

## **ECCLESIASTES**

### **What a weird book!**

*“The book of Ecclesiastes is the perspective of someone writing (or pretending to write) from a sceptical, ungodly worldview in order to demonstrate the meaninglessness and frustration of a hedonistic life lived without God.”*

**Agree or Disagree? How would you argue it?**

### **Who was Ecclesiastes?**

Hebrew – ‘Qoheleth’ (Preacher, Convener, Collector)

- [1:1] The son of David, king in Jerusalem.
- [1:12] King over Israel in Jerusalem
- [1:16] He acquired great wisdom surpassing all who were over Jerusalem before him
- [2:9] He became great and surpassed all who were before him in Jerusalem and his wisdom remained with him.
- [12:9] Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care.

Where are we in the Bible story?

### So how do we read Ecclesiastes?

**GOD HAS CURSED ALL LIFE UNDER THE SUN. IN FEAR AND JOY, LONG FOR SOMETHING BETTER.**

1. Be a humble creature and fear your Creator in the face of the curse and judgement
2. Stop defaulting to a this-world solution for: vanity / dissatisfaction / injustice
3. Enjoy God's gifts in this world rightly, knowing they are fleeting
4. Long for a world without curse

### **How will this book be good for you?**

#### Structure?

1:1-18	All is vanity
2:1-26	The Preacher's own search for meaning in toil by wisdom
3:1-22	God's deliberate frustration of toil and wisdom in a cursed world
4:1-6:9	The vanity of all man's toil
6:10-11:6	The vanity of all man's wisdom
11:7-12:8	All is vanity
12:9-14	Epilogue

- The book begins [1:1] and ends [12:9-14] with the words of an editor.
- The Preacher's first [1:2] and last [12:8] words are the same. Nice clear bookends.
- 'A striving after wind' only appears in chapters 1-6: 1:14, 1:17, 2:11, 2:17, 2:26, 4:4, 4:6, 4:16, 6:9.
- Toil and wisdom are both mentioned frequently but sometimes one of them appears to be more in focus than the other. Are there cycles? Toil → Wisdom → God's work.
- Verses on joy are throughout: 2:24-26, 3:12-13, 3:22, 5:18-20, 8:15, 9:7, 9:9, 11:8-10.
- Compare 1:15 and 7:13 – "What is crooked cannot be made straight".
- Repeated 'not finding out' in ch7-8 culminating in a triple 'not finding out' in 8:17.
- Repeated 'not knowing' in ch9-11 culminating in a triple 'not knowing' in 11:5-6.