folds his hands and consumes his own flesh.

⁶Better one handful with tranquility than two handfuls with toil and pursuit of the wind.

⁷Again, I saw futility under the sun. ⁸There is a man all alone, without even a son or brother. And though there is no end to his labor, his eyes are still not content with his wealth: "For whom do I toil and bereave my soul of enjoyment?" This too is futile—a miserable task.

⁹Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor. ¹⁰For if one falls down, his companion can lift him up; but pity the one who falls without an-

ECC 4:9 [NOTABLE] You were not made to do life alone. Find people who will pick you up. Many read these verses at weddings.

other to help him up! ¹¹Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone? ¹²And though one may be overpowered, two can resist. Moreover, a cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

THE FUTILITY OF POWER

¹³Better is a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king who no longer knows how to take a warning. ¹⁴For the youth has come from the prison to the kingship, though he was born poor in his own kingdom.

¹⁵I saw that all who lived and walked under the sun followed this second one, the youth who succeeded the king. ¹⁶There is no limit to all the people who were before them. Yet the successor will not be celebrated by those who come even later. This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

5

CHAPTER 5 IN 30 SECONDS

Church tip: listen more, talk less, and pay your vows. Money never satisfies the man who loves it. You came into the world with nothing and you will leave the same way, so enjoy the days God gives you.

APPROACHING GOD WITH FEAR

¹Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools, who do not know that they do wrong. ²Do not be quick to speak, and do not be hasty in your heart to utter a word before God. For God is in heaven and you are on earth. So let your words be few.

³As a dream comes through many cares, so the speech of a fool comes with many words.

⁴When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it, because He takes no pleasure in fools. Fulfill your vow. ⁵It is

ECC 4:12 [NOTE] THREE STRANDS. Two friends are good. Many Christians read the third strand as God, and the verse is often read at weddings.

ECC 5:2 [NOTE] LET YOUR WORDS BE FEW. Jesus said the same: do not babble on like the pagans when you pray, Matthew 6:7.

ECC 5:4 [NOTE] PAY YOUR VOWS. A promise to God is serious. Better not to promise than to promise and not pay, 5:5. See Deuteronomy 23:21 to 23.

better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it.

⁶Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, and do not tell the messenger that your vow was a mistake. Why should God be angry with your words and destroy the work of your hands? ⁷For as many dreams bring futility, so do many words. Therefore, fear God.

THE FUTILITY OF WEALTH // PSALM 49:1-20

⁸If you see the oppression of the poor and the denial of justice and righteousness in the province, do not be astonished at the matter; for one official is watched by a superior, and others higher still are over them. ⁹The produce of the earth is taken by all; the king himself profits from the fields.

¹⁰He who loves money is never satisfied by money, and he who loves wealth is never satisfied by income. This too is futile. ¹¹When good things increase, so do those who consume them; what then is the profit to the owner, except to behold them with his eyes?

¹²The sleep of the worker is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of the rich man permits him no sleep.

¹³There is a grievous evil I have seen under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner, ¹⁴or wealth lost in a failed venture, so when that man has a son there is nothing to pass on.

¹⁵As a man came from his mother's womb, so he will depart again, naked as he arrived. He takes nothing for his labor to carry in his hands. ¹⁶This too is a grievous affliction: Exactly as a man is born, so he will depart. What does he gain as he toils for the wind? ¹⁷Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness, with much sorrow, sickness, and anger.

¹⁸Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in all the labor one does under the

sun during the few days of life that God has given him—for this is his lot.

¹⁹Furthermore, God has given riches and wealth to every man, and He has enabled him to enjoy them, to accept his lot, and to rejoice in his labor. This is a gift from God.

²⁰For a man seldom considers the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with the joy of his heart.

6

CHAPTER 6 IN 30 SECONDS

A man gets riches, a hundred kids and a long life, but cannot enjoy any of it. A baby born dead is better off, says the Teacher. Ouch. Nobody knows what comes after him.

THE FUTILITY OF LIFE

¹There is another evil I have seen under the sun, and it weighs heavily upon mankind: ²God gives a man riches, wealth, and honor, so that he lacks nothing his heart desires; but God does not allow him to enjoy them. Instead, a stranger will enjoy them. This is futile and a grievous affliction.

³A man may father a hundred children and live for many years; yet no matter how long he lives, if he is unsatisfied with his prosperity and does not even receive a proper burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he. ⁴For a stillborn child enters in futility and departs in darkness, and his name is shrouded in obscurity. ⁵The child, though neither seeing the sun nor knowing anything, has more rest than that man, ⁶even if he lives a thousand years twice over but fails to enjoy his prosperity. Do not all go to the same place?

⁷All a man's labor is for his mouth, yet his appetite is never satisfied.

⁸What advantage, then, has the wise man over the fool? What gain comes to the poor man who knows how to conduct himself before others? ⁹Better what the eye can see than the wandering of desire. This too is futile and a pursuit of the wind.

¹⁰Whatever exists was named long ago, and it is known what man is; but he can-

■ ECC 5:15 [NOTE] NAKED HE CAME. Job said it, Job 1:21, and Paul said it, For we brought nothing into the world, so we cannot carry anything out of it, 1 Timothy 6:7.

THE HEART

not contend with one stronger than he.¹¹ For the more words, the more futility—and how does that profit anyone?¹² For who knows what is good for a man during the few days in which he passes through his fleeting life like a shadow? Who can tell a man what will come after him under the sun?

7

CHAPTER 7 IN 30 SECONDS

A funeral teaches you more than a party. Do not ask why the old days were better. Nobody is perfect, not one. The Teacher searched for answers and found that people take a good thing and make it complicated.

THE VALUE OF WISDOM

¹A good name is better than fine perfume, and one's day of death is better than his day of birth.

²It is better to enter a house of mourning than a house of feasting, since death is the end of every man, and the living should take this to heart.

³Sorrow is better than laughter, for a sad countenance is good for the heart.

⁴The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure.

⁵It is better to heed a wise man's rebuke than to listen to the song of fools.

⁶For like the crackling of thorns under the pot, so is the laughter of the fool. This too is futile.

⁷Surely extortion turns a wise man into a fool, and a bribe corrupts the heart.

⁸The end of a matter is better than the beginning, and a patient spirit is better than a proud one.

⁹Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit,

for anger settles in the lap of a fool.

¹⁰Do not say, "Why were the old days better than these?"

For it is unwise of you to ask about this.

¹¹Wisdom, like an inheritance, is good, and it benefits those who see the sun.

¹²For wisdom, like money, is a shelter, and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of its owner.

¹³Consider the work of God:

Who can straighten what He has bent?

¹⁴In the day of prosperity, be joyful, but in the day of adversity, consider this:

God has made one of these along with the other, so that a man cannot discover anything that will come after him.

THE LIMITS OF HUMAN WISDOM

¹⁵In my futile life I have seen both of these:

A righteous man perishing in his righteousness, and a wicked man living long in his wickedness.

¹⁶Do not be overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise. Why should you destroy yourself? ¹⁷Do not be excessively wicked, and do not be a fool. Why should you die before your time? ¹⁸It is good to grasp the one and not let the other slip from your hand. For he who fears God will follow both warnings.

¹⁹Wisdom makes the wise man stronger than ten rulers in a city.

²⁰Surely there is no righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.

²¹Do not pay attention to every word that is spoken, or you may hear your servant cursing you. ²²For you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others.

²³All this I tested by wisdom, saying, "I resolve to be wise." But it was beyond me.

■ ECC 7:2 [HEART] The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning. Facing death makes the heart wise.

■ ECC 7:2 [NOTE] THE HOUSE OF MOURNING. A funeral makes you think about your own life. Moses prayed the same, Teach us to number our days, Psalm 90:12.

■ ECC 7:20 [NOTE] NO ONE RIGHTEOUS. Paul says the same thing in Romans 3:10 to 12, where he quotes the Psalms. Everyone needs God's mercy.

THE HEART

²⁴ What exists is out of reach and very deep. Who can fathom it?

²⁵ I directed my heart to understand, to explore, to search out wisdom and explanations, and to understand the stupidity of wickedness and the folly of madness. ²⁶ And I find more bitter than death the woman who is a snare, whose heart is a net, and whose hands are chains. The man who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is ensnared.

²⁷ “Behold,” says the Teacher, “I have discovered this by adding one thing to another to find an explanation. ²⁸ While my soul was still searching but not finding, among a thousand I have found one upright man, but among all these I have not found one such woman. ²⁹ Only this have I found: I have discovered that God made mankind upright, but they have sought out many schemes.”

8

CHAPTER 8 IN 30 SECONDS

Obey the king and know when to keep quiet. When justice is slow, people get bold about doing wrong. Life is not fair under the sun, so enjoy the meals God gives and leave the rest to Him.

OBEY THE KING

¹ Who is like the wise man? Who knows the interpretation of a matter? A man's wisdom brightens his face, and the sternness of his face is changed.

² Keep the king's command, I say, because of your oath before God. ³ Do not hasten to leave his presence, and do not persist in a bad cause, for he will do whatever he pleases. ⁴ For the king's word is supreme, and who can say to him, “What are you doing?”

⁵ Whoever keeps his command will come to no harm, and a wise heart knows the right time and procedure. ⁶ For there is a right time and procedure to every purpose, though a man's misery weighs

heavily upon him. ⁷ Since no one knows what will happen, who can tell him what is to come?

⁸ As no man has power over the wind to contain it, so no one has authority over his day of death. As no one can be discharged in wartime, so wickedness will not release those who practice it. ⁹ All this I have seen, applying my heart to every deed that is done under the sun; there is a time when one man lords it over another to his own detriment.

FEAR GOD // ISAIAH 8:11–15

¹⁰ Then too, I saw the burial of the wicked who used to go in and out of the holy place, and they were praised in the city where they had done so. This too is futile.

¹¹ When the sentence for a crime is not speedily executed, the hearts of men become fully set on doing evil.

¹² Although a sinner does evil a hundred times and still lives long, yet I also know that it will go well with those who fear God, who are reverent in His presence. ¹³ Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow.

GOD'S WAYS ARE MYSTERIOUS

¹⁴ There is a futility that is done on the earth: There are righteous men who get what the actions of the wicked deserve, and there are wicked men who get what the actions of the righteous deserve. I say that this too is futile.

¹⁵ So I commended the enjoyment of life, because there is nothing better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be merry. For this joy will accompany him in his labor during the days of his life that God gives him under the sun.

¹⁶ When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to observe the task that one performs on the earth—though his eyes do not see sleep in the day or even in the night—¹⁷ I saw every work of God, and

■ **ECC 7:28 [NOTE] ONE IN A THOUSAND.** A hard verse. Some read it as the bitter words of a man with 1,000 wives and concubines, 1 Kings 11:3. Others say the point is 7:29: all people, men and women, have gone looking for trouble. The Bible honors many wise women, like the one in Proverbs 31.

■ **ECC 8:11 [HEART]** When punishment is slow, the hearts of men become set on doing evil.

■ **ECC 8:11 [NOTE] THE SENTENCE.** The Hebrew word *pitgam*, a ruling or decree, comes from Persian. It is one of the clues scholars use to date the book. See Who Wrote Ecclesiastes?

THE HEART ARCHAEOLOGY

that a man is unable to comprehend the work that is done under the sun. Despite his efforts to search it out, he cannot find its meaning; even if the wise man claims to know, he is unable to comprehend.

THE BIG QUESTION

EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY?

Enjoy Life or YOLO?

ECCLESIASTES 2:24 · 3:13 · 5:18 TO 20 · 8:15 · 9:7 TO 9

THE REFRAIN

About seven times the Teacher says to enjoy your food, drink and work: 2:24, 3:12 to 13, 3:22, 5:18 to 20, 8:15, 9:7 to 9 and 11:9. Most times he says it is from the hand of God, or God's gift.

WHERE THE SAYING COMES FROM

Eat, drink and be merry mixes 8:15 with Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die, Isaiah 22:13, which Paul quotes in 1 Corinthians 15:32. Jesus told of a rich fool who said, Eat, drink and be merry, and died that night, Luke 12:19 to 20.

Every View

LUKE 12:19 TO 21 · 1 CORINTHIANS 15:32 · 1 TIMOTHY 6:17

VIEW 1: A GIFT FROM GOD

Many read the refrain as good news: food, work and family are gifts. Enjoying them is a way to thank God, 1 Timothy 6:17.

VIEW 2: MAKE THE BEST OF IT

Some read it as a sad shrug: life is short and unfair, so grab the little joys you can.

NOT YOLO

Either way, it is not You Only Live Once, so do whatever you want. Enjoy your youth, but know that God will judge, 11:9. Remember your Creator, 12:1.

WHAT ALL SIDES AGREE ON

Enjoy the good things God gives, with thanks, and live for Him. The rich fool's mistake was not the party; it was leaving God out, Luke 12:21.

9

CHAPTER 9 IN 30 SECONDS

Everyone dies, good and bad. So eat your bread with joy, wear clean clothes, love your wife, and work hard while you can. The race is not always to the fast, and a poor wise man once saved a whole city. Nobody remembered him.

DEATH COMES TO GOOD AND BAD

¹ So I took all this to heart and concluded that the righteous and the wise, as well as their deeds, are in God's hands. Man does not know what lies ahead, whether love or hate.

² It is the same for all: There is a common fate for the righteous and the wicked, for the good and the bad, for the clean and the unclean, for the one who sacrifices and the one who does not. As it is for the good, so it is for the sinner; as it is for the one who makes a vow, so it is for the one who refuses to take a vow.

³ This is an evil in everything that is done under the sun: There is one fate for everyone. Furthermore, the hearts of men are full of evil and madness while they are alive, and afterward they join the dead.

⁴ There is hope, however, for anyone who is among the living; for even a live dog is better than a dead lion. ⁵ For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing. They have no further reward, because the memory of them is forgotten. ⁶ Their love, their hate, and their envy have already vanished, and they will never again have a share in all that is done under the sun.

ENJOY YOUR PORTION IN THIS LIFE

⁷ Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a cheerful heart, for God has already approved your works:

⁸ Let your garments always be white, and never spare the oil for your head.

■ ECC 9:3 [HEART] The hearts of men are full of evil and madness while they live.

■ ECC 9:5 [NOTE] THE DEAD KNOW NOTHING. Under the sun, the dead have no part in this world any more, 9:6.

■ ECC 9:7 [ARCHAEOLOGY] An Old Babylonian tablet of

the Epic of Gilgamesh, about 1800 to 1700 BC, where a tavern keeper tells Gilgamesh to eat, drink, wear clean clothes and love his wife, see the Siduri Field Notes page → FIELD NOTES p.14

DEBATED FIELD NOTES · ARCHAEOLOGY · CONFIDENCE: HIGH · DEBATED: DID THE TEACHER KNOW IT?

SIDURI IN GILGAMESH

ECCLESIASTES 9:7 TO 9



The Sun God Tablet from Sippar, about 860 to 850 BC: the sun god Shamash on his throne. The Siduri tablet is not shown; it is said to come from this same city. British Museum, London. Photo Osama Shukir Muhammed Amin, CC BY SA 4.0.

WHAT IT IS

A clay tablet with part of the Epic of Gilgamesh, the most famous story of ancient Iraq. After his friend Enkidu dies, King Gilgamesh looks for a way to never die. He meets a woman who keeps a tavern by the sea, named Siduri in later copies.

HOW OLD IT IS

Old Babylonian, about 1800 to 1700 BC, centuries before Solomon. It was the first piece of Gilgamesh found that is older than the copies from Assyria.

WHERE AND WHEN FOUND

Bruno Meissner bought it in 1902 for the Berlin Museum, VAT 4105. It is said to come from Sippar, the city of the sun god.

WHAT SHE SAID

Her words, from the 1920 translation of Morris Jastrow and Albert Clay. Gish is Gilgamesh.

Why, O Gish, does thou run about?
The life that thou seekest, thou wilt not find.

When the gods created mankind,
Death they imposed on mankind;
Life they kept in their power.
Thou, O Gish, fill thy belly,
Day and night do thou rejoice,
Daily make a rejoicing!
Day and night a renewal of jollification!

Let thy clothes be clean,
Wash thy head and pour water over thee!
Care for the little one who takes hold of thy hand!

Let the wife rejoice in thy bosom!

SOUNDS LIKE 9:7 TO 9

Eat your bread with joy, let your garments be white, never spare the oil for your head, enjoy life with your wife.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT

In Gilgamesh the gods keep life for themselves, so party before you die. The Teacher says enjoy these things because God has approved your works, 9:7, and they are His gift, 2:24. And God will judge, 12:14.

GONE FROM LATER COPIES

The tablets from Nineveh, a thousand years later, drop this speech. There Siduri mostly tells him the way to the boatman.

DID THE TEACHER KNOW IT?

In 1905 a scholar named Hubert Grimme saw the match. Some think the Teacher knew the story. Many say both just say what people everywhere say about a short life.

SEE ALSO

The same epic has a flood story, see Other Flood Stories in Genesis, p. 7.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE

It does not show the Bible copied a myth. The Teacher asked the oldest question and gave a different answer: enjoy life as God's gift and live for Him.

NOTABLE

⁹ Enjoy life with your beloved wife all the days of the fleeting life that God has given you under the sun—all your fleeting days. For this is your portion in life and in your labor under the sun. ¹⁰ **Whatever you find to do with your hands, do it with all your might, for in Sheol, where you are going, there is no work or planning or knowledge or wisdom.**

¹¹ I saw something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; neither is the bread to the wise, nor the wealth to the intelligent, nor the favor to the skillful. For time and chance happen to all. ¹² For surely no man knows his time: Like fish caught in a cruel net or birds trapped in a snare, so men are ensnared in an evil time that suddenly falls upon them.

WISDOM IS BETTER THAN STRENGTH

¹³ I have also seen this wisdom under the sun, and it was great to me: ¹⁴ There was a small city with few men. A mighty king came against it, surrounded it, and built large siege ramps against it.

¹⁵ Now a poor wise man was found in the city, and he saved the city by his wisdom. Yet no one remembered that poor man. ¹⁶ And I said, "Wisdom is better than strength, but the wisdom of the poor man is despised, and his words are not heeded."

¹⁷ The calm words of the wise are heeded over the shouts of a ruler among fools.

¹⁸ Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.

10

CHAPTER 10 IN 30 SECONDS

A dead fly can ruin a whole bottle of perfume, and a little folly ruins a wise man. Sharpen your axe. Fools talk too much. And watch what you say about the king, because a little bird might tell him.

■ **ECC 9:10 [NOTABLE]** Life is short, so give your best to the work in front of you today.

■ **ECC 9:10 [NOTE] SHEOL.** The Hebrew name for the place of the dead, the grave. The Old Testament says little about life after death; the New Testament says much more, 2 Timothy 1:10.

■ **ECC 9:11 [NOTE] TIME AND CHANCE.** The fastest runner does not always win. Life is full of surprises no one can plan for.

WISDOM AND FOLLY

¹ As dead flies bring a stench to the perfumer's oil, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

² A wise man's heart inclines to the right, but the heart of a fool to the left.

³ Even as the fool walks along the road, his sense is lacking, and he shows everyone that he is a fool.

⁴ If the ruler's temper flares against you, do not abandon your post, for calmness lays great offenses to rest.

⁵ There is an evil I have seen under the sun—an error that proceeds from the ruler:

⁶ Folly is appointed to great heights, but the rich sit in lowly positions.

⁷ I have seen slaves on horseback, while princes go on foot like slaves.

⁸ He who digs a pit may fall into it, and he who breaches a wall may be bitten by a snake.

⁹ The one who quarries stones may be injured by them, and he who splits logs endangers himself.

¹⁰ If the axe is dull and the blade unsharpened, more strength must be exerted, but skill produces success.

¹¹ If the snake bites before it is charmed, there is no profit for the charmer.

¹² The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious, but the lips of a fool consume him.

¹³ The beginning of his talk is folly, and the end of his speech is evil madness.

¹⁴ Yet the fool multiplies words. No one knows what is coming, and who can tell him what will come after him?

¹⁵ The toil of a fool wearies him, for he does not know the way to the city.

■ **ECC 10:1 [NOTE] DEAD FLIES.** A little bit of foolishness can ruin a good name, the way dead flies make perfume stink.

THE HEART NOTABLE

- ¹⁶ Woe to you, O land whose king is a youth,
and whose princes feast in the morning.
- ¹⁷ Blessed are you, O land whose king is a son of nobles,
and whose princes feast at the proper time—
for strength and not for drunkenness.
- ¹⁸ Through laziness the roof caves in,
and in the hands of the idle, the house leaks.
- ¹⁹ A feast is prepared for laughter, and wine makes life merry,
but money is the answer for everything.
- ²⁰ Do not curse the king even in your thoughts,
or curse the rich even in your bedroom,
for a bird of the air may carry your words,
and a winged creature may report your speech.

11

CHAPTER 11 IN 30 SECONDS

Cast your bread on the waters and be generous. You cannot control the weather, so plant anyway. Young man, enjoy being young, but remember: God will judge it all.

CAST YOUR BREAD UPON THE WATERS

- ¹ Cast your bread upon the waters,
for after many days you will find it again.
- ² Divide your portion among seven, or even eight,
for you do not know what disaster may befall the land.
- ³ If the clouds are full,
they will pour out rain upon the earth;
whether a tree falls to the south or to the north,
in the place where it falls, there it will lie.
- ⁴ He who watches the wind will fail to sow,
and he who observes the clouds will fail to reap.

■ **ECC 10:20 [NOTE]** A LITTLE BIRD. The saying A little bird told me may come from this verse. The point: what you say in private can get out.

■ **ECC 11:1 [NOTABLE]** Be generous and take good risks. What you give away has a way of coming back.

■ **ECC 11:1 [NOTE]** CAST YOUR BREAD. Some read it as trade, sending grain by ship and getting profit back later. Many read it as giving: be generous, and it will come back to you. 11:2 says spread it out to seven or eight.

- ⁵ As you do not know the path of the wind,
or how the bones are formed in a mother's womb,
so you cannot understand the work of God,
the Maker of all things.
- ⁶ Sow your seed in the morning,
and do not rest your hands in the evening,
for you do not know which will succeed,
whether this or that, or if both will equally prosper.

ENJOY YOUR YEARS

- ⁷ Light is sweet,
and it pleases the eyes to see the sun.
- ⁸ So if a man lives many years,
let him rejoice in them all.
But let him remember the days of darkness,
for they will be many.
Everything to come is futile.

- ⁹ Rejoice, O young man, while you are young,
and let your heart be glad in the days of your youth.

Walk in the ways of your heart
and in the sight of your eyes,
but know that for all these things
God will bring you to judgment.

- ¹⁰ So banish sorrow from your heart,
and cast off pain from your body,
for youth and vigor are fleeting.

12

CHAPTER 12 IN 30 SECONDS

Remember your Creator before old age shows up: shaky hands, missing teeth, weak eyes and hair like almond blossoms. The body goes back to dust and the spirit to God. The bottom line: fear God and keep His commandments.

REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR

- ¹ Remember your Creator in the days of your youth,
before the days of adversity come
and the years approach of which you will say,
"I find no pleasure in them,"

■ **ECC 11:9 [HEART]** Let your heart be glad while you are young, but know that God will judge. Joy and judgment go together.

NOTABLE

- ² before the light of the sun, moon, and stars is darkened,
and the clouds return after the rain,
³ on the day the keepers of the house tremble
and the strong men stoop,
when those grinding cease because they are few
and those watching through windows see dimly,
⁴ when the doors to the street are shut
and the sound of the mill fades away,
when one rises at the sound of a bird
and all the daughters of song grow faint,
⁵ when men fear the heights and dangers of the road,
when the almond tree blossoms,
the grasshopper loses its spring,
and the caper berry shrivels—
for then man goes to his eternal home
and mourners walk the streets.
- ⁶ Remember Him before the silver cord is snapped
and the golden bowl is crushed,
before the pitcher is shattered at the spring
and the wheel is broken at the well,
⁷ before the dust returns to the ground from which it came
and the spirit returns to God who gave it.
- ⁸ "Futility of futilities," says the Teacher.
"Everything is futile!"

THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN

- ⁹ Not only was the Teacher wise, but he also taught the people knowledge; he pondered, searched out, and arranged

many proverbs. ¹⁰ The Teacher searched to find delightful sayings and to record accurate words of truth.

¹¹ The words of the wise are like goads, and the anthologies of the masters are like firmly embedded nails driven by a single Shepherd. ¹² And by these, my son, be further warned: There is no end to the making of many books, and much study wearies the body.

¹³ When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is this: Fear God and keep His commandments, because this is the whole duty of man. ¹⁴ For God will bring every deed into judgment, along with every hidden thing, whether good or evil.

■ **ECC 12:1 [NOTABLE]** Do not wait until you are old to get serious about God. Start now.

■ **ECC 12:1 [NOTE] REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR.** Remember means more than think about. It means to live for Him, before the hard years come.

■ **ECC 12:3 [NOTE] THE OLD AGE POEM.** Many read 12:2 to 7 as a picture of a body growing old. The keepers who tremble are the arms and hands, the grinders are the teeth, the windows are the eyes, the almond blossoms are white hair, and the grasshopper that drags itself along is a stiff walk.

■ **ECC 12:6 [NOTE] THE SILVER CORD.** Many picture a gold lamp bowl hanging by a silver cord. When the cord snaps, the bowl falls and breaks. It is a picture of death, when life is cut off.

■ **ECC 12:7 [NOTE] DUST AND SPIRIT.** The body goes back to the dust, as God said to Adam, Genesis 3:19. The spirit, the breath of life God gave, Genesis 2:7, goes back to Him.

■ **ECC 12:9 [NOTE] A NEW VOICE.** In 12:9 to 14 someone talks about the Teacher instead of as the Teacher. Many think this is the one who put the book together.

■ **ECC 12:11 [NOTE] ONE SHEPHERD.** The wise sayings come from one Shepherd. Many Christians think of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, John 10:11.

■ **ECC 12:12 [NOTE] MANY BOOKS.** Every student's favorite verse. Books never end, and too much study wears you out.

■ **ECC 12:13 [NOTABLE]** After trying everything, the Teacher lands here. This is the bottom line of the whole book.

■ **ECC 12:14 [NOTE] EVERY HIDDEN THING.** God will judge it all. Paul says, We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:10.