

*'All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.'*  
2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

# Ecclesiastes

## Introduction

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## **Kerrville Bible Church**

### Fall Semester 2023

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## Ecclesiastes: Titles Introduction

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- Hebrew: *Koheleth (Qoheleth)*
  - Preacher; wise man
  - One who gathers an assembly and teaches them
  
- Greek: *Ekklesiastes*
  - Derived from “*ekklesia*”, meaning assembly
  - Preacher is the one who gathers the assembly

# Ecclesiastes: Inspired by God

## Introduction

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### □ Solomon's Divine Appointment to Study "LIFE"

#### ■ Time:

- 40 Years!
- No War ... Unchallenged Power and Influence

#### ■ Wealth:

- "Greater than all kings of the earth" 1K 10:23
- "All that my eyes desired I did not refuse" (2:10)

#### ■ Geography: Mixing of cultures

#### ■ Wisdom:

- Was he made for **this** "grievous task"?
- So that (V.12:13) would be possible?



# Ecclesiastes: The Preacher

## Introduction

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*<sup>1</sup>The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.*

- Solomon (1010-932)
  - Preacher (12:9-10)
  - Son of David
  - King in Jerusalem
  - His Wisdom 1:16 (1 Kings 3:9-10)
  - His Building Activities (2:4-6)
  - His Wealth (2:7-9)

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*'Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.' ECC 1:2*

# Ecclesiastes: The Problem Declared

## The Monotony of Life (1:2-11)



<sup>2</sup>"Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity."

- Hebrew superlative
- "All" refers to "all of life" ...
- Vanity is Hebrew: "*Hebel*"
  - THINNEST of vapors
  - No substance – Soap Bubbles
  - Cannot get your hands around and possess
  - Like trying to catch the wind
  - Futility ... Meaningless



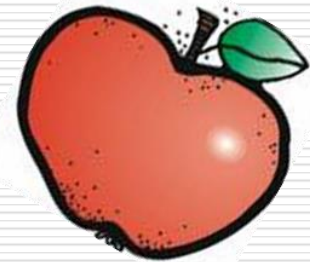
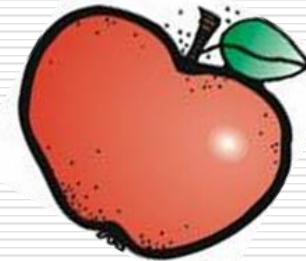
# Ecclesiastes: The Problem Declared

## The Monotony of Life (1:2-11)



<sup>2</sup>"Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity."

- Live Life in the Moment
- Conveyer belt with apples
  - Don't Waste Your Life
    - Looking for apples TO COME
    - Looking at apples that have PASSED
  - Enjoy the apple IN FRONT OF YOU
    - Take The Biggest Bite You Can Take!
    - Enjoy eating in the moment
    - Enjoy drinking in the moment
    - Enjoy your work in the moment
- God is Sovereign ... Not You!



*"Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity." ECC 1:2*

# Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

## The Monotony of Life (1:2-11)



<sup>3</sup>What advantage does man have in all his work, which he does under the sun?

- The BIG Question: What's the Point of this Life?
  - Advantage in Hebrew: “*Yitron*” – a commercial term referring to “what’s left over”
  - Could be translated gain, or profit, or advantage
  - After you do your work – you labor, you sweat, you worry, -- what is left over?
  - What lasts ... beyond the moment?
  - Is there anything of lasting value from all this toil – or is life only about survival?



*‘Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.’ ECC 1:2*

# Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared The Monotony of Life (1:2-11)



<sup>3</sup>What advantage does man have in all his work, which he does under the sun?

- “Under the sun”
  - Refers to life on this earth
  - One tiny, finite, frail human
  - On a Small planet, in a small solar system, in a small galaxy, in an incalculably large universe
  - My goodness! We are nothing!



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# Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

## The Monotony of Life (1:2-11)



<sup>4</sup>A generation goes and a generation comes, But the earth remains forever.

- Earth Remains Forever
  - God created man to rule the earth
  - But we only inhabit it for a brief moment.
  - Then we die.
  - Our life is so TRANSIENT.



*'Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.'* ECC 1:2

# Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

## The Monotony of Life (1:2-11)



<sup>5</sup>Also, the sun rises and the sun sets; And hastening to its place it rises there again.

### □ Sun Cycles Endlessly

- The cycle of the SUN never ceases ... over and over ... endlessly repeating its journey across the heavens
- This pictures the REPETITIVE nature of our lives
- One day is just like the next ... forever



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# Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

## The Monotony of Life (1:2-11)



<sup>6</sup>Blowing toward the south, then turning toward the north, the wind continues swirling along; and on its circular courses the wind returns.

- Wind is always moving
  - The WIND is always moving randomly ... swirling ... changing speeds ... changing directions ... going where it wishes.
  - This pictures our lives as AIMLESS.



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# Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

## The Monotony of Life (1:2-11)



<sup>7</sup>All the rivers flow into the sea, Yet the sea is not full. To the place where the rivers flow, There they flow again.

### □ Rivers Never Stop Flowing

- The RIVERS flow to the sea ... endlessly ... never stopping
- And yet, the sea is never full
- This shows that our lives are never satisfied, and our lives are FUTILE.



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# Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

## The Monotony of Life (1:2-11)



<sup>8</sup>All things are wearisome; man is not able to tell it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing.

### □ Life is Wearisome

- Solomon has used the four basic elements – Earth, Wind, Fire, Water to illustrate his point.
- Our lives are Transient, Repetitive, Aimless and Futile.
- We tire of even the most beautiful sights and most stirring music.
- Man is “not able to tell it” ... can’t find the words to connect to God



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# Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

## The Monotony of Life (1:2-11)



<sup>9</sup>That which has been is that which will be, and that which has been done is that which will be done. So there is nothing new under the sun.

- ❑ But, *Koheleth* tells us there is nothing new under the sun
- ❑ He makes his point more forcefully ...

<sup>10</sup>Is there anything of which one might say, "See this, it is new"? Already it has existed for ages which were before us.

- ❑ Do you disagree?
- ❑ Let's think this through ...

# Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

## The Monotony of Life (1:2-11)



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- ❑ Need to COMMUNICATE
- ❑ Old: Mouth
- ❑ Now: Zoom
- ❑ BUT the process unchanged
  - Still exchanging words / pictures
  - Still manipulate / lie
  - Still struggle to find the right ways to say, "I love you" and "I'm so sorry"



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- ❑ Need to HEAL
- ❑ Old: Eyes, hands, crude tools and herbal medicines
- ❑ Now: 3-D MRI ... extension of the eyes
- ❑ Now: Robotic Arthroscopic surgery ... extension of hands
- ❑ Now: Laser surgery ... just fancier tools
- ❑ Now: Powerful drugs ... extension of boiled tree bark



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- ❑ Men wage WAR
- ❑ Old: Bashing each other with fists
- ❑ Now: Mind-boggling atomic power ... able to destroy cities and large populations
- ❑ But, aren't they just much bigger fists?



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# Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

## The Monotony of Life (1:2-11)



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- ❑ What about Social Progress?
- ❑ Miseries of human life are still with us
  - Poverty and starvation are pervasive
  - Slavery abounds, women and children are exploited
  - Racism and genocide are rampant
  - Lawlessness and corruption are unchecked
- ❑ Just as it has always been

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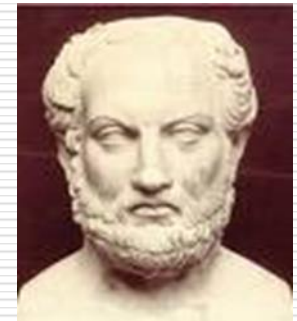
## The Monotony of Life (1:2-11)



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<sup>10</sup>Is there anything of which one might say, "See this, it is new"? Already it has existed for ages which were before us.

- ❑ Fifth century B.C. – Herodotus and Thucydides
- ❑ Five biggest worries in their day:
  - 1. Threat of international war
  - 2. Breakdown of marriage and rise of divorce
  - 3. Rebellion of their youth
  - 4. Corruption in politics and injustice in the courts
  - 5. Potholes in the public roads.



# Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

## The Monotony of Life (1:2-11)



<sup>9</sup>That which has been is that which will be, and that which has been done is that which will be done. So there is nothing new under the sun.

<sup>10</sup>Is there anything of which one might say, "See this, it is new"? Already it has existed for ages which were before us.

- ❑ The point is that men's hearts ... and their needs, desires, pursuits, corruptions and complaints are still the same.
- ❑ Those needs, desires, pursuits, corruptions and complaints are what shape life under the sun.
- ❑ Certainly we are more efficient ... certainly we can destroy ourselves much faster.
- ❑ But the sinful human heart has not changed ... so there is nothing new under the sun.

# Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

## The Monotony of Life (1:2-11)



<sup>11</sup>There is no remembrance of earlier things; and also of the later things which will occur, there will be for them no remembrance among those who will come later still.

- ❑ Can you remember your maternal grandmother's maiden name?  
That is ... the name of the woman ... who bore the woman ... who bore you.
- ❑ Even if you know her name – does anyone else in the world?
- ❑ How quickly we are forgotten.



# Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

## The Monotony of Life (1:2-11)



<sup>11</sup>There is no remembrance of earlier things; and also of the later things which will occur, there will be for them no remembrance among those who will come later still.

- ❑ *Koheleth* says that nothing we do under the sun will be remembered
- ❑ We leave no legacy on this earth ... future generations on this earth will not tell inspiring stories of our exploits ... we die and our story disappears with us from this earth.
- ❑ How does this truth sound to you? Does it sound harsh? Does it make you sad? Are you beginning to feel weary?
- ❑ *Koheleth* is bringing us to grips with the reality of life under the sun. And he continues that task in the next section of this chapter.

*'Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.'* ECC 1:2

## Ecclesiastes – The Problem Declared

### The Vanity of Wisdom (1:12-18)



<sup>12</sup>I, the Preacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

<sup>13a</sup>And I set my mind to seek and explore by wisdom concerning all that has been done under heaven.

- ❑ “Mind” in Hebrew means “heart”: To the Jew, it is the center of intelligence, emotion and will.
- ❑ The wisest man on earth resolved to dedicate his entire life to explore the meaning of the human experience
- ❑ “Seek” in Hebrew means “to probe the roots of a matter”
- ❑ “Explore” in Hebrew means “to investigate on all sides.”
- ❑ Solomon is determined to do a thorough job. And he does.
- ❑ And remember a key point, William Barrick observes that Solomon did most of his research into to exploring life’s most important issues WITHOUT GOD

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# Ecclesiastes

## The Vanity of Wisdom (1:12-18)



<sup>13b</sup>It is a grievous task which God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with.

- ❑ “Sons of men” of Adam who live under the curse of Genesis 3.
- ❑ Toil and labor all their lives without finding the answer to the question: *What advantage does man have in all his work which he does under the sun?*
- ❑ Yet, God has divinely planted a hunger in these men to know the answer to that question.
- ❑ It is a grievous task indeed.
  - The word ‘task’ literally means a “*busy-ness which is deeply humbling*”



*“Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.” ECC 1:2*



# Ecclesiastes

## The Vanity of Wisdom (1:12-18)



<sup>14</sup>I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind.

- After an extended period of personal trials, observations, interviews with men of every calling from all parts of the known world.
- And then, after applying his wisdom and insight to all he had gathered,
- Koheleth tried to make sense out of the human experience:
  - **Life under the sun is meaningless...**
  - it is vapor ... it brings no lasting gain ... no lasting satisfaction
  - Looked at from every angle – his conclusion is the same – **hebel**.
  - It was like trying to herd cats or to nail jello to a post.
  - It was like trying to catch the wind. It can't be done ... it just slips through your fingers.

*'Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.'* ECC 1:2

# Ecclesiastes

## The Vanity of Wisdom (1:12-18)



<sup>15</sup>What is crooked cannot be straightened and what is lacking cannot be counted.

- ❑ *Koheleth* is telling us this world is broken, and things can never be made perfect/whole again by man under the sun.
- ❑ Despite man's many plans and efforts, much of what is crooked or lacking in this world will never be put right because of man's intractable sinfulness.
- ❑ Man's wisdom – even Solomon's own God-given wisdom -- cannot make the world right.
- ❑ People will always have unmet needs (love, acceptance, recognition, satisfaction) and nothing will ever become all that it could be **under the sun**.
- ❑ Does man keep trying? Of course.
- ❑ Can he create utopia ... heaven on earth? No. Never. Not!

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# Ecclesiastes

## The Vanity of Wisdom (1:12-18)



<sup>16</sup>I said to myself, "Behold, I have magnified and increased wisdom more than all who were over Jerusalem before me; and my mind has observed a wealth of wisdom and knowledge."

- Here Solomon acknowledges that in his searching for meaning and purpose, he has been growing in wisdom and knowledge.

<sup>17</sup>And I set my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly; I realized that this also is striving after wind.

- But now, in his search for explanations, Solomon chooses to explore madness and folly – the very opposite of wisdom.
- And that, indeed, is folly!

# Ecclesiastes

## The Vanity of Wisdom (1:12-18)



<sup>18</sup>Because in much wisdom there is much grief and increasing knowledge results in increasing pain.

- ❑ We know Solomon has descended into foolish and unwise behavior as he has explored the meaning and purpose of life.
- ❑ Despite that behavior, we know he has never let go of his faith in God.
- ❑ As Solomon continues to realize how much he has learned, he also realizes how much he will never know, how much he cannot change and how much of life “under the sun” is havel/vapor.
- ❑ This increasing wisdom and knowledge brings him much increasing grief and pain.

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# The Book of Ecclesiastes

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***"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Psalm 111:10"***

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