



Cover to Cover: (Wisdom Literature)

Aug 5

Ecclesiastes! One of the wisdom books (Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes) that ponders the exception of Proverbs and explores the meaning of life! The thing we need to understand with Ecclesiastes is it cannot be taken or understood piecemeal but rather whole. We need to take the whole book into consideration to see what it actually is teaching. As such watch these two helpful videos: [Ecclesiastes Overview](#) and [Wisdom Literature](#).

Today we're going to try to understand the message of Ecclesiastes in a nutshell (if you're able to read ahead that would be helpful, otherwise today's study will give you way markers as you continue to read Ecclesiastes).

Reading: We'll have 5 short readings throughout our survey.

Between the teacher and the author we are going to learn some very important lessons that supplement Proverbs (that if you fear the Lord and follow wisdom things will generally go well for you). Along the way he also notes some micro-truths and offers some small proverbs of his own.

A key word that is used (38 times) is meaningless or vanity or *hevel*. Hevel is Hebrew for mist, smoke or vapour. It gives the idea that life is temporary or fleeting and that it is also an enigma or a puzzle: just when it seems certain and we try to grab hold of it, it is gone. Life is seldom clear, it is uncontrollable and changing and unstable. All such pursuits are "chasing after the wind."

The author and the teacher deconstruct areas of life where humans often look to find meaning apart from God—a possibly painful process! In 12:11 these words are called "goads" (a goad is a pointy livestock prod), they may hurt but they point us to life.

The teacher presents us with 3 disturbing realities:

1. TIME (**read:** 1:3–11)
 - a. What are these verses saying?
 - b. How do we try to immortalize ourselves? Slow time?
 - c. How is the march of time humbling?
2. DEATH (**read:** 11:7–12:7)
 - a. How do we try to stop or avert death in our culture?
 - b. How is this hevel and death the great equalizer of all?
3. RANDOMNESS (middle of book)
 - a. In the middle of the book there are reflections on other pursuits that people pursue. What are some of these in today's terms? How are they hevel?
4. EVEN WISDOM IS HEVEL (**read:** 9:13–18)
 - a. Wisdom is not meaningless, but it too does not guarantee a good life and so has an element of hevel. How is this so?
5. SOME WAYS FORWARD (**read:** 8:15; 9:7–10)
 - a. Are these verses commending sinful enjoyment?
 - b. They, and others, encourage us that we need to admit that life is out of our control and accept the good and the bad along with the little gifts of God as our lot may fall.
 - c. How are enjoying the little things God give you a way to find joy in the midst of the hevel?
6. THE WAY FORWARD (**read:** 12:13–14)
 - a. The author now speaks.
 - b. What alone makes sense of the hevel?
 - i. V. 13
 1. As we live...
 - ii. V. 14
 1. A future hope...

Other thoughts or questions about Ecclesiastes?