

## ECCLESIASTES OVERVIEW – Floyd Nolen Jones, Th.D., Ph.D.

Read the final conclusion first (12:13–14).

Solomon, as a great teacher, begins (1:1 ff) by *agreeing* with his listeners.

That is, he observes what they see “under the sun” – that life is unfair and futile. Thus, as life’s victories are so short-lived and temporal, there is constant dissatisfaction. Hence, man usually feels frustrated and unfulfilled.

Besides, it all ends in death – so what’s the use?

But knowing all this is merely a temporal surface truth and having used the agreement to gain their interest, Solomon – as a master teacher – now uses his own life’s experiences to lead us to his inescapable final conclusion.

Indeed, this final conclusion turns out to be the very opposite of that which appears to be true on the surface. He shows that everything each person does in this life is actually significant.

Solomon argues that although life seems to be composed of unexplainable events and randomness, these deeds and works are actually part and parcel of God’s plan. Similar to the potter controlling and shaping the clay, the Creator also molds the person by using these very acts.

Further, that each will stand before God and give an account of these deeds and happenings as well as the attitudes in which they were done.

Moreover, since the Lord will examine all deeds, thoughts, and attitudes, everything mankind does in this life is significant and has meaning – because they have eternal implications.

(A) The phrase “under the sun” has to do with an earthly lifestyle that is both self-centered and man-centered – a humanistic centered existence.

(B) The Preacher knows that this attitude must become God-centered.

Hence, Solomon wisely and cleverly weaves the narrative so as to bring the reader from (A) to (B).

Thus, he teaches that if there is nothing more than what we see and observe “under the sun”, life and work *are* worthless vanity. Without enduring, value, all is truly empty – leading only to frustration and despair.

But, he concludes, cheer up and rejoice – there is far more to life than this. There is a duty to the Creator. Being faithful to this will bring true peace, joy, meaning, and fulfillment to man’s earthly stay. In His timing (3:17), we will all stand before our Judge and give an account (12:14). Therefore, until then, enjoy life but keep all within the bounds of His commandments.