



## Ecclesiastes

The book of Ecclesiastes is one of the most unusual and perhaps most difficult biblical writings to understand. It has a spirit of hopeless despair; it has no praise or peace; it seems to promote questionable conduct. However, unlike Proverbs, where individual verses can be read as independent and stand-alone axioms, Ecclesiastes must be read as an entire unit.

Ecclesiastes is best described as an intellectual search for meaning in life, and it is brutally honest about observed realities. It is similar to the book of Job in the respect that the answer to the search does not come until the end of the book.

But Ecclesiastes also moves beyond Job in probing the philosophical implications the author sees in life that do not match up to the ordered and logical world of Proverbs. In other words, to expect wise living to always result in the unmarred bliss of the Garden of Eden is foolish. In this sense, Ecclesiastes compliments the book of Proverbs by discussing the apparent contradictions when trying to understand the world from only a logical perspective.

As strange as Ecclesiastes may seem, when understood properly, tells us that we will not find the meaning in life apart from serving God. While many try to find meaning for their life through work, wealth, or pursuit of pleasure, Ecclesiastes tells us a life lived only for these goals is meaningless, futile, and it is like chasing after the wind. It is only as we serve God that life takes on significant meaning.

The conclusion of Ecclesiastes, and the main point of the book, is that one should “fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (12:13). Wisdom is a good approach to life, but one cannot find meaning apart from acknowledging God as the ultimate Creator (12:1). Mankind cannot understand and comprehend everything nor explain it all. Life should not be viewed as a mystery to be solved but as a gift to be enjoyed. *Life does not always make sense... but there is still a God who understands!*