

TERM 3 SERMON SERIES

ECCLESIASTES



TURN, TURN, TURN
A time for everything.



Bible Study Booklets

Turn, Turn, Turn

As our western world is haunted by the Corona virus, riven by racial violence and protest, bedogged by the spectre of climate change and hell bent on an individualism that is ultimately self-destroying we need a ‘reality check’. And if there is a blunt ‘reality check’ in the Bible the book of Ecclesiastes is it.

Its ‘motto’

‘Vanity, vanity all is vanity’

(‘Meaninglessness, meaninglessness all is meaninglessness’.)

Brings us up with a start – It that in the Bible? And it is just that sort of reaction that Qohelet (the teacher), I think, wanted to provoke.

As we dig into this enigmatic book and use it as a lens to look carefully, critically and realistically at our own 21st Century Western Culture. and as we ponder what it means to be one of God’s people in that society, it is my prayer that we will through these studies see the grandeur of the work of the Creator God and the infinite nature of his gracious actions in our world, particularly in Jesus who comes to bring all things to their true reality.

Greg Holmes (July 2019)

	Week Ending	Passage	Title	Page
1	Sun 26 Jul	<i>Ecclesiastes 1:1-2:26</i>	<i>The Words of the Preacher</i>	5
2	Sun 2 Aug	<i>Ecclesiastes 3:1-22</i>	<i>An Occasion for Everything</i>	7
3	Sun 9 Aug	<i>Ecclesiastes 4:1-5:7</i>	<i>“One Handful of Tranquillity”</i>	9
4	Sun 16 Aug	<i>Ecclesiastes 5:8-6:12</i>	<i>“Whoever Loves Money”</i>	11
5	Sun 23 Aug	<i>Ecclesiastes 7:1-8:1</i>	<i>“Consider What God Has Done”</i>	13
6	Sun 30 Aug	<i>Ecclesiastes 8:2-9:10</i>	<i>“A Proper Time”</i>	15
7	Sun 6 Sep	<i>Ecclesiastes 9:11-10:20</i>	<i>“Wisdom is Better than Strength”</i>	17
8	Sun 13 Sep	<i>Ecclesiastes 11:1-12:8</i>	<i>“Remember Your Creator”</i>	19
9	Sun 20 Sep	<i>Ecclesiastes 12:8-14</i>	<i>“The Conclusion of the Matter”</i>	21

ECCLESIASTES: TURN, TURN, TURN. – A TIME FOR EVERYTHING

References:

Kidner, D. "Ecclesiastes – A time to Mourn and s Time to Dance" (The Bible Speaks Today) (Nottingham, IVP, 1976) – *This is the most helpful of the general commentaries.*

Eaton, M.A. "Ecclesiastes" (Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries) (IVP, Leicester, 1983). *Again a helpful general commentary.*

Provan, I. The NIV Application Commentary : Ecclesiastes (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2001).

Ryken, P.G. "Ecclesiastes (Preaching the Word Commentary) (Wheaton, Crossway Books, 2010)

The sections on Ecclesiastes in these are also helpful.

Webb, B.G. Five Festal Garments (New Studies in Biblical Theology 10) (Nottinham, Apollos, 2000). *A great little book, scholarly but pastoral.*

Dever, M. Promises Made : The Message of the Old Testament (Wheaton, Crossway Books, 2006) – *The Ecclesiastes section in here is most helpful in getting the whole flow of the book. You can find the sermon on which the chapter is based at <https://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/sermon/wisdom-for-the-successful-the-message-of-ecclesiastes/>*

Kidner, D: The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes (An Introduction to Wisdom Literature) (Downers Grove, IVP Academic, 1985).

Waltke, B.K.; Yu, C., An Old Testament Theology (An exegetical, canonical and thematic approach) (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2007)

The Bible Project overview is also helpful see <https://bibleproject.com/>

FYI -Just a few 'quotes' that have been 'attached' to Ecclesiastes over the years:

"The two most important days of your life is the day you're born and the day you know why." Mark Twain

"Life is just a dirty trick, a short journey from nothingness to nothingness" Ernest Hemingway

"To wonder at nothing is almost the only thing which can make and keep a man happy." Horace, cited by Pascal, Pensées, 2.73

"Human life in its natural state is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Seventeenth-century philosopher Thomas Hobbes

*"I am blinded by the light
Of God and truth and right
And I wander in the night without direction
So I'll continue to continue to pretend
My life will never end
And flowers never bend
With the rainfall"*

Paul Simon

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Jesus (KJV)

ECCLESIASTES

Study One: 'The Words of the Teacher ...'

Ecclesiastes 1:1-2:26

Read it Through

Day	Ecclesiastes	Comments / Notes / Prayer Points
1	1:1-11	
2	1:12-18	
3	2:1-12	
4	2:13-26	
5	Romans 8:18-31	

ECCLESIASTES

Study One: The Words of the Preacher Ecclesiastes 1:1-2:26

Read: Ecclesiastes 1:1-2:26

The Broad View

1. What is your first reaction after reading these two chapters?

2. What change occurs at 1:3?

3. Who is the Teacher (Qohelet)? And in Chapter 2 what sorts of things does find to be 'meaningless'?

4. What new element do 2:24-26 introduce?

Up Close

Look again at 1:1-11

1. Verse 2 (which is repeated in 12:8) stands like a motto in this book. What do you think it means?

2. Note the phrase (V3) 'under the sun'. What do you think this refers to? What does it not include?

3. What aspects of life are referred to in these verses?

Connections

1. “What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?” (Matt. 16:26). How does this passage reinforce this idea?
2. Read Romans 8:18-32. What is the solution to all this meaninglessness?

Walk the Talk

1. Work, pleasure, wisdom. What matters?
2. Where do you look for meaning in the world?
3. “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). How does this passage do these things?

ECCLESIASTES

Study Two: 'A Season for Every Activity'

Ecclesiastes 3:1-22

Read it Through

Day	Ecclesiastes	Comments / Notes / Prayer Points
1	3:1-8	
2	3:9-15	
3	3:16-22	
4	James 4:13-17	
5	Ephesians 5:15-21	

ECCLESIASTES

Study Two: 'An Occasion for Everything'

Ecclesiastes 3:1-22

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-22

The Broad View

1. What is the general point v1-14 is making?

2. What point does v15-22 make?

Up Close

Look again at 3:1-11

1. What does v1 imply about God?

2. Note especially 3:11. What are the three key ideas in this verse? What does each of them mean for people 'under the sun'?

3. How are these verses constructed? What do you think is the significance of this?

4. Which 'time' resonates with you at this moment in your life?

Connections

1. Note Romans 5:8 (Galatians 4:4); Ephesians 5:15-16; 2 Corinthians 6:2; 1 Peter 5:6; James 4:13-17. What does the New Testament have to say about our attitude to 'time'?
2. What 'time' should we as Christians, this side of the resurrection, always be looking to?

Walk the Talk

1. What should be our personal response to the times which seem to engulf us?
2. How do you put the ideas of 3:11-13 together and then how does v13 resonate with you in your daily life?
3. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). How does this passage do these things?

ECCLESIASTES

Study Three: “A Handful of Tranquility”

Ecclesiastes 4:1-5:7

Read it Through

Day	Ecclesiastes	Comments / Notes / Prayer Points
1	4:1-6	
2	4:7-12	
3	4:13-16	
4	5:1-7	
5	Ephesians 2:11-14	

ECCLESIASTES

Study Three: “One Handful of Tranquillity”

Ecclesiastes 4:1-5:7

Read Ecclesiastes 4:1-5:7

The Broad View

1. How do the two sections (1-8 and 9-12) relate in the first part of our passage?
2. What is the point of the little ‘parable’ in 4:13-16?
3. What is 5:1-7 speaking about?

Up Close

Look again at 4:1-12

1. In v1-3 what is the attitude to oppression? (Note also 3:16.) Why better off dead?
2. From v4:6 why does Qohelet desire ‘a handful of tranquillity’ (NIV)?
3. What positive about life is Qohelet encouraging in v7-12?

Connections

1. Note Leviticus 19:13; Deuteronomy 24:14–15; Zechariah 7:10; Proverbs 14:31. What should be the Godly persons' attitude to the 'oppressed'?

2. Note 5:1-7 again and read 1 Corinthians 11:17-33. What need we be careful about when we meet together for worship?

Walk the Talk

1. Discuss the value of friendship/mateship/partnership?

2. Who are the oppressed in our society? What can we as a Church do about it?

3. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). How does this passage do these things?

ECCLESIASTES

Study Four: “Whoever Loves Money”

Ecclesiastes 5:8-6:12

Read it Through

Day	Ecclesiastes	Comments / Notes / Prayer Points
1	5:8-14	
2	5:15-20	
3	6:1-7	
4	6:8-12	
5	Luke 12:15-21	

ECCLESIASTES

Study Four: “Whoever Loves Money”

Ecclesiastes 5:8-6:12

Read Ecclesiastes 5:8-6:12

The Broad View

1. Note 5:18-20. What is this saying about everyday life?
2. What is the lot of every person (6:1-7)
3. From 6:8-12. Is wisdom worth having?

Up Close

Look again at 5:8-17

1. What should be our reaction to the oppression of the poor?
2. What is the ‘benefit’ of wealth?
3. In v15-17 what does Qohelet say is the purpose of life?

Connections

1. Read Luke 12:15-21. What does Jesus say regarding the hoarding of wealth?
2. Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10. What does Paul say is the problem with 'money'? How does this reflect what Qohelet is saying?

Walk the Talk

1. In the context of our world we are all wealthy. What warnings and encouragements should we take away from what Qohelet is saying?
2. Is "eat, drink and be merry" a helpful Christian attitude? Why or why not?
3. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). How does this passage do these things?

ECCLESIASTES

Study Five: “Consider What God Has Done”

Ecclesiastes 7:1-8:1

Read it Through

Day	Ecclesiastes	Comments / Notes / Prayer Points
1	7:1-12	
2	7:13-21	
3	7:23-29	
4	8:1	
5	Romans 11:33-12:3	

ECCLESIASTES

Study Five: “Consider What God Has Done”

Ecclesiastes 7:1-8:1

Read Ecclesiastes 7:1-8:1

The Broad View

1. Note 7:1-12. What are the benefits of wisdom?
2. What are the traps of being a fool?
3. Note 8:1. What is this commending about wisdom? Note Proverbs 3:13-18.

Up Close

Look again at 7:13-29

1. Consider 7:13-15. What is the underlying principle here? What implications does that have for the following passage and indeed for the whole book?
2. What is v16-18 commending?
3. What light does 7:29 shed on the verses before it? What is its main point?

Connections

1. Note Proverbs 5:1-4. How is this related to v26 of our passage?

2. Read Romans 11:33-12:3. How does Paul's message here speak into the ideas in this part of Ecclesiastes?

Walk the Talk

1. What is the problem with being what Qohelet calls 'overrighteous'? What does that mean for us?

2. What is the trap in v26 and how do we escape 'her'?

3. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). How does this passage do these things?

ECCLESIASTES
Study Six: “A Proper Time”
Ecclesiastes 8:2-9:10

Read it Through

Day	Ecclesiastes	Comments / Notes / Prayer Points
1	8:2-8	
2	8:9-15	
3	8:16-9:10	
4	1 Peter 2:13-17 Romans 13:1-7	
5	Luke 20:20-27	

ECCLESIASTES

Study Six: “A Proper Time “

Ecclesiastes 8:2-9:10

Read Ecclesiastes 8:2-9:10

The Broad View

1. What broad point does 8:2-15 make?
2. What is the major thrust of 8:16-9:10? What is it commending?
3. What is the problem Qohelet has with death?

Up Close

Look again at 8:2-15

1. What attitude to rulers are verses 2-5 encouraging?
2. What warning is there for rulers in verses 6-10?
3. What do verses 11-14 have to say to our society?

4. What attitude to living is commended in verse 14-15

Connections

1. What does Jesus say about what we owe to rulers? (see Luke 20:20-26)
2. Read 1 Peter 2:13-17; Romans 13:1-7, Titus 3:1. What should be the attitude of the Christian to the 'powers that be'?

Walk the Talk

1. It would appear that respect for rulers and for our governments is at a very low ebb in our world at this time. What is Qohelet saying to us about Godly attitudes to the "powers that be"?
2. Given that Qohelet and Jesus and Paul and Peter all lived under autocratic rule, discuss what living in a 'liberal democracy' modifies about how we relate to rulers.
3. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). How does this passage do these things?

ECCLESIASTES

Study Seven: “Wisdom is Better than Strength”

Ecclesiastes 9:11-10:20

Read it Through

Day	Ecclesiastes	Comments / Notes / Prayer Points
1	9:11-12	
2	9:13-10:1	
3	10:2-11	
4	2:12-20	
5	1 Corinthians 1:18-25	

ECCLESIASTES

Study Seven: “Wisdom is Better than Strength”

Ecclesiastes 9:11-10:20

Read Ecclesiastes 9:11-10:20

The Broad View

1. What positives and negatives about wisdom can you discern in this passage?
2. What do these verses say about the fool?
3. What advice is there in regard to rulers in this passage?

Up Close

Look again at 9:11-10:1

1. What do verses 11 and 12 warn about?
2. What is the point of the little story in verses 13-16?
3. What do you take away from the 3 little proverbs in 9:17-10:1?

Connections

1. How does Psalm 1 illustrate the principles of wisdom and folly?

2. Read Matthew 7:24-27. What does Jesus say in the foundation for wisdom?

Walk the Talk

1. “We live in a world, in fact, in which wisdom—at least insofar as it derives from authority and tradition—is routinely suspected, mocked, and despised.” And “where information is widely privileged over wisdom.” (Provan (NIVAC)). Discuss.

2. Think of a current issue in your life. Which is more important to you in facing it: wisdom or strength?

3. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). How does this passage do these things?

ECCLESIASTES

Study Eight: “Remember Your Creator”

Ecclesiastes 11:1-12:8

Read it Through

Day	Ecclesiastes	Comments / Notes / Prayer Points
1	11:1-7	
2	11:8-10	
3	12:1-8	
4	John 1:1-14	
5	Matthew 6:24-34	

ECCLESIASTES

Study Eight: “Remember Your Creator”

Ecclesiastes 11:1-12:8

Read Ecclesiastes 11:1-12:8

The Broad View

1. What do 11:1-6 have to say to us about our ability to control the times?
2. How is the idea of ‘light is sweet’(v7) illustrated in 11:8-9?
3. “Banish anxiety”! (v10) Does Qohelet give any advice as to how to do that?

Up Close

Look again at 12:1-8

1. Many see 12:1a as the crucial sentence in the whole book. What is it saying?
2. What help is ‘remembering your creator in the days of your youth’ as you grow older as illustrated in 12:1b-5?
3. What do 12:6-7 have to say about Man’s ‘end’? How does this relate to 12:1?

4. And what 'motto' is 12:8 repeating? (see Ecclesiastes 1:2).

Connections

1. Look at Deuteronomy 8:18 and Nehemiah 4:14. What are these commanding and commending. (Remember also Revelation 3:3a and 2:5a)
2. Remember your Creator: Read John 1:1-14. What depth does this give to the concept of 'the Creator'?

Walk the Talk

1. If you are a 'young' person, what is 12:1-8 saying to you? What about if you are an 'older' person?
2. 'Remember your creator' How do you do that?
3. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). How does this passage do these things?

ECCLESIASTES

Study Nine: “The Conclusion of the Matter”

Ecclesiastes 12:8-14

Read it Through

Day	Ecclesiastes	Comments / Notes / Prayer Points
1	12:8-9	
2	12:10-11	
3	12:13-14	
4	Proverbs 1:7; 2:1-8	
5	Hebrews 12:18-25	

ECCLESIASTES

Study Nine: “The Conclusion of the Matter”

Ecclesiastes 12:8-14

Read Ecclesiastes 12:8-14

Up Close

1. There is some discussion about whether the ‘motto’ (v8) fits best with v1-7 or with v9-14. Or is it both? Discuss.
2. Verse 9 begins the ‘frame editor’s’ summing up. Do you think his affirmation of Qohelet (the Teacher) is appropriate?
3. It would be easy to read too much into v11. What is it saying?
4. Verse 12 is a favourite among school students. What precisely is it saying in its context?
5. What is “the conclusion of the matter? (see v13-14)

Connections

1. “Fear God and keep his commandments.” (Note also 7:18 and 8:13.) What does this mean? Note these verses: Proverbs 1:7; 2:1-8; Isaiah 50:10; 1 Peter 2:17; Revelation 19:4.

The Broad View

1. Ecclesiastes is one of the ‘wisdom’ books of the bible which some scholars claim are rooted in creation rather than ‘the law’ which drives the other OT books. How does ‘the creator’ and his creation impact what Qohelet is saying?
2. How does the ‘editors’ summing up help in the understanding of the whole of Ecclesiastes?

Walk the Talk

1. What have learned about the world, our culture and being one of God’s people from Ecclesiastes?
2. What have you learnt about yourself?
3. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). How does this Ecclesiastes do these things?



KIAMA ANGLICAN
CHURCHES