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

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