



Making Sense

of the Mess

The Study of Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes 3:19-20

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.”

Ecclesiastes 7:2

“It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart.”

Yes! Amen!

Wait. What?

Ecclesiastes 3:19-20

“Surely the fate of human beings is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; humans have no advantage over animals. Everything is meaningless. All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return.”

Ecclesiastes 9:2

“So I reflected on all this and concluded that the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God’s hands, but no one knows whether love or hate awaits them. All share a common destiny—the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad.”

Wait. What?

Ecclesiastes 7:16^{ESV}

“Be not overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise. Why should you destroy yourself?”

Ecclesiastes 9:8_{NLT}

**“Wear fine clothes, with a splash of
cologne!”**

Ecclesiastes 10:19_{HCSB}

**“Wine makes life happy,
and money is the answer for everything.”**

Ecclesiastes 7:28^{NIV}

“This is my conclusion,” says the Teacher.

“I discovered this after looking at the matter from every possible angle.

Though I have searched repeatedly, I have not found what I was looking for.

Only one out of a thousand men is virtuous, but not one woman!”

Ecclesiastes 11:3^{NIV}

**“Whether a tree falls to the south or
to the north, in the place where it falls,
there it will lie.”**

**What do we do with
all of this?**

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all of this?

*For some, Ecclesiastes rattles their
“neat-and-tidy” view of the world.*

*Others are like— “Yes! Finally
someone is telling the truth!”*

Ecclesiastes is one of
the most confusing—
yet clarifying books
in the entire Bible.

“The truest of all books.”

Herman Melville

American Novelist



Making **SENSE**

of the **MESS**

LIVING IN THE REAL WORLD

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

¹ The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem: "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? Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises.

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

⁶The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again. All things are wearisome, more than one can say. The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing.

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

9 What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one can say, "Look! This is something new"? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time. No one remembers the former generations, and even those yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow them.

1. The Author. (v. 1)

2. The Motto. (v. 2)

3. The Treadmill. (vv. 3-11)

1. The Author. (v. 1)

**“The words of the Teacher,
son of David, king in Jerusalem:”**

**“I said to myself, ‘Look, I have increased in
wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over
Jerusalem before me; I have experienced
much of wisdom and knowledge.’”**

Ecclesiastes 1:16

1. The Author. (v. 1)

**“The words of the Teacher,
son of David, king in Jerusalem:”**

**“I became greater by far than anyone in
Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom
stayed with me.”**

Ecclesiastes 2:9

1. The Author. (v. 1)

“The words of the Teacher,
son of David, king in Jerusalem:”

Clearly King Solomon

1. The Author. (v. 1)

the Teacher → "Qoheleth"

*"One who gathers an
assembly"*

"Ecclesia" = the assembly

1. The Author. (v. 1)

“Ecclesiastes”

One who speaks in
the assembly

1. The Author. (v. 1)

The teacher. The preacher.

Solomon.

Solomon uses two voices:

His own voice as the author.

And the voice of The Critic.

1. The Author. (v. 1)

The Critic.

1. **The Author.** (v. 1)

The Critic.

2. **The Motto.** (v. 2)

“Meaningless! Meaningless!

Utterly Meaningless!

Everything is meaningless.”

2. The Motto. (v. 2)

"Havel"



"A breath...or a breeze.

*A mist, a vapor, a puff of wind,
a bit of smoke."*

[As in Psalm 39:5-6]

2. The Motto. (v. 2)

The Book of Ecclesiastes is a meditation on what it means for our lives to be like a whisper spoken in the wind: here one minute and carried away forever in the next.

2. The Motto. (v. 2)

(v. 3)

“What do people gain from
all their labors at which
they toil under the sun?” (29x)

1. The Author. (v. 1)

Solomon speaking as "The Critic"

2. The Motto. (v. 2)

"Havel!"



3. The Treadmill. (vv. 3-11)

The march of time

3. The Treadmill. (vv. 3-11)

This side of eternity, life is a breath. We do the same things over and over again in a world repeating itself over and over again, and then we die, only to be followed by our children who will do the same things in the same way and then meet the same end.

3. The Treadmill. (vv. 3-11)

Being a Christian doesn't change this.

In fact, it should CAUSE us to stop pretending that death isn't a reality.

This is what "The Critic" wants us to see.

It is only when we prepare to die—that we truly understand how to live.

Ecclesiastes 7:2

“It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart.”

“The truest of all books.”

