Ecclesiastes and the wisdom of
Solomon

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# A controversial writer and writing

## Caveat:

# The question

# He knows what he’s talking about.

## Although he’s sometimes unsure.

### We’re way too sure. Time to be wise.

# Distinctive feature and Q’s method in Ecclesiastes

# 1-2 - Introduction and overview: ‘Double, double toil and trouble’ – Macbeth

## Effort should be productive, even factoring in failure rates etc. But in truth, from what a man can see it’s all going nowhere.

## The despair of loss of self from being forgotten

## The despair of all things ending in death rendering all achievements impermanent and having little of you, or control over what happens after – ownership and reward cannot be continually connected, it is impermanent.

## Even within this life there is already vexation and unrest

## The problem, despair and crisis are immense — Are you seeing and feeling it?

## The Teacher’s goal

### Choosing the path of wisdom

## Choosing to at least to be living while being alive – not hippiedom, or existentialism, or utilitarianism, but more a sober assessment of reality — wisdom. But this isn’t the complete story either.

## The pleasure test (2.1-12)

### Conclusion from pleasure test — nothing was gained

### The teacher is faced with disappointment, but the wise person can at least walk through darkness with some sight.

### Death and futility 🡪 vanity

#### (Especially) that nothing is remembered (v.16f)

#### Someone else who has no idea what’s going on is going to take it (v.19), when it was you who worked for it (v.21)

### Circumspect conclusion x1

### In fact, God holds the key — he is the game-changer for life.

# Learning to fear God

## Observation 1 - The truth about being busy

### God’s control of all purposeful activity for His purpose of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?

#### Fearing God

#### Circumspect conclusion x2

## 3.16-22 - An opening statement on wickedness in this life, and everything ending in death, and a judgment of everything.

### v.16-17 - The ‘time’ that really puts things into perspective — God’s judgment

### v.18-21 – Thus, Death lowers our pride to make us wisely fearful of God.

### Circumspect conclusion x3

## 4 - ‘Oppressions’ (horrors of life)

### The horror of living for self-love (4.1-8)

### The horror of living without human support

#### Conclusion? Reflection? – This world is so full of evil that it’s best to have already died.

## 5 🡪 6 - God is watching. Be careful how you live, especially to those who have the capacity to believe they’re doing well now and forever, the people who control wealth and are ambitious for more.

### 5.1-7

### 5.8

#### Circumspect conclusion x4

## 6 - The great burden of evil pervading mankind is death. (cf. 6.6b)

## 7-8 - Humanity needs the answer — the Teacher now calls for a recognition of what death and sin must teach us especially in light of the end – wisdom. (A sustained reflection on this is coming up on chapters 9-11.)

### The impediments to wisdom suffered by fools (7.9)

### Aside: A note to the young

### Wisdom is worth so much in this context.

### The sober horror of sinfulness

## 8.1-2f - With wisdom, we have something better than make-up! Without it, trouble, trouble. Only trouble.

#### Circumspect conclusion x5 in light of the intensity of the problem — of sin, and of the work of God limiting man

# 9.1-3 - Refrain, final reflection, especially in light of the end — There is an evil, a madness in this world, which is death, whose origin is from mankind’s sin. Our rejection of the life that is in God (Gen 1-3) has resulted in living death with God firmly in charge.

# 9.4f - Take action, since you (still) can — Being really alive (with hope) before the inevitable end.

## 9.7-10.20 - ‘Go’! Take action — Live! Be wise! It’s better! Be turned off and alarmed by sin and the fool!

## The foolishness of foolishness (9.18b - 10.20)

### The ‘terpesongness’ of fools

### Idiot leaders

## Fools are those who don’t know their place – the rich, and the fool both

# Concluding statement and final call to action:

# What did Q learn?

## God has the end game in his hand, whereas we are not knowledgeable of the end

## The problem of man

## The horror of the corruption of sin, the danger of sinners in God’s world

## Thus, fear God

## Appreciating the Cross and the Gospel of the Resurrection with Ecclesiastes (and Job)

# What God gives

# Address the responses of the young and old today