

Literary Background

The Genesis Background of Ecclesiastes

Introduction

It has been the contention by several men (Barth, Karl. *Church Dogmatics*. Vol. III, Part 2, pp. 293-300, Vol. IV, Part 1, pp. 309-21) that Solomon was referring to Genesis and the sadness of the curse when he wrote Ecclesiastes. Cady (Cady, Chester. "The 'Good' in Ecclesiastes") has pointed out clearly that Solomon did refer to Genesis in many places. He focuses his attention on Genesis 1 to point out that Solomon recognized that the 'good' of creation was still present in our sin cursed world.

It is the contention of this article that Solomon was doing more than simply referring to the problem that is developed in Genesis 1. The purpose will be to demonstrate that Solomon was expounding Genesis, chapters 1 - 5.

Approach to the study

Ecclesiastes - Genesis

To demonstrate this point, first the message of Genesis 1 - 5 will be surveyed. Second, Ecclesiastes will be paralleled to that message by demonstrating how the basic themes of Solomon are parallel to those of Moses.

It is often said that there are no good examples in the Bible of good expository preaching. This article will attempt to demonstrate that there are. Ecclesiastes is a sermon taken from Genesis 1 - 5. Notice that the book is called Ecclesiastes (Heb.: Qoheleth), meaning "the Preacher."

Meaning of Ecclesiastes

There are basically two different views within evangelicalism with regard to the meaning of Ecclesiastes. The first view holds that the book is basically written from the standpoint of Solomon, a man in a sad spiritual state, who can derive nothing better from life than to "eat, drink and be merry." Ecclesiastes 8:15

Those who hold this view feel that this statement conflicts with perceived systematic theology. This statement is usually attributed to the wicked of Noah's day, "eat, drink and be merry." However, this phrase is not found in Genesis, but in Matthew

24:38. It was attributed to Noah's contemporaries. But it was not "merry" but "marry." Nevertheless, for the holders of this view, the comparison seems to be close enough. Thus both Solomon and the wicked are saying the same thing.

Essentially, this view observes that the book contains too many depressing statements about the state of the world as compared to the few statements about what is good.

However, it is the view of this paper, that Qoheleth's view of the world was accurate. That ever since the curse of Adam, there is nothing that is observably profitable in this life. For when Adam sinned, God made a very depressing statement to him, "...in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die." Adam had a perfect relationship with his world until he sinned, and then God told him that, not only would he die, but also his life would be full of frustrations.

This qualifies for the most depressing point in man's earthly existence. While modern man worries about losing his job, Adam kept his job, but lost all hope of profit. Qoheleth simply observed that what God had said to Adam had come to pass. Furthermore, it is the contention of this article that the message of Genesis 1--5 is essentially the same as that of Ecclesiastes. Yet Genesis, like Qoheleth, recognized the sure hope. It was found in God's creative 'good.'

"Good" (Heb. "*tob*") is found frequently through the book. It is seen most frequently in statements like "What can a man do that is *good*?" or "There is nothing *better*" ("gooder"). This statement is based on the statement that "God saw (evaluated) that it was *good* in Genesis 1. This use of "good" is indicating that God's evaluation was a perfect reflection of His character. Thus creation is a perfect reflection of God's character; not the totality of His character, but that it reflects about God what it is supposed to reflect.

"YOU SHALL SURELY DIE"

Genesis

"And behold it was very good (tob)." (Gen. 1:31)

In the first chapter of Genesis God completed all of His creative works. Whatever occurred between verses 1 and 25 is labeled as "good" (*tob*) by God.

God described the function of man;

*"Be fruitful
and multiply, "
and fill the earth,
and subdue it..." (Gen. 1:28a)*

Man's responsibility was simply to procreate and rule the earth. Notice God's command was to have a sexual relationship between man and his wife, clearly before sin entered the world.

He is to procreate and utilize the provisions of living things for his existence. Thus the physical union with his wife, and 'labor' to provide for his food was man's responsibility. It was a provision of joy. There was no resistance to man in the form of arguments from his wife, weeds in the soil, nor ferocious animals. He planted, cultivated and reaped.

"Then YHWH Elohim took the man and put him into the garden..." (Gen. 2:15)

God had finished creation, an infinitely wonderful task. He placed man, His creation, into the garden. God's design for this man was to rule the elements that God had created. He had limitations. He had to operate within the created principles.

"...to cultivate it and to keep it..." (Gen. 2:15)

In Chapter 2, God revealed man's function in more detail. Chapter 2 of Genesis is simply an enlargement, a more detailed look at man's creation of 1:26-31. God had planted a garden, and had placed man in it.

"Then YHWH Elohim took the man ('adam) and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and to keep it." (Gen. 2:15)

Man was given responsibility over the fruit of the ground. While both fruits and man were taken from the same source, man's responsibility was to care for these fruits, which would give him pleasure. Thus God provided labor for man.

Contrary to current belief, labor is good. And Adam enjoyed it at its best. Labor is simply the process which man enters into to provide himself fruits. In Adam's world he did not have to fight human nature, weeds, and a resistant ground. When Adam labored, the ground consistently and overwhelmingly produced a profitable return. God had created a wonderful process of fruitfulness in which He allowed man to participate. This was "labor."

Adam's responsibility was the cultivating and keeping of the garden. When he sinned he was sent out into a sin-cursed world to work by the sweat of his brow. It was still labor, but it was changed. That Adam's major responsibility on earth was that of keeping the garden and cultivating it, and that these chapters deal with Adam's abuse of that privilege is evident from the "inclusio" which occurs in Genesis 2:15 and in Genesis 3:23.

"...therefore YHWH Elohim sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken." (Gen. 3:23)

"...in sorrow shall you eat of it..." (Gen. 3:17)

But man sinned and God told Adam what would happen to this process because of him.

"Cursed is the ground ('adamah)"

It is interesting to notice the play on words in the curse of Adam. Adam's name was 'adam, while the word for "ground" was 'adamah. Adam was taken from the ground. Thus the choice of his name was appropriate. Now when God curses 'adam, it is the 'adamah which is cursed. And even further, 'adam returns to 'adamah.

because of you:

In sorrow shall you eat of it all the days of your life.

*Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;
And you shall eat the plant of the field;*

*By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread
Till you return to the ground ('adamah).*

*Because from it you were taken;
For you are dust and to dust you shall return.*

Notice the conclusions made by God regarding the effect of the curse. The introduction points out that the process would be characterized by sorrow. The word "sorrow" here implies more than just a one time pain. This is obvious from the context. Throughout Adam's life, this sorrow would be evident. This same word "sorrow" is used in 3:16 to speak of the curse on bearing children. Thus it seems to indicate, that while the woman will have pain in bearing children, it will not be the first sorrow that they bring her. For like Adam, no longer being assured of a crop, Eve would suffer over her children throughout her life¹. (cf. Proverbs 10:1).

Why? Because now the ground would become festered with thorns and thistles which would oppose the growth of the fruit. Man would no longer be assured of its production. And as if that isn't enough, he would work to exhaustion in getting it to produce, just so he could eat. So Eve would also have difficulty in raising her children. They would, like her, follow the Serpent and cause her misery.

But the ultimate problem Adam faced was that even in obtaining fruit from this process, man could not derive more than a transient enjoyment, for the end of this process was death.

If Adam wasn't depressed over this, it is difficult to see what could have depressed him. For in the curse, there was no hope of ever getting ahead in this life. It had been ruined.

"...she gave birth to his brother, Abel (habel)" (Gen. 4:2)

With the resulting curse, and the promise of a "seed of the woman" (Genesis 3:15) basically explains the promise of the Redeemer, the Seed of the woman, who would eventually remove sin and the source of sin from the world.

Eve bore a son, Cain. In verse 2 she bore Cain's brother and she named him Abel (*habel*). The meaning of this word basically is "breath, vapor." (For a full study of the word as used in Ecclesiastes, see Robin Cover's study *The Use of Hebel in Ecclesiastes.*) It carries the connotation of fleeting life.

Why did Eve name him Abel? It is obvious, since the curse occurs only a few verses earlier, that Eve recognized that life now was not going to be something you could count on, as previously. It could be characterized as a vapor. It would be here and then gone. So Eve named her child "vapor." And prophetically, he died early at the hands of the seed of the serpent. Abel was the first example of how the 'good die young.'

¹ Note here that the word for "bearing children" is actually, "conception." Thus the phrase should read "sorrow in conception."

"...all the days that (he) lived were...and he died." (Genesis 5)

As Chapter 5 lists the genealogies, there is a clear message. God's curse of man was effective. The sound of God's "Thou shalt surely die" rings in the reader's ears as he reads "...and he died...and he died...and he died..."

Where is the hope if man continually died? As it details each generation, it becomes more depressing. Yet in the depression there is hope. For while these men were passing away, yet these same men were links in the godly line, the line that led to the "Seed of the woman," and the removal of the curse. So what appears to be depressing, is really hopeful. Man is mortal, but the eternal God is working.

"He shall bruise you on the head." (Gen. 3:15)

The most hopeful verse in the Bible was given to Adam and Eve when the serpent was cursed. Within this verse the promise of a Seed was given to Eve. He would erase sin from the world, as well as eliminate the source of sin, the serpent, Satan. So Adam's hope was that God would bring about His ultimate purpose in the Seed of the Woman. Yet Adam's job was to labor. What did Adam's labor have to do with the elimination of sin by the Seed of the Woman? Adam could not have known. He only knew that God would do it.

When Cain was born directly after the curse on Adam, Eve exclaimed,

"I have gotten a man, YHWH."

The question about what Eve was saying when she mentioned YHWH is still debated. It varies from the fact that she was simply saying that YHWH had blessed her with the child who now was to begin the Godly line ("with the help of YHWH") to the fact that this child was indeed the Messiah himself ("even YHWH). In light of the promise of God that one would come who would be the *image* of YHWH, it should be better translated "...like YHWH."

Eve was pointing out that despite the depressing curse, there was the promise that YHWH's Messiah would eliminate sin and once more the world would return to its Edenic sinless state.

When Seth is born after Abel is killed, Eve exclaims,

"...and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth (sheth), for 'God has appointed me (sheth-li) another seed in place of Abel."

God had sustained Eve's hope by providing her a substitute.

"VANITY OF VANITIES"

Ecclesiastes

I. Introduction

Solomon was an expositor of the Genesis verses. His concern was labor. It seemed frustrating to him. He looked all around him and noticed that the curse was true. It was not only true in the lives of all who surrounded him, but also in his own life, despite the fact that he was king. Yet Solomon wanted everyone to know that there was hope for the righteous man who conformed to God's ways.

While the process of labor was affected, yet the original created intent of *YHWH Elohim* is still with us. Man is still involved in the process of labor. He still works and produces fruits which he can enjoy. That is God's intention in Genesis Chapter 2 and it is still with us. What is not with us is the ease at which the process was carried out, the assurance of production, the sure blessing of God in their production, and the guarantee of endless life in which to enjoy the fruits.

Thus, Solomon pointed out that even though there was no hope that his labors would keep him from dying (the curse insured this), or even insure the continuation of his name, and there was frustration in the process, yet there is still the enjoyment of the fruits of righteous labor, as there was before sin.²

(Note: Parallel thoughts in Genesis are placed in parenthesis below each heading.)

Inability to Change God's Process

The Preacher lamented that he could not change anything. He recognized that God was the Creator and man was the created. While God had established worlds and laws in His creation, Solomon was limited to operating within those principles.

"...the sun rises and the sun sets..." (1:5)

² What Solomon is basically dealing with is the second aspect of image, the immaterial, the instructed activity of man through Revelation. While the physical is separated from the revelation, yet man can know the revelation and thus alter his behavior in the physical world to still represent God. Thus, man looks around him and all is dying, including himself, yet he realizes from the revelation that God is moving to an eternal grand plan which is beyond his perception in the physical realm or with his corrupt finite mind. Thus, his observation is that man is hopelessly tied to this dying physical world, and with his dying brain attempts to find satisfaction in it. But without the revelation of God, incomplete in the aspect of telling him everything about God and his plan, man cannot find pleasure, for he cannot see anything but death.

"...the wind continues..." (1:6)

"...all the rivers flow to the sea,
yet the sea is not full..." (1:7)

Solomon was lamenting that man had no ability to affect anything. Only God, who created these processes and these worlds was able. Man was nothing.

"A generation goes and a generation comes..." (Eccl. 1:4)
("...all the days that (he) lived were...and he died.")

Frustration of Life in This World

Solomon seemingly looked at the genealogies of Genesis 5 and saw frustration. While men continually were born, and had children, yet they died. But the earth and God's created things went on. Man seemingly had no effect.

"...all his days his task is painful and grievous." (Eccl. 2:23)
("In sorrow you shall eat of it".)

Qoheleth enlarged on this theme. He spent the first two chapters lamenting that he could not enjoy the greatest of pleasures on their own merit. There was frustration and sorrow. Even the increase of wisdom brought sorrow. All was useless (2:11).

"All was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun." (2:11)

"So I hated life, for the work...was grievous to me...everything is futility and striving after wind." (2:17)

Therefore I completely despaired of all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun." (2:20)

...all his days his task is painful and grievous; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is vanity. (2:23)

"Throughout his (the hoarding rich man's) life he also eats in darkness with great vexation, sickness and anger." (5:17)

"All came from dust and all return to dust." (Eccl. 3:20)
("For you are dust, and to dust you shall return")

"All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust." (3:20)

"As he had come naked from his mother's womb, so will he return as he came. He will take nothing from the fruit of his labor that he can carry in his hand..." (5:15)

"...during the few years of his futile life? He will spend them like a shadow. (6:12)

"There is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one fate for all men. Furthermore, the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives. Afterwards they go to the dead." (9:3)

"...there is no activity or planning or wisdom in Sheol where you are going." (9:10)

"then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the breath will return to God who gave it." (12:7)

The Contradiction of Labor and Death

Qoheleth pointed out clearly the lamentable state of labor, after which, came death.

"a generation comes and a generation goes..." (1:4)

"there is no remembrance..." (1:11)

"how the wise man and the fool alike die!" (2:16).

He lamented that even after all his labor he must die and leave it to one who comes after him (2:18).

The statements of Genesis 3:17-19 seem to be applied almost directly.

Frustration of Life and the Wicked

"Vanity of vanities..." (1:2, 12:8)

("...she gave birth to his brother, Abel")

"'Vanity (*habel*) of vanities (*habelim*),' says the Preacher,

'Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.'" (1:2, 12:8)

It is interesting to note that the Preacher came to the same conclusion as Eve did when she named Abel. Life was a breath, a vapor. It was vanity. What seemed to mean something, meant nothing.

In the chapters in Genesis, the consistency and the joy which Adam possessed before the fall were gone. Due to the entry of sin in the world, no longer would a planted seed, a cultivated soil, a watered ground guarantee the fruitful crop. And so she realized with the birth of 'habel', that the righteous life did not guarantee longevity in physical years. For sin, in the form of Cain, had entered to upset the 'good' system.

Thus the Preacher remarked throughout his book at the inconsistencies of life; the fact that the wicked prosper, and the righteous suffer.

"...I have seen under the sun that in the place of justice there is wickedness, and in the place of righteousness there is wickedness." 3:16

"...there is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness." 7:14

"...there are righteous men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked. On the other hand, there are evil men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous." 8:14

Qoheleth's summation of the world situation was that all was futility, all was a breath. It made no difference if you were rich or poor, whether you lived long or short (in fact the unborn had an advantage in not seeing the futility of the world), Ecclesiastes 6:3.

For all must die. What man believed was great; pleasures, materials, laughter, was but breath.

The Enjoyment of The Sovereign Creator

"There is nothing better..." (2:24, 3:12, 22, 5:18, 8:15)

("And, behold, it was very good")

This phrase is repeated throughout the book, typically at the conclusions to Qoheleth's sections of thought (2:24-26, 3:12-13, 3:22, 5:18-20, 8:15, inferred in 9:7-10, 11:8-10, 12:1-8).

The word used here is the Hebrew 'tob' ("good" or "better"). When God created all things, it was spoken in the text that God "saw that it was "good (tob)." In Ecclesiastes, Qoheleth used the same word to express his conclusions, when he says, "It is better..." He points out the way which man can derive the creation "good" in a sin-cursed world. A more detailed study of the connection between the "good" of

Ecclesiastes and the "good" of Genesis may be found in the excellent thesis by Chet Cady referred to in the Bibliography.

While acknowledging that the process of labor (and enjoyment of its fruits) was carried through into the sin world, he made it clear that the process could be enjoyed only in the understanding that his labor was related to God's purposes.

"For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him (God)."
(2:24)

Like Adam and Eve, man cannot fathom the ways or reasonings of God in putting man in this futile situation, or how his process of labor relates to the ultimate purpose of God. But yet he may be content that God has made it his lot.

"I have seen the task which God has given the sons of men with which to occupy themselves. He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end." (3:10,11)

"...man cannot discover the work which has been done under the sun. Even though man should seek laboriously, he will not discover..." 8:17.

Yet man may enjoy the fact that God has it all in his control, and the righteous man's seemingly futile efforts are in God's plan. For he identifies the fact that the joy of the process of labor is in God's plan and His creative 'good.'

"There is nothing better than for a man to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God."
(2:24)

"I know that there is nothing better for them to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime, moreover, that every man who eats and drinks and sees good in all his labor -- it is the gift of God. (3:13)

"And I have seen that nothing is better than that man should be happy in his activities, for that is his lot..." (3:22)

"Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting; to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward." (5:18)

"...for there is nothing good for a man under the sun except to eat and to drink and to be merry, and this will stand by him in his toils throughout the days of his life which God has given him under the sun." (8:15)

Conclusion

Application

The Preacher provided application in this life of futility in 9:7-10.

“Go then, eat your bread in happiness, and drink your wine with a cheerful heart;

For God has already approved your works." (9:7)

"Let your clothes be white all the time and let not oil be lacking on your head." (9:8)

"Enjoy life with a woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun.

For this is your reward in life, and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun." (9:9)

"Whatever your hand finds to do, verily, do it with all your might;

For there is no activity or planning or wisdom in Sheol where you are going." (9:10)

These verses are particularly related to God's 'good' creative plan. They are characterized by four imperatives, commands from Solomon for the righteous man.

Labor

Verse 7 has already been discussed. It is parallel to the "There is nothing better..." verses. The statement that God has already approved your works is saying that a righteous man is in God's plan. He has created the process of labor for man to participate in so that he may enjoy its fruits. Thus God has approved the righteous man's works. Further He has placed the man in the spot that he finds himself in.

Joy

Verse 8 is the second of the imperatives. Here the white clothes and the oil and the head indicate a readiness for rejoicing and happiness. Throughout the Old Testament, white clothes were the preparation for the feast, and oil was used to prepare one for enjoyment of the feast. It is always related to the anticipation of good.

A Woman

This verse demands a reflection on Genesis 2:18-25; The fact that "woman" lacks the article has caused concern for many. The actual reading would be "enjoy life with a

woman..." Some have felt that Solomon was expressing his considerable desire in sexual matters as exemplified by his many wives and multiple concubines. Others have simply felt that he was expressing generally that man has a choice of "a woman", that is, some particular one, who became his wife. However it seems that what Solomon was doing was referring to the creation story, where God made "a woman" for Adam (Gen. 2:22, 23). He was indicating that man should be thankful that part of God's 'good' creation was 'a woman' for man to enjoy.

The following words of the verse, indicating that God gave her to man for a companion in this fleeting life, refer to Genesis 2, the making of the woman as a helper suitable for Adam. In his function as cultivator and keeper of the garden, he needed a helper who would perform the functions that Adam could not, who would provide for Adam the enjoyments of things he could not have without her. Thus she was a helper, to support him in his purpose of laboring in the garden. Here again, this was God's plan for man. He could enjoy her to the fullest, for she was a reward related to his labor. She was designed as a companion for this life.

Responsibility

Solomon's last imperative, is an indication of the same purpose which God gave to man. He told man that his function was to cultivate the garden and keep it. When he sent him out of the garden, this was still his purpose, although outside the garden. Solomon told men to fulfill this function "with all their might."

"Remember your Creator..."

In Solomon's final words and conclusions he confirmed his creation theme by his reference to God. He called God, not "Elohim", but "The Creator." The Creator, or the creation is only found in Genesis 1 and 2. In spite of the futility of this world, in spite of the sin which clouds our view, yet man can still see His Creator and His good creation.

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of your youth..."

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Background

Author and Date

There is considerable opposition to Solomon as the author based upon the critics view that Ecclesiastes is written substantially later than Solomon. However, most innerrantists view the statement of 1:1 as a requirement that it be written by Solomon if it is to be included in the canon. Those who try to rectify the two views declare that it was an accepted practice for one to write pseudipigraphically (take one's name and write for him). However, it is this author's view that this would require the Word of God to take on a literary form which was deceitful at best.

The evidence for a later date is 1) that the proverbial literature was begun by Solomon and continued into Hezekiah's reign, 2) the vocabulary and sentence structure are post-exilic, more closely akin to Mishnaic style, and 3) the questioning of beliefs (such as are represented in the book) would be more closely akin to a time when prophetic activity had ceased. (From LaSor, p.588). They further 4) add that statements (4:13, 7:19, 8:2-4, 9:14f.; 10:4-7) do not fit well into a king's mouth.

The first argument is strictly conjecture. On one hand the critics argue that the proverbs were borrowed from Egyptian proverbs, yet argue that the Israelite proverbs were developed much later. Yet they clearly state that the proverbial development did begin with Solomon. What is to stop it from being printed in that early development? It is a weak argument at best.

The second argument is more difficult but most would not object to a later editor.

The third argument is the easiest to dispel. For when one understands the argument of the Preacher is based on Genesis 1-5 it becomes a non-cultural (dated) argument which was begun in Moses (Adam's) day and bears no special relationship to a post-exilic period. There has never been a time when man has not experienced the things of which Qoheleth speaks.

The fourth argument may be easier to refute. First of all, the statements of chapters 1 and 2 do not fit into anyone's mouth but a king's. Secondly, the statements listed do fit into a king's mouth, especially one who sees the world from the position of a wise man, and can review the responsibilities of his own position.

Thus this observer holds that the authorship is by Solomon during, of course, his lifetime.

Outline of Ecclesiastes³

<u>INTRO.</u>	→				<u>CONCL.</u>				
“Vapor... All is vapor”	Search For Meaning	Fixed Nature	Limited Know- ledge		“Fear God...”				
Value of Human Life	In Human Life	of Human Life	about Human Life		Value of Human Life				
1:1	1:11	1:12	2:26	3:1	6:12	7:1	12:8	12:9	12:14

Ecclesiastes

Dr.C.Baylis
10/95

Introduction: The problem of life: futile, like a breath, purpose not discerned (1:1-2)

In the introduction Solomon lays out his whole premise, following his introduction as author. The reason that he identifies himself as the preacher is to demonstrate his exposition (and application) of God's word and his authority to carry that out.

I. The purpose of work (life) cannot be discerned from observing the natural systems (1:3-11).

³ Credit is given in a large part for the notes of notes of Elliott E. Johnson, Dallas Theological Seminary, Bible 303, circa. fall, 1981, modified by this author. These notes are very heavily influenced by his notes and lectures, without which the understanding of this book would have been much more difficult.

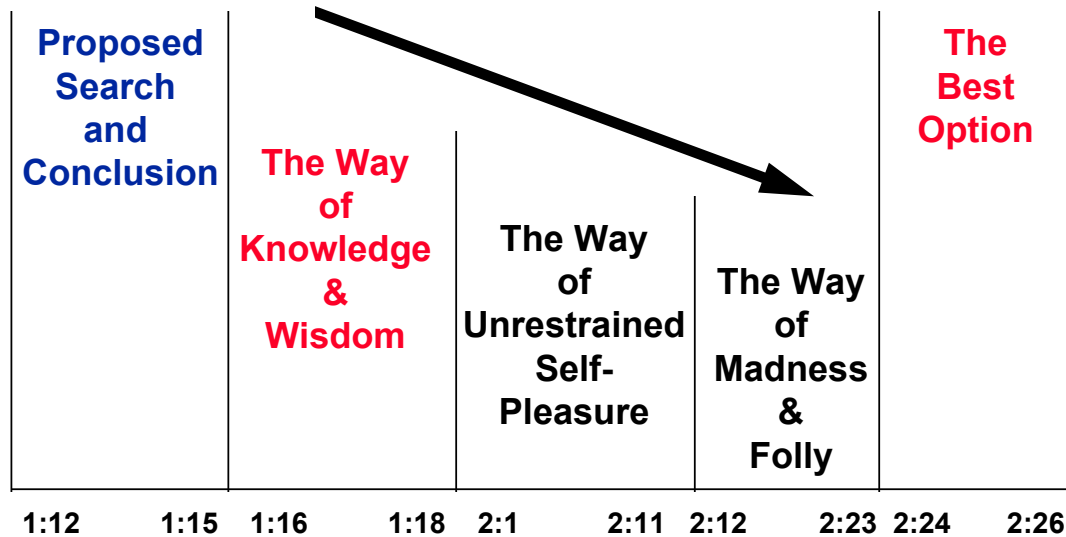
His theme is basically introduced as the fact that all is futility. He is not making a conclusion, he is merely beginning what is a deductive argument. **He begins by stating an observational fact; man's work is useless to either discover his purpose or affect any permanent outcomes.** This is the state which God has given man in Genesis 3 as a result of his sin.

- A. Foundational question: What does life (work) change? (1:3).
1. Man lives, bears children and dies; nothing changes (1:4).
 2. The sun rises and sets; yet time does not change (1:5)
 3. The wind proceeds, never blowing out or changing (1:6).
 4. Water cycles do not change (1:7).
 5. The mind is not satisfied to explain, nor satisfied with receiving (1:8)
 6. The cycles are uninterrupted, unchangeable by man (1:9-11)
 - a. All things are the same, there is nothing new (1:9)
 - b. Nothing is new that has not been done before (1:10).
 - c. If it appears new, it is only because it is forgotten (1:11)

Conclusion: Man's life has no ability to change the natural processes, and thus observation of the processes does not give explanation of life's purpose (1:11).

II. In the great options of life there is one that is best, yet it does not explain the purpose of work (life) (1:12--2:26).

From 1:12 to 2:27 the author examines what the world names as success. This is, obviously, the very traits that the author possessed; great wisdom and riches. The only thing that he could derive from this great gift was pleasure. Thus there was no benefit in the gift or the success it brought.



Ecclesiastes

1:12--2:26

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His conclusion to this section on labor, is that God has given labor to man, even before the fall, and thus he is to enjoy that part which God has given, even if he does not understand or realize worldly benefits for labor cannot alter nor explain God's plan. The conclusion is: Eat and drink in the peace that one's work is good, that it is doing something that God ordained. 2:24-26

- A. Proposed search and conclusion (1:12-15).
1. Person: The King (1:12)
 2. Means: wisdom (1:12).
 3. Search: To determine the achievements of work (1:12)
 4. Scope: All the experiences of men (1:13a)
 5. Conclusion: Work is grievous with no meaning discerned (1:13b-15)
 - a. Man's purpose is a grievous task (1:13b).
 - b. They are futile (1:14).
 - c. Man has no ability to effect change (1:15).
- B. The way of wisdom and knowledge do not give a solution, but only lead to an understanding of the grievous situation of man (1:16-18).

- C. The way of pleasure produces nothing (2:1-11).
1. Pleasure accomplishes nothing (2:1)
 2. Laughter accomplishes nothing so it is madness (2:2).
 3. Excesses of pleasure and reward is futile (2:3-11).
- D. The way of madness and folly (2:12-23).
1. Wisdom and folly do not change the wise man's heirs to effect change (1:12).
 2. Wisdom excels folly (2:13)
 3. One fate befalls them both (2:14)
 4. Conclusion: Why exert oneself to be wise? (2:15)
 5. Man's wisdom is lost in the cycle which he cannot change (2:16)
 6. Conclusion: Work changes nothing (2:17)
 7. Whatever gain is left to heir who has unknown purpose (2:18-19)
 8. Work results in despair (2:20).
- E. Since there is no logical connection between observation of life and purpose, the best option is to simply recognize that certain good things have been given by God to be enjoyed with Him, however, this still leaves unanswered certain questions of purpose.

III. Life is a gift from God may be seen by observing God's role in the world (3:1--6:12).

Having established that labor is useless unless it is understood within God's creative plan, the author moves to developing that theme; God's sovereign (though unknown) plan for our lives.

God has planned eternity, yet man does not understand, yet participates with his part in His plan (3:1-3:15). God has sovereign control of seeming paradoxes of life (3:16-6:9).

These injustices are specified further by showing that oppression is unjust as well as striving for useless goals such as competition, inheritances. One is better simply to trust in God since all are under His control. Man cannot find satisfaction in plenty. **His conclusion is: In spite of inequalities, man should enjoy what God has given him, again unable to explain nor change God's plan.** View the situation that God has put you in and appreciate it. (5:18-20)

He ends this section with an exhortation in view of the question of paradoxes; men are given gifts from God, yet are not utilizing them as He planned. (6:1-9)

Evidences of plan of life:	Problem:	Certainties of God's Purpose:	Wise courses of action based on God's Creative Purpose				
Appointed Times	Relation between man's labor & God's plan	Life Is: A Gift of God Permanent Purposeful	"better"	"profit"			
			←→	←→			
			3:22, 4:3,4:6,9,13, 5:5,6:3,9	5,9,11,16			
3:1	3:8	3:9	3:11	3:12	3:15	3:16	6:12

Ecclesiastes

3:1--6:12

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- A. God has a plan for man as seen by the observation of times (3:1--8)
- B. A problem: Man can see God's times but cannot discern purpose so must enjoy life (a gift) (3:9-12).
- C. The certainties that can be seen from God's role in man's life (3:13-15).
 1. Life is a gift from God (3:13).
 2. Life is permanent, complete and perfect as God has made it. Man to fear God (God totally unknowable, so man to operate in revelation) (3:14).
 3. Life is purposeful by design of God (3:15).
- D. Wise courses of action should be taken based on God's role in life (3:11-22).
 1. It is better (bwj)⁴ . . . (3:22; 4:3; 4:6; 4:9; 4:13; 5:5; 6:3,9), ...profit ... (5:9; 5:11; 5:16) - wise courses of action in a "crooked" world.
 2. Justice (3:16-22)

⁴ This word tends to indicate the creation good. It is the phrase "and God saw that it was good."

- a) In the place of justice there is wickedness (16)
 - b) Even though justice cannot be observed in history the knowledge of God's ultimate judgment is known (17)
 - c) God tests man. His fate is that of an animal. God has prepared man for the experiences of death by what they share with animals (18)
 - 1) Life is fragile.
 - 2) In death we should have more than the animals
 - d) Enjoy what has been given (22).
3. Oppression: Observed - the oppressed are better off dead (4:1-3)
 4. Labor: Vanity (7), competition (4), laziness (5), striving (6), work (8) (4:4-8)
 5. Two rather than one: Relationship (4:9-12)
 6. Unlikely comparison: Dissatisfaction with all (4:13-16)
 7. Relationship with God: Fear (5:1-7)
 8. Dishonest ruler is common (5:8-9)
 9. Satisfaction does not come with increase of money (5:10-12).
 10. Hoarded riches devastate one in death, thus enjoy life (5:13-17)
 11. Refrain: Enjoy riches earned in God's purpose (5:18-20)
 12. Basic evil: God has not given to some men to enjoy their labor (6:1-9).
- E. Conclusion: God determined life in a beautiful and appropriate pattern; so life is a gift to man and its enjoyment the reward from God (6:10-12)

IV. While the absolute understanding of life's purpose is unknowable, man can discern courses of action based on an understanding of God's revelation (7:1-11:6)

7:1--29:	Setting Wisdom as Goal: May result in one's undoing
8:1-10	Authorities may be evil, but loyalty better than insurrection.
8:11-15	Justice may be hidden but fearing God and enjoying life is good
8:16--9:6	Inability to discover the work of God understand God's control in one's life
	9:7-10 In the enjoyment of God's purpose in life do all things according to his creative purpose
9:11--10:20	Chance and timing under God's control wisdom the better way one sinner destroys much good
11:1-6	Use timing and wise judgment
11:7--12:8	In limited understanding rejoice in good gifts of God remember responsibility to Creator

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Summary:

1. Not knowing future, man should enjoy life since God provides both adversity and prosperity for His own eternal purposes.

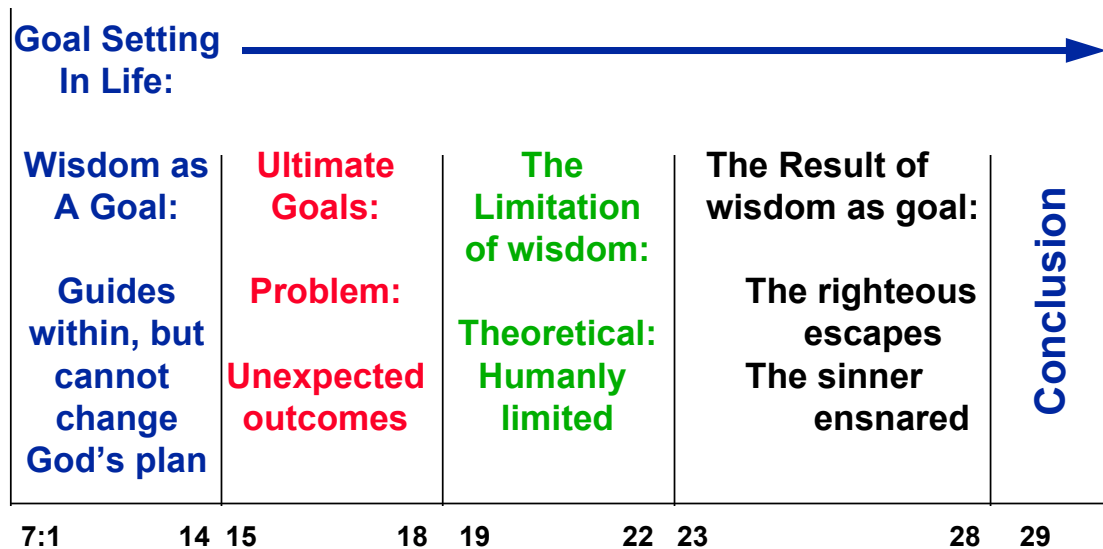
First of all Solomon states that man, not knowing the future, should be happy in whatever circumstances, for God provides both adversity and prosperity for His own eternal unknown purposes. (7:1-14)

2. Man should be both righteous and wise. (7:15-8:1)

That wisdom guides better than foolishness is obvious (since it can avoid the woman whose heart is snares and nets (7:26). Yet the Preacher still cannot figure out the purpose yet he has discovered that no one else has as well. God made man to fulfill His purposes, yet no one does. The figure of speech at verse 28 is simply to say he has found no one, covering both man and woman. Also the word "devices" in v. 29 is the same word as explanation in v. 27 and should be translated thusly.

3. Man should obey authority, for God controls circumstances. (8:2-9).
4. Man should enjoy his lot, for although the evil man may prosper for time, God controls eventual destiny. (8:10-9:1).
5. Man does not know when he will die, thus he should enjoy life, conscientiously applying himself to his given task. (9:2-12)
6. Summary: Finally, Solomon applies two things concerning the unknown future to his readers. Since the future is unknown watch your steps. (9:13-10:20) And,

because the future is uncertain, man should conscientiously and wisely apply himself to his given task. (11:1-6).



goal setting in life

Ecclesiastes

7:1-- 29

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- A. Wisdom as a course of action is futile (7:1-14)
1. Choices: The obvious choice is not the best (7:1-11)
 2. Wisdom is a shelter or a protector. It preserves life (7:11-12).
 3. The purpose of God (7:13-14).
 - a. Work: Man cannot change what God providentially allows (7:13)
 - b. Result: By wisdom man cannot ultimately discover the future nor predict its result for both prosperity and adversity God has made and man cannot determine God's plan by either (7:14)
- B. Wisdom critiques the ultimate goals (7:15-18).
1. Observation of life: Expect the unexpected outcome (7:15)
 2. Reasoned conclusions: Do not be overly wicked as a goal, nor overly righteous as neither guarantee any outcomes (7:16-17)
 3. Conclusion: Ultimate goal is to fear God (7:18)

- C. Wisdom critiques practical (theoretical) wisdom (7:19-22).
 - 1. Value of wisdom: Better than strength (7:19)
 - 2. Limitation of wisdom: Does not make perfect, is not able to determine truth from false information ((7:20-22)
- D. Wisdom is not the ultimate goal (7:23-28)
 - 1. Wisdom as a goal: Wisdom is ultimately unknowable (2:23-24)
 - 2. Consequences: The sinner is shown by his folly, while the Godly escape (7:25-26).
 - 3. Seeking of wisdom is endless (&27-28)
- E. Conclusion: Critique on setting wisdom as an absolute goal in life - through cleverness one brings about his own undoing (7:29)
- F. Wisdom does not determine purpose, but courses of action based on revelation (8:1--10:20)
 - 1. Authorities may be evil, but loyalty is better than insurrection (8:1-10)
 - 2. Justice may be hidden, but fearing God and enjoying life is good (8:11-15)
 - 3. Inability to discover the work of God is clear, but understand the control of God in one's life (8:16--9:6)
 - 4. In the enjoyment of God's purpose in life do all things according to His creative purpose (9:7-10).
 - 5. Chance and timing under God's control, so wisdom is the better way (9:11--10:20).
 - 6. Use timing and wise judgment (11:1-6).
- V. **In light of limited understanding man can enjoy God's purpose within the scope of His revelation (11:7--12:8).**

Now Solomon moves to his final application. This regards rejoicing in one's life. He focuses on a youth so that he can align his whole life for God. He further focuses on aligning his life with the creative purposes of God. He doesn't know what God holds for him, but he needs to enjoy where God has placed Him and enjoy it in a relationship with his Creator.

- A. Let a man rejoice in his life (11:7-1:8)
- B. Rejoice in childhood, yet be careful, since youth is short-lived (11:9-10)
- C. Serve God while you are young, before it is too late to serve effectively (12:1-8.)

VII. Conclusion: Ability to change times and purposes is futile, yet God will judge. 12:8-14

Finally, Solomon reminds man of the futility of a life without God and a warning of final responsibility and judgment of the deeds of that life by God.

- A. Repeated theme: All is futility (12:8).
- B. These wise words are useful (12:9-12)
- C. Remember, in the end God will judge the actions of this life (12:13-14)