

The Wisdom Literature

- ▶ Instructions for living wisely
 - Contrast with the Law of Moses – display of sin
 - Contrast with O.T. Scripture – Messianic hope
 - Living in a world under the curse

- ▶ Three perspectives:
 - Job – Fear and submit
 - Proverbs – Fear and be wise
 - Ecclesiastes – Fear and obey

Ecclesiastes – The Bible’s resident alien?

- ▶ Pessimistic
 - “Life is full of trouble and then you die.”
- ▶ Temporal perspective only (9:7-10)
 - “Eat drink and be merry for tomorrow you die.”
- ▶ Contradictions
 - Death or life is better (4:1-3 v. 9:4-6)
 - Sinner’s life is long or short (8:12-13)
 - Wisdom is sorrowful or good (1:18 v. 7:11)
- ▶ Question: Is this book inspired?
 - Scofield Bible – “no claim to revelation”
 - Two authors with opposite perspectives
- ▶ The wisdom of God
 - Life under the fall
 - Fundamental truth – Fear God and obey Him = faith!
 - A Christian message (Romans 8:18)
- ▶ Outline
 1. Introduction (1:1-11)
 2. The King’s search for meaning (1:12-2:26)
 3. Reflections on meaning in this vain life (3:1-12:8)
 4. Epilogue (12:9-14)

Introduction (Ecclesiastes 1:1-11)

- ▶ Qohelet – Qoheleth – Koheleth – the Preacher
 - King Solomon
 - Speaker before the assembly

- ▶ HEBEL – Vanity
 - First and last word (1:2; 12:8)
 - Absurd: upside down (3:16-17; 8:12-14)

- ▶ Striving after wind (1:14, 17; 2:11, 17, 26; 4:4, 6, 16; 6:9)
 - No profit (1:3; 3:9; 5:15; 6:8; and 6:11)
 - Great evil (2:21); evil task (4:8); evil sickness (6:2)

- ▶ Qohelet finds vanity in pleasure, wisdom, labor, injustice

- ▶ Does Qohelet find anything of value?
 - Joy (2:24; 3:12-13; 3:22a; 5:18; 8:15; 9:7-9; 11:8-12:1)
 - Wisdom (2:13-14; 2:26; 4:13; 7:5; 7:11-12; 7:19; 8:1; 8:5; 9:16-18; 10:10; 10:12)
 - Fear of God (3:14; 5:6; 7:18; 8:12-13)

- ▶ The perspective of Qohelet – The fall

- ▶ Thesis – all human experience is absurd or vain
 - May have temporary value
 - Takes you nowhere ultimately

Introduction (Ecclesiastes 1:1-11)

- ▶ Illustrations
 - Changing generations
 - Circuit of the sun
 - The wind
 - The rivers and the ocean
 - All things are weary (1:8)
 - Eye not satisfied with seeing
 - Ear not filled with hearing
 - Cycles of history
 - Forgotten generations

- ▶ Conclusion:
 - Absurd
 - No perfection in the earth
 - No permanence in the earth

The royal experiment (Ecclesiastes 1:12-2:17)

- ▶ Wisdom (1:12-18)
 - Unhappy business given by God.
 - Vanity and striving after wind
 - Vexation and sorrow

 - ▶ Pleasure (2:1-11)
 - Great works and possessions
 - Seeking to cheer his heart
 - Great works
 - Great wealth
 - Large family
 - Vanity and striving after wind

 - ▶ Compare wisdom, madness and folly (2:12-17)
 - Wisdom better than folly
 - Conclusion:
 - Hatred for life
 - Grievous experience.
 - Vain effort – absurd; striving after wind
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Concluding thoughts (Ecclesiastes 2:18-26)

- ▶ Hatred for meaningless toil
- ▶ Nothing better than to find enjoyment in toil
- ▶ The final outcome is in the hand of God

VANITY OF VANITIES! ALL IS VANITY!

- ▶ Life has no meaning or fulfillment
- ▶ A message of despair
- ▶ A message of hope
 - The futility of human effort
 - the good hand of God