

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

Introduction:

“All Is Emptiness.”

Study by Jason Labonte

I. Author: Most Likely Solomon (1:1)

A. Hebrew **קהל** *Kohelah* (Greek **ἐκκλησιαστής** *ekklesiastes*)

1. Root: **קהל** *Kahal* “Assembly”
2. Literally, “Assembler, *One* Assembling”
3. So Then, “Speaker, Preacher, or Leader of an Assembly”

B. A “Son of David”

1. Very Likely, Solomon (See also 1:12, 16; 2:4-9; 7:26-29; 12:9.)
2. Possibly, Another Descendant of David

C. “King in Jerusalem” (See also 1:12.)

D. Extremely Wise (See 1:16; 12:9.)

E. Extremely Rich (See 2:4-9.)

II. Theme: “All Is Emptiness.” (1:2)

A. Hebrew **הבל** *Hevel*

1. “a breath; void, emptiness, nothingness”
2. (Also the Hebrew Name of Adam and Eve’s Second Son, Abel)
3. The word is used 35 times in Ecclesiastes — half of all the times in the whole Old Testament.

B. “Emptiness of Emptinesses”

1. Everything in this life (“under the sun”) is one empty, meaningless thing among countless other empty, meaningless things.
2. But there is still a reason to live. (See the conclusion in 12:13.) Do not read this book without reading the whole thing!

III. Introduction: A Poem About Emptiness

A. One of Two Poems in the Book

B. “Under the Sun” — A Key Phrase in the Book

C. Humanity has no advantage. (1:3)

1. A human’s life is short relative to... (1:4-7)
 - i. the earth,
 - ii. the sun,
 - iii. wind, and
 - iv. rivers.
2. A human is never satisfied. (1:8)
3. A human can never really do anything truly new. (1:9-11)
4. Therefore, a human’s work is “emptiness”.

IV. Application & Discussion

A. What is the mood of Ecclesiastes? Is this a depressing book? Why or why not?

B. Can there be for us a distinction between life “under the sun” and life “under the Son”?

C. Can you recall any teachings of Jesus that affirm the message of the introductory poem.¹

D. How is God neither like man nor like the four examples from nature listed in vv. 4-7?²

E. Is it possible to find satisfaction “under the sun”? If so, how?

F. How do vv. 9-11 apply to our lives particularly as graduate students, seekers of “new” knowledge? Are our degrees then worthless?

¹ Possible answer: Mark 8:36-38

² Possible answer: James 1:17