

# The Riddle

## The Message of Ecclesiastes

### Syllabus

- Outline
- The teacher's thesis abstract
- The teacher
- The teacher's research
- The teacher's thesis
- The teacher's complaint
- The teacher's advice
- The teacher's final plea
- Ecclesiastes apologetic
- Jesus in the Old Testament



# Ecclesiastes

## Handout #1: Outline of Ecclesiastes

1. The teacher's thesis abstract (1:2-11)
  - a. Life is the mother of all intangibles
  - b. Man is inconsequential, has no lasting impact
2. The teacher (1:1, 12; 12:8-10)
  - a. The faith of the teacher
  - b. The identity of the teacher
3. The teacher's research (1:12-2:23)
  - a. Life's mysteries are intentional
  - b. Man can do nothing to make it better
  - c. God has not allowed us to figure it out
4. The teacher's thesis (2:24-3:15)
  - a. From birth to death, it is all choreographed by God
  - b. Accepting this is the only way to live life meaningfully
5. The teacher's complaint (3:16-4:16)
  - a. God's choreography seems wrong to us
  - b. Inequities, injustices, wrong vs. right
6. The teacher's advice (3:19-22; 4:7-12; 5:1-12:8)
  - a. Don't fret evildoers
  - b. Fear God
  - c. Expect adversity
  - d. Don't give up
7. The teacher's final plea (12:9-13)
  - a. This is the best advice you'll ever get
  - b. Any other approach to this issue is ungodly

# Ecclesiastes

## Handout #2: The teacher's thesis abstract

1. 1:1-11 What strikes you about this passage?
2. 1:1-11 What hints are there to its subject?
3. 1:2 What does "vanity of vanities" mean?
4. 1:3 "What advantage..." means, "What is the \_\_\_\_\_?"
5. 1:3 What does "under the sun" mean?
6. 1:5-7 Man's environment is \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
7. 1:9-11 The natural world \_\_\_\_\_ man.
8. Comment on Genesis 1:31 and Romans 8:20

# Ecclesiastes

## Handout #3: The teacher

### The faith of the teacher

1. 1:1 Preacher = *qoleheth* = \_\_\_\_\_ = ecclesiastes.
2. 2:24; 12:13 “Fear \_\_\_\_\_.”
3. 9:2 “The man who offers a \_\_\_\_\_.”
4. 9:7; Heb 11:2 “God has \_\_\_\_\_ your works.”

### The identity of the teacher

5. 1:1 How many “*Son of David, king in Israel*”?
6. Wisdom: Compare I Kgs 3:12 with Eccl 1:16.
7. Fame: Compare I Chr 29:25 with Eccl 2:9.
8. Sayings: Compare I Kgs 4:32 with Eccl 12:9-10
9. I Kgs 11:3-4 What happened to Solomon?
10. What is the most compelling argument against Solomon being the teacher?

# Ecclesiastes

## Handout #4: The teacher's research

1. 1:13 God has made sure man knows he is \_\_\_\_\_.
2. 1:13; 3:10 God has made man \_\_\_\_\_.
3. 1:14; 2:11 What does the phrase, "striving after wind" mean?
4. 1:15 This broken world is \_\_\_\_\_.
5. 1:18; 3:11 Why does more investigation into the matter merely increase frustration?
6. 11:10; 12:11 What is the warning the teacher gives us?

# Ecclesiastes

## Handout #5: The teacher's thesis

1. 2:24-26 Accepting God's plan brings \_\_\_\_\_  
and \_\_\_\_\_.
2. 2:24-26 What is the difference between how the unbeliever deals with this broken world and how the believer does?
3. The message of 3:1-8 is God \_\_\_\_\_ life.
4. 3:1-8 What is wrong with how the 60s' rock group the Byrds' used this passage?

The teacher's thesis summary

5a. 1:1-11; 3:9-15 4:1-16; Rom 8:20 God has made life inhospitable

and \_\_\_\_\_.

5b. 3:1-8 He has decreed every single \_\_\_\_\_ of our lives.

5c. 3:11 He also also blocked man from \_\_\_\_\_ life.

5d. 3:10 Yet made man want desperately to \_\_\_\_\_ life.

5e. 7:6-9 Attempts to do so lead to \_\_\_\_\_ and poor choices.

5f. 3:14 This is designed to \_\_\_\_\_ men toward God.

5g. 3:12-13 Only by giving God the \_\_\_\_\_ can man find peace.

# Ecclesiastes

## Handout #6: The teacher's complaint

1. What is the teacher doing in 3:16 through 4:16?
2. 4:1-16 Life is full of the nasties, including what, in this passage?
3. 3:16 The result is that man tends to believe God \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
4. 4:5-6; 7:16-18 The teacher says some folks react in one of two extremes. They either react with \_\_\_\_\_, a caricature of real faith, but not useful to God; or they \_\_\_\_\_ completely, emotionally withdrawn, blaming and hating God.
5. 7:18 The correct response is to fear God and \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.



# Ecclesiastes

## Handout #7: The teacher's advice

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# Ecclesiastes

## Handout #8: The teacher's final plea

1. 12:1-8 Give Him your \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. 12:8 This life is not for \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. 12:10-11 This journal is said to be “words of \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
given by the \_\_\_\_\_ .”
4. 12:11 The writer intended this document to have the  
effect of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ .
5. 12:12 This is the best advice you'll ever get. Not all  
writings have this message; most books are \_\_\_\_\_ on  
the topic of life.
6. 12:13 Take God seriously, no one gets a \_\_\_\_\_ .
7. 12:14 God is the authority, in \_\_\_\_\_ just as much as in  
life.

# Ecclesiastes

## Handout #9: Apologetic

### **The riddle (ch 1-2)**

Eternal, sentient man is trapped in, and subservient to, the dusty, mechanistic, inanimate earth. Though his possession, the earth actually owns him, rules him, out-performs him, outlasts him, mocks him as small and insignificant, and merely, cruelly, hauntingly, echoes back to him the emptiness of his life (1:3-11). Man grindingly exhausts his life eking out a living from the world, then it rewards him by swallowing up even his memory. The meager fruit of his life then falls into another's hand unbidden and unappreciated, becoming mere tokens of human rivalry. Rivalry in fact defines man's relationships. Wisdom is disdained, and disparity and inequitable rewards are commonplace. Authority is abused, justice is a sham, and oppression goes unchecked (ch 2-6). Bottom line: wring life as hard as you will, none of the fruits of life fulfill: not *pleasure*, not *possessions*, and not *personhood* (ch 2). Thus despair is inevitable, inescapable, even normal (2:23).

### **The Riddler (ch 3)**

That is, until one accepts God's orchestration of His creation (2:24). For in fact God is behind it all (1:13, 15), He has ordained it, He makes this world exactly the way it is, every gritty facet of life. And He purposely not only made it a hurtful riddle, He has even set it up so we cannot solve the riddle, making it a testimony to Himself that He waits for us to acknowledge, to believe (ch 3).

## **The choice (ch 4-8)**

Those who fail to acknowledge God choose instead to either check out completely, living meagerly, retractedly (4:1-6), blaming and hating God (5:1-2), or they react with false piety, an overblown caricature of real faith, that is, protractedly (7:15-18), two extremes that belie the truth in the middle (7:18). The faithful will instead cultivate contentment and a relationship with God (5:18-20), choosing to let God be God (8:5-8), and accepting that He knows more than you (8:12, 15-17), and that God's favor or displeasure is not measured in your circumstances (9:1). The faithful person views what God has done as good (8:1) and tries to learn and grow from it (7:1-14), while accepting life's inequities (7:19-29).

## **The warning (ch 9-12)**

But be forewarned, there is limited opportunity to choose God, to be *approved* by Him, to be declared righteous (9:3-8). Foolishness in word and deed comes from leaving God out of life (ch 10). Wisdom is the right choice not only for eternity, but even for making this present life work for you (ch 11). But choose wisdom while still young (12:1-7), as the alternative is to be subject to this rotten world (12:8). God's word pricks us, and seals us (12:11), but others' words are merely inconclusive, frustrating and wearying (12:12, 1:18). Fear God, love Him, obey Him (12:13). Everyone will give an answer in the end to how they responded to Him (12:14).

# Ecclesiastes

## Handout #10: Jesus in the OT

1. \_\_\_\_ percent of the OT book of Genesis is given over to the emergence of Messiah.
2. Lk 24:27; Jn 1:45; Jn 5:39; I Pet 1:10-12; Acts 3:18-26; 10:43; 26:22-23; Rom 3:21-22 The OT foretold of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Gen 3:15; Num 21:5-9/Jn 3:14; Deu 18:15; Heb 1:1-2  
What do these verses tell us about the gospel as it was revealed in the OT?
4. Job 19:25-26; Jn 8:56; Gal 3:8; Jn 5:46; Jn 12:36-41 Job, Abraham, Moses, David, and Isaiah were \_\_\_\_\_.

5. Rom 10:3-4; Mk 7:8 The Jews made up their own

\_\_\_\_\_.

6. Ps 137:8-9; Jer 7:4/Zech 4:7 The Jews' religion was/is

\_\_\_\_\_, that is, righteousness by birth.

7. Eccl 9:2-7; Job 35:6-7; Ps 51:6-7, 16-17 Even though the ancients knew \_\_\_\_\_.

8. II Cor 3:12-16 The Jews have a \_\_\_\_\_.