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Introduction

- I. Who wrote the book of Ecclesiastes and when did he write it?
- II. Why did Solomon write this book? Who did he write it for?
- III. Key words and phrases.
- IV. Key themes.

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I. Who wrote the book of Ecclesiastes and when did he write it?

- Though the writer of Ecclesiastes is not named there are many indicators within the book that point to Solomon as the author:
 - linguistic evidence
 - literary evidence
 - historical evidence

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- Solomon likely wrote Ecclesiastes in his old age. He died ca. 930 B.C.
- Because of its jarring nature and unique perspective, the canonicity of Ecclesiastes has been argued about in both Judaism and early Christianity. However, it was considered canonical at the time of Christ, and retained as such by the Jewish council of Jamnia in A.D. 90.

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II. Why did Solomon write this book? Who did he write it for?

- From the perspective of one who had seen and done it all, Solomon confronts us with the frustration and sense of futility we will all experience in this fallen world. His purpose is to “drive readers not to the self but *to God* as the only giver of permanent worth” (Garrett).

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- Solomon’s original audience were the wise and well-off in Israel who had the means and motivation to seek and strive for the kinds of achievements, accomplishments, and life outcomes that Solomon recounted in his narrative.
- Today, Western capitalism and culture have greatly expanded this audience. It certainly applies to all of us here today.

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III. Key words and phrases.

- *hebel* (35 times) – Translated “meaningless” (NIV) or “vanity” (ESV; NRSV). Literally, *hebel* means “breath” or “vapor”, and it implies something fleeting, futile, frustrating, pointless, or absurd.

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III. Key words and phrases.

- “*under the sun*” (25 times) – Refers to earthly life lived between the boundaries of birth & death. It is life with no immediate or vital connection to eternity or transcendent reality.
- “*chasing after the wind*” (9 times) – A symbol for futility; the paradigmatic metaphor for goals, projects, and endeavors that ultimately reward us only with emptiness.

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IV. Key themes.

- **Overarching theme:** *The World is Never Enough*

Eternity or transcendent reality cannot be attained by anything we might accomplish in life “*under the sun*”. The meaning to life in this world cannot be found in this world. No human achievement can yield lasting value or everlasting reward.



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IV. Key themes.

- *This is a weary and worn-out world.*

Solomon paints us a picture of the effects of the fall. This world & human life are subject to futility, frustration, and dissatisfaction.

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IV. Key themes.

- *We are captives on the carousel of life & time.*
Our lives cycle through repetitive rounds of personal and social routine. No level of achievement or pleasure can lift us from the plane of existence that begins with birth and ends with death.
- *Eternity beckons but eludes us.*
We sense within ourselves that we were made for more than the transitory lives we lead. We long for lasting love, meaning, and value, yet we can never grasp them.

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IV. Key themes.

- *Death awaits us all.*
Death intrudes on and eventually ends all our best laid plans. Much of what we do with our lives serves only to distract us from the dark doorway of death at the end of the short hallway of life. There is actually only *one* thing certain in life. There are such things as tax shelters. There are no death shelters.
- *Remember your Creator and fear God.*
If we forget God, anything else we do is just killing time.

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