

THE BIBLICAL BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES: SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

By Nino Boezio

The book of Ecclesiastes is attributed to King Solomon, who reigned over ancient Israel from around 970 to 931 BCE (a period of 40 years).

In response to Solomon's rather humble attitude towards rulership after ascending the throne, God gave Solomon wisdom, wealth and honor (1 Kings 3:5-14, 2 Chronicles 1:1:10-12). God stated these would not be surpassed by anyone else in the world, regardless of whether they preceded Solomon or would follow after him, in terms of time sequence.

Details of his reign are covered within 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles (Chapters 3-11, and Chapters 1-9 respectively), Wars are known to drain the resources of a nation, but God granted Israel peace at that time, in part to help facilitate the building of the temple. The period under Solomon is often called Israel's Golden Age.

Most of us may love to be in Solomon's position. He did not restrain himself from anything he desired, especially since he could afford it. He engaged in multiple building projects, many of which were also directed towards his own benefit. He strengthened Israel in terms of trade and military defense. He also had accumulated seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (1 Kings 11:3).

The book of Ecclesiastes reflects Solomon's observations about life and what he experienced overall.

Solomon frequently uses the word 'vanity' in the book and makes the remark "all is vanity". In other words, in every pursuit, there is both a temporal and unsatisfactory element attached to it. We will never become truly satisfied. It reflects a reality that many today want to ignore. It doesn't mean however, that we can't receive enjoyment in whatever we do, howbeit temporary.

In our world and culture, most would claim that Solomon was totally wrong. But few have had the resources and ability to explore and understand things to the depth and extent that Solomon was able to do.

However, even in small ways, we should be able to see that Solomon is correct. We are unable to engage in anything for very long before we begin to lose interest, become bored, and want to move on to something else.

Solomon's reflections upon life should not get us discouraged. Solomon is simply indicating that there must be more to our existence than what we can observe and experience physically.

Solomon indicated that God has placed a sense of eternity into the mind of human beings, even though we may not have all of the details (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Contrary to atheists that think life ends upon death, Solomon indicated that human beings by nature have a long-term view.

Ecclesiastes is a very profitable book to read and explore. It would be of value to study those things that help explain what the long-term view of our individual existence is to be.

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