

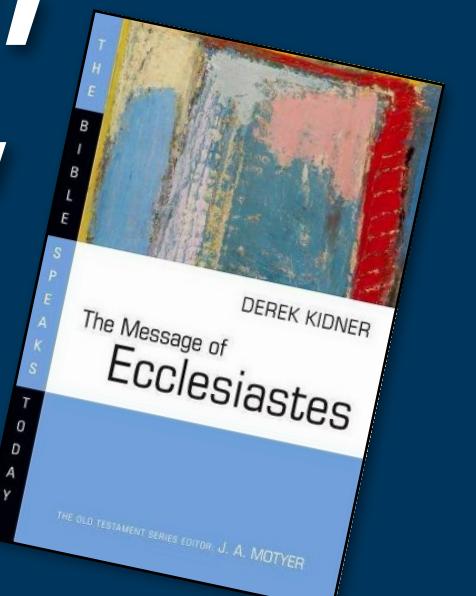
Making Sense of the Mess

The Study of Ecclesiastes

The Narrator of Ecclesiastes
("The Critic") has taken us
on a journey into life's
deepest questions.

“Before the positive emphasis of the final three chapters can emerge, we have to make sure that we are building on nothing short of hard reality. In case we might be holding on to some comforting illusions, chapter 9 confronts us with the little that we know—then with the vast extent of what we can’t even handle: in particular, with death, the ups and downs of fortune, and the erratic opinions of the crowd. But first it asks the crucial question, whether we are in the hands of friend or foe.”

Derek Kidner; *The Message of Ecclesiastes*

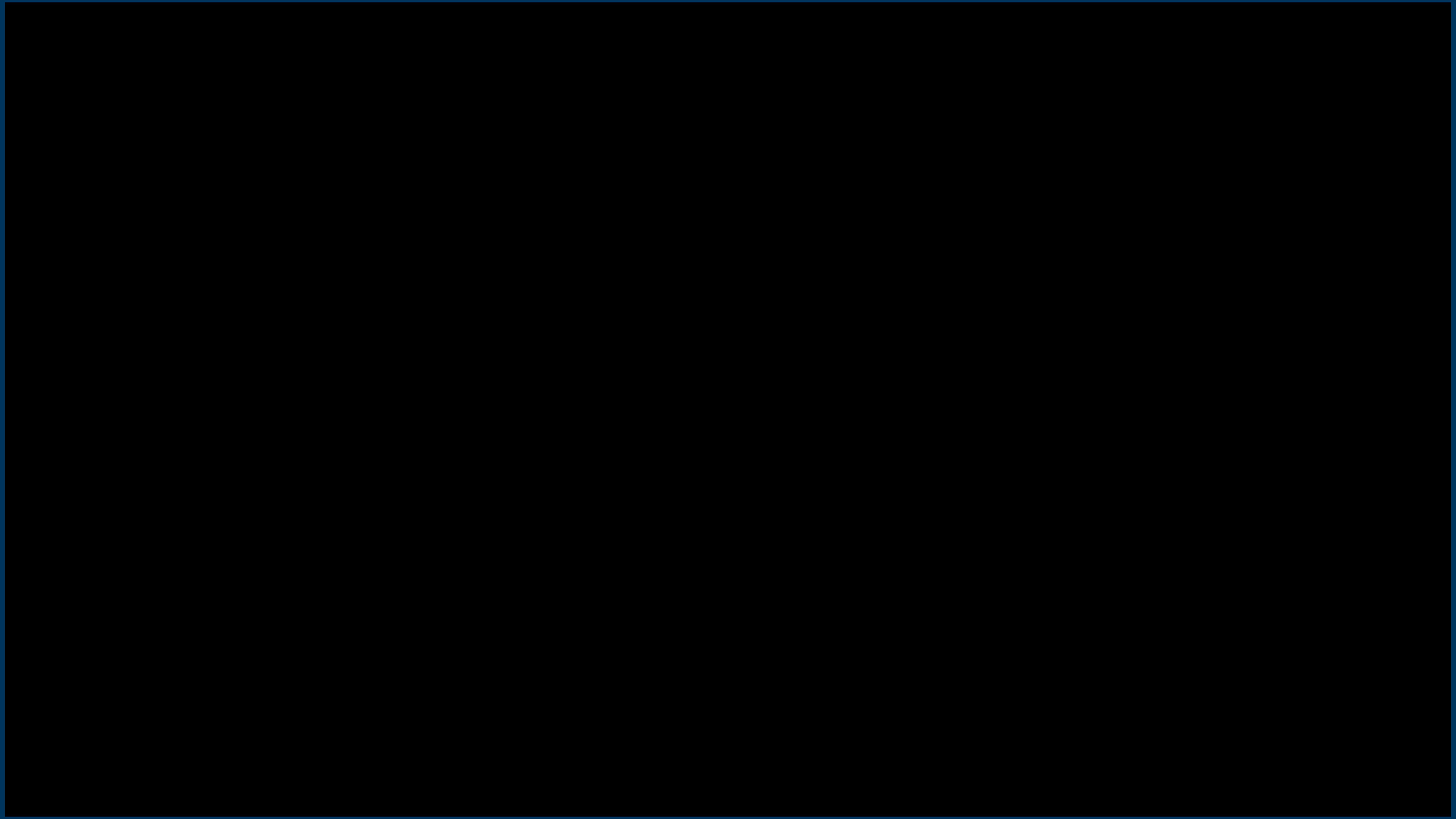


Chapter 9 takes us all the way down
to deepest question of them all...

Is there even a God?

And if so, is He kind—or is He angry?

Is He loving—or is He hateful?





Making SENSE of the MESS

WHOSE HANDS ARE WE REALLY IN?

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12

If God “has the whole world
in His hands”—
what kind of hands are they?

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12 MSG

¹ Well, I took all this in and thought it through, inside and out. Here's what

I understood:

The good, the wise, and all that they do are in God's hands—but, day by day, whether it's love or hate they're dealing with, they don't know.

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12 MSG

² Anything's possible. It's one fate for everybody—righteous and wicked, good people, bad people, the nice and the nasty, worshipers and non-worshipers, committed and uncommitted. I find this outrageous—the worst thing about living on this earth—that everyone's lumped together in one fate. Is it any wonder that so many people are obsessed with evil? Is it any wonder that people go crazy right and left? Life leads to death. That's it.

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12 MSG

⁴ Still, anyone selected out for life has hope, for, as they say, "A living dog is better than a dead lion." The living at least know *something*, even if it's only that they're going to die. But the dead know nothing and get nothing. They're a minus that no one remembers. Their loves, their hates, yes, even their dreams, are long gone. There's not a trace of them left in the affairs of this earth.

[So...]

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12 MSG

**7 Seize life! Eat bread with gusto,
Drink wine with a robust heart.
Oh yes—God takes pleasure in *your* pleasure!
Dress festively every morning.
Don't skimp on colors and scarves.
Relish life with the spouse you love
each and every day of your precarious life.
Each day is God's gift. It's all you get in exchange
for the hard work of staying alive.
Make the most of each one!**

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12 MSG

¹⁰ Whatever turns up, grab it and do it.

And heartily!

This is your last and only chance at it,

For there's neither work to do nor thoughts to

think in the company of the dead,

where you're most certainly headed.

* * * * *

¹¹ I took another walk around the neighborhood and
realized that on this earth as it is—

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12 MSG

The race is not always to the swift,
Nor the battle to the strong,
Nor satisfaction to the wise,
Nor riches to the smart,
Nor grace to the learned.

Sooner or later bad luck hits us all.

¹² No one can predict misfortune.

Like fish caught in a cruel net or birds in a trap,
So men and women are caught
By accidents evil and sudden.

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12 MSG

¹³ One day as I was observing how wisdom fares on this earth, I saw something that made me sit up and take notice. There was a small town with only a few people in it. A strong king came and mounted an attack, building trenches and attack posts around it. There was a poor but wise man in that town whose wisdom saved the town, but he was promptly forgotten. (He was only a poor man, after all.)

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12 MSG

¹⁶ All the same, I still say that wisdom is better than muscle, even though the wise poor man was treated with contempt and soon forgotten.

The quiet words of the wise are more effective than the ranting of a king of fools.
Wisdom is better than warheads,
but one hothead can ruin the good earth.

Word.

“Ecclesiastes isn’t the kind of book that we keep reading until we reach the end and get the answer, like a mystery. Instead it’s a book in which we keep struggling with the problems even when we do NOT have all the answers. This is how the Christian life works: it isn’t just about what we get at the end, but about what we become along the way. Discipleship is a journey, not a destination.”

Philip Ryken

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12 deals with 3 things:

1. The one thing in life that is certain. (vv. 1-6)

2 All share a common destiny—the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the clean and the unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not. As it is with the good, so with the sinful; as it is with those who take oaths, so with those who are afraid to take them. 3 This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun: The same destiny overtakes all. The hearts of people, moreover, are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live, and afterward they join the dead.

Unless Jesus comes back in our
lifetime—

We are ALL going to experience
what happens one moment after
our hearts stop beating and our
soul leaves our body.

At that moment it won't matter...

- What your politics were
- How much money you made
- How good you looked
- What car you drove
- How **RIGHT** you thought you were

Death completely levels
the playing field.

God is using Ecclesiastes to shatter
our belief that we can control our
own lives...and that we can be gods
and decide our own destinies.

You are not god.

But you will stand before Him.

We are surrounded by
people who never think
about this.

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12 deals with 3 things:

1. The one thing in life that is certain. (vv. 1-6)
2. The many things in life that are uncertain. (vv. 11-12)

“Time and chance happen to us all.”

Under the sun—
you won't ever make
sense of everything.

This isn't saying that there
is no sense at all.

The preacher is just saying
that TO US not
everything makes sense.

Don't miss the bigger
message:

You are not god.
You're not always right.
You can't control everything.

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12 deals with 3 things:

1. The one thing in life that is certain. (vv. 1-6)
2. The many things in life that are uncertain. (vv. 11-12)
3. The simple things in life that are wise. (vv. 7-10)



Verse 7

Go, eat your food with gladness,
and drink your wine with a joyful
heart, for God has already
approved what you do.

Seize the day!

God takes pleasure
in your pleasure!

They are part of His
design for you!

God created you for joy!

Our joy comes from things that
death can't take away.

“Some of what I have been learning these past few years seems to really coincide with Solomons conclusions, to basically live in the moment, find joy and gratitude in these simple things from God, one day at a time, resting in the fact that God knows how many days that will be.

“Not sure if you have bumped into much of the findings from neuroscience, but there is extra validation from brain imaging that living life grateful and in the moment is REALLY good for our brain function, which helps our body. It is good for our spirit, fostering emotional maturity and potentially spiritual maturity (if we lean into that). I just love learning so many practical ways to lean into God's true joy and peace that Jesus died that we might have.”

God delights in giving us gifts...
and in seeing the joy that
those daily gifts bring to us.

John 10:9-10 MSG

“I am the Gate. Anyone who goes through me will be cared for—will freely go in and out, and find pasture. A thief is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.”

Ride a bike.

See the Grand Canyon.

Go to the theater.

Learn to make music.

Visit the sick.

Cook a gourmet meal.

Teach Sunday School.

Watch a film.

Read a book.

Laugh till you cry.

Run a marathon.

Snorkel in the ocean.

Listen to Mozart.

Call your parents.

Write a letter.

Play with your kids.

Spend your money.

Speak about Christ.

Learn a language.

Travel somewhere new.

Plant a church.

Adopt a child.

Start a school.

Give away your fortune.

Slow down. Take a Sabbath.

Enjoy a sunset. Dance.





