Ecclesiastes

Who, When, Where

Written by Solomon.
During the reign of Solomon, who lived from around 1000BC to 931BC. And his reign was the last 40 years of that. So somewhere between 971BC abd 931BC.
Written in Jerusalem.

Summary

You're born, you live, you die.
You can't take anything with you. So whatever you do is just worthless vanity. Right?

Whatever you do with your life, the sun comes up, the sun goes down. Who remembers what anyone did with their life 200 years ago.

Before You Read

If you were a really wise person, who had spent your life thinking about what is, (and isn't), important in life.
What would you write if you wanted to write down the important things from those thoughts to pass them on to those who come after you.

What do you think is the most imporant thing in life?
If you had your life over again, what would you do differently?

Key Verses

Ecclesiastes 1:2

"Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

When it comes down to it… he's not wrong eh.
Given that eternally we end up with Yahweh, but we can't take anything with us. What is there about this world which isn't just vanity? Is there anything which is actually worth having, or doing, or seeing?

Ecclesiastes 1:8

The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

Whatever you like looking at. However much of it you see. You always want more.
Why is that!

Proverbs 27:20-22

Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied; and a man's eyes are never satisfied.

Solomon said the same thing in Proverbs.
Our eyes are never satisfied.

I John 2:16

Because everything in the world, the desire of the flesh, and the desire of the eyes, and the pretentiousness of life, isn't from the father but from the world.

Yohannes knew this too. The worldly side of us is never satisfied. Especially our eyes. They get us into so much trouble! I know yours do.

Ecclesiastes 1:9

That which has been is that which shall be; and that which has been done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

Are things really different than they were 20 years ago? 50 years ago?
Sure we have computer games, and technology, but people are basically the same right? Good, bad, indifferent. When you look at the essential aspects of life… it's the same.

Ecclesiastes 1:18

For in much wisdom is much grief; and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.

Ignorant bliss seems the way to go?
Even being the wisest person who ever lived. Even having hundreds of wives, thousands of horses and chariots. Even having so much gold that silver was worthless. (1 Kings 10-11).

Ecclesiastes 2:1

I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with mirth: therefore enjoy pleasure"; and behold, this also was vanity.

Most young adults try this. They suddenly have freedom, so they pursue pleasure. Largely because their parents have been trying to protect them from this path their whole life.

Sadly, for most people, this is a lesson which can only be learned the hard way.

If this is your child. Keep praying that they will stay alive long enough to learn it, and come back to Yeshua.

Ecclesiastes 2:4

I made myself great works. I built myself houses.

A lot of men especially go down this path. Working. Trying to make money, riches, to build businesses, and houses. Monuments to how great they are.

But in the end… you die. Someone else gets them, and you have nothing.
From what I've read, people don't get to the end of their life and wish they had worked harder or longer or built a bigger house. They get to the end and wish they'd spent more time with family, and focused more on spiritual things and relationships with people.

Ecclesiastes 3:1

or everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven

The trick is… to know which season you're in right now.
Life will not always be the same. The answer to "What should you do when … " will not always be the same.

The 40 year old you is not the same person as the 20 year old you. And neither is the 80 year old you.
Learn to recognise the seasons of your own life.

Ecclesiastes 4:3

Yes, better than them both is him who has not yet been, who has not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.

Better to have not been born to have lived, or to have died. Because at least if you haven't been born you haven't seen all the evil that is in the world.

But better yet, to have been born, and to have been born again. And although you have seen the evil in the world, you have been delivered from it, and you have a message of hope to share with all those victims of that evil.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him who is alone when he falls, and doesn't have another to lift him up.

Do you have a best friend?
Do you have any friends?
A life partner?

Are you being someone else's number two? The one who will be there to help them up if they fall?

If you live life, only focused on number one, (yourself), you will miss out on a lot. And when you fall, you'll be on your own, wishing you had partnered up with someone.

Ecclesiastes 5:2, 5

Don't be rash with your mouth, and don't let your heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and you on earth. Therefore let your words be few.

It is better that you should not vow, than that you should vow and not pay.

Remember Jephthah? He led the Israelites in battle, (Judges 11), and he vowed that if Yahweh gave him victory, then whatever came out his door to greet him when he returned - he would sacrifice it.
It was his daughter.
What a tragedy.

If you vow to Yahweh, he will expect it fulfilled. If you fail to fulfil it, there will be consequences.

Better, as Solomon says here, to keep your mouth shut.

Ecclesiastes 5:12

The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not allow him to sleep.

Isn't that the truth! After working hard on something all day, and getting it finished. Like repainting your kitchen, or weeding the vegetable garden. It's so satisfying, and you sleep like a log.

Rich people. Worry about who is trying to steal their money.

Ecclesiastes 7:15

All this have I seen in my days of vanity: there is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who lives long in his evildoing.

Someone living a long time is not an indicator that they have pleased God. Neither is someone dying young an indication that they were evil and displeased him.

Ecclesiastes 5:20

Surely there is not a righteous man on earth, who does good and doesn't sin.

Totally true. And you know it.
Even the "wisest man who ever lived" knew it.

Ecclesiastes 9:7

Go your way — eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already accepted your works.

So in the end… that's it. Just accept that God doesn't expect a lot from you. Enjoy your life and be happy.
You'll be dead soon.

Ecclesiastes 10:18

By slothfulness the roof sinks in; and through idleness of the hands the house leaks.

How's your house?

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

This is the end of the matter. All has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it is good, or whether it is evil.

Solomon must have been so excited to meet Yeshua. To learn that in spite of the futility of life. There is a bigger picture.

I think his final summary wouldn't be "Fear God and keep his commands", but, "Thank Yeshua, and serve him always".

After You Read

What verses really stood out to you?

How would you summarize this book in a sentence or two? What is it about? What is God trying to say to us?

Are you satisfied? Looking back at your life, have you made good choices? Are you proud of it?
Or, like me, did you make lots of bad ones in there too?

The point of Christianity, is that nobody is perfect. We all make bad choices. We all give in to our pride of life, the lust of our flesh, and the lust of our eyes.
But we have a savior.

Instead of "Fear God and keep his commandments", we can say, "Thank Yeshua, and serve him always".

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