

Dr. Al Fuhr, Ecclesiastes, Session 9, Ecclesiastes 7-12, Text Exposition Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Fuhr, Ecclesiastes, Session 9, Ecclesiastes 7-12, Text Exposition, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Al Fuhr's lecture on Ecclesiastes examines the book's central themes. **Kohelet's search for meaning** (Yitron) and "what is good" (Tov) in a world characterized by futility (Hevel) is explored through the lens of proverbial wisdom. The lecture **analyzes proverbs** emphasizing probabilistic wisdom, the inevitability of death, the importance of fearing God, and the need for sobriety. Fuhr discusses **Kohelet's observations on justice**, the limitations of wisdom, and the challenges of navigating life in a fallen world. Finally, the lecture concludes by highlighting the book's **emphasis on enjoying life in the present** while acknowledging the coming judgment.

2. 21 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Fuhr, Ecclesiastes, Session 9 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Psalms and Wisdom → Ecclesiastes).



**Fuhr_Eccles_Session
n09.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. Al Fuhr's lecture on Ecclesiastes, Session 9:

Briefing Document: Ecclesiastes - Session 9

Introduction:

This document summarizes the key themes and ideas presented in Dr. Al Fuhr's lecture on Ecclesiastes, focusing on chapters 7 through 12. The lecture explores Kohelet's quest to find "tov" (good) in a world characterized by "hevel" (meaninglessness, vanity, transience), and delves into the nature of wisdom, its limitations, and the importance of fearing God. The lecture highlights the tension between enjoying life and recognizing its uncertainties and the inevitability of death.

Main Themes & Ideas:

1. The Quest for "Tov" (Good) and the Role of Wisdom:

- Kohelet, despite failing to find lasting gain ("Yitron") through wisdom, wealth, etc., continues his search for what is good ("tov").
- Chapters 7, 10, and 11 feature a collection of proverbs emphasizing a "probabilistic wisdom" - understanding what is good in a fallen, uncertain world.
- Wisdom is valuable but limited in its ability to provide lasting satisfaction or to fully understand God's ways or the future.
- "Wisdom is a shelter, as money is a shelter, another wisdom provides some sense of benefit and safety, but the advantage of knowledge is this, that wisdom preserves the life of its possessor, something that money might ultimately not be capable of doing."

1. The "Better Than" Sayings (Chapter 7):

- Chapter 7 begins with a series of "better than" statements, highlighting that certain things often perceived as negative or undesirable can be more beneficial than their opposites.
- "A good name is better than fine perfume and the day of death better than the day of birth."

- "It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting for death is the destiny of every man."
- "Sorrow is better than laughter because a sad face is good for the heart."
- These sayings emphasize sobriety, reflection on the realities of life, and the importance of learning from rebukes over listening to the fleeting pleasure of fools.
- "The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure."

1. The Inevitability of Death and its Implications:

- The inevitability of death is a recurring motif that frames Kohelet's reflections on life.
- It is crucial to live with sobriety and a "fear of God" in light of death and the judgment to come.
- Focusing on the end of things, rather than the beginning, is a reflection of wisdom: "The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride."
- Man's limited scope and inability to know the future should encourage living in the present: "Do not say, why were these old days better than these?"

1. Limitations of Human Understanding and God's Sovereignty:

- Kohelet emphasizes humanity's inability to fully comprehend God's actions or predict the future.
- "Consider what God has done, who can straighten what he has made crooked? When times are good, be happy, but when times are bad, consider. God has made the one as well as the other, therefore a man cannot discover anything about his future."
- God is the ultimate controller, while man is limited and lacks sovereignty. This recognition should encourage humility and reliance on God.
- "No man has power over the wind to contain it, so no one has power over the day of his death."

1. The Problem of Injustice and the Nature of "Hevel":

- Kohelet observes the apparent injustice in the world: righteous people suffering while wicked people prosper.
- "In this hevel life of mine, I have seen both of these, a righteous man perishing in his righteousness and a wicked man living long in his wickedness."
- These observations are part of the "hevel" of life, the absurd and frustrating aspects of existence in a fallen world.
- "There is something else hevel that occurs on earth, absurd as I think we see that family of meaning coming to the forefront with these observations of injustice and lack of equity in this hevel world."
- This does not lead to rebellion against God but instead to a call to live in the present and take advantage of life.
- It's important to not be "over-righteous" in the sense of expecting guaranteed prosperity because we live in a "hevel" world. *"Do not be over-righteous, neither be over-wise. Why destroy yourself? ... The idea here perhaps is that Kohelet is saying, don't think that by being righteous, by exerting yourself with some kind of an expectation that things will go well for you because of your righteousness, don't be surprised. Why astonish yourself? Because we have seen that sometimes the righteous perish in their righteousness."*

1. The Nature of Women (Chapter 7):

- Kohelet uses strong language comparing women to snares and traps, potentially reflecting on the tension between the sexes after the Fall: "I find more bitter than death the woman who is a snare, whose heart is a trap, and whose hands are chains. The man who pleases God will escape her, but the sinner she will ensnare."
- This might be a reflection of the tension created after the Fall in Genesis 3 where women would desire their husbands, and men would rule over them.
- Kohelet seems to view women as a potential obstacle to wisdom and control.
- The statements should be understood in the context of ancient Near Eastern culture and not as a general dismissal of women or an endorsement of misogyny. *"I found one upright man among a thousand, but not one upright woman among them all. Now this of course is a very difficult statement... but perhaps he is reflecting upon the potential snare that woman might bring even to a wise man, the fact that there will be this tension, that there will be this conflict for authority,*

and one thing that a wise man cannot grasp and control in Kohelet's line of thinking is woman."

1. The Importance of Timing, Discretion, and Taking Calculated Risks (Chapters 8-11):

- A wise person needs discretion, careful timing, and calculated risk-taking.
- Timing is critical for success. "For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter, sounds very much like Ecclesiastes chapter three, though a man's misery weighs heavily upon him."
- Wisdom involves understanding proper conduct before authority figures and in various situations: "Obey the king's command, I say, because you took an oath before God. Do not be in a hurry to leave the king's presence."
- We should not foolishly engage in every battle or take every action without careful consideration.
- Wisdom involves working hard, working smartly, and taking risks. "If the axe is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed, but skill will bring success."
- We should be adventurous but also cautious and diverse in our undertakings, taking calculated risks.

1. "Enjoy Life" Refrains:

- Kohelet presents several "enjoy life" refrains.
- He observes, commends, and eventually commands the enjoyment of life.
- "So, I commend the enjoyment of life because nothing is better, I am told there is nothing better, answering the question of what is good, for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of his life that God has given him under the sun, however many days they may be."
- Kohelet's wisdom recognizes that the enjoyment of life is best done in light of its heaviness and uncertainty.
- "Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for it is now that God favors what you do. Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil. Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love. All the days of this

hevel life that God has given you under the sun... For this is your lot, your helot, your allotment in life. God has given you the opportunity now."

1. **The Present-Tense Focus:**

- The wisdom of Ecclesiastes is often focused on the present moment.
- "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. And I would add, do it now, Kohelet is saying, for in the grave, in Sheol, where you're going...there is neither working, nor planning, nor knowledge, nor wisdom. The wisdom of Ecclesiastes is present tense. Act now, don't put off till tomorrow what you can do for today, because you don't know if tomorrow is guaranteed to you."
- We must not put off till tomorrow what can be done today, because we do not know if tomorrow is guaranteed to us.

1. **The Aging Process and Remembering God:**

- Kohelet uses vivid allegorical language to describe the effects of aging and the inevitability of death in chapter 12.
- It's a call to remember God in our youth before the aging process diminishes our faculties and opportunities: "Remember your creator in the days of your youth. Don't put off till tomorrow this idea of understanding that you will answer for the deeds that you have done."
- He encourages living soberly with a recognition of death and judgment.

1. **The Epilogue (Chapter 12:9-14):**

- The epilogue is a concluding commentary that reinforces the wisdom of Kohelet.
- It emphasizes the authority and truthfulness of Kohelet's words.
- "The teacher that Kohelet searched to find just the right words and what he wrote was upright and true. This is a book that is impossible to master but it is tremendously profound and it really is a book that is so incredible in the wisdom that is espoused within."
- It calls on the reader to be discerning about where they receive wisdom.
- "Be warned my son of anything in addition to them and so be careful in the kind of wisdom that you receive he's basically saying I put the stamp of approval on what Kohelet has said here but remember there are many words and there are many sayings out there don't be misled."

- The ultimate conclusion is that we must fear God and keep His commandments, recognizing that we will all be held accountable for our actions.
- "Here is the conclusion of the matter fear God and keep his commandments. This is imperative for this is the whole duty of man... For God will bring every deed into judgment including every hidden thing whether it is good or evil. "

Conclusion:

Dr. Fuhr's lecture on Ecclesiastes, Session 9, highlights the complexities of life in a fallen world. It does not offer easy answers but rather encourages a sober and reflective approach. The lecture emphasizes embracing present opportunities, enjoying life with wisdom and discretion, while remembering the inevitability of death and the ultimate judgment by God. It balances the need to find joy and purpose in life with the recognition of life's inherent limitations and uncertainties.

4. Fuhr, Ecclesiastes, Session 9, Ecclesiastes 7-12, Text Exposition

Ecclesiastes Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is Kohelet seeking throughout the book, and how does this quest shift in chapter 7?
2. Explain the significance of the phrase "a good name is better than fine perfume" and how it relates to the concept of death in the book of Ecclesiastes.
3. According to the text, why is sorrow considered "better than laughter?"
4. How does the text portray the limitations of wisdom in relation to knowing the future?
5. What does the text suggest is the relationship between righteousness and prosperity?
6. What is the significance of Kohelet's statement, "I found one upright man among a thousand, but not one upright woman among them all?"
7. How does the text connect a wise man's relationship to the king and the appropriate posture before the divine?
8. What is meant by the text's assertion that "the race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong?"
9. Explain the meaning behind the phrase "cast your bread upon the waters."
10. According to the epilogue of the book, what is the final conclusion regarding man's duty?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Kohelet seeks "Yitron," or ultimate lasting gain. However, in chapter 7, he redirects his quest to find "Tov," or what is good, acknowledging that lasting gain is not found in wealth or wisdom alone.

2. A good name, which is built over a lifetime, is more valuable than fleeting pleasures. The day of death is better than the day of birth because it is the culmination of life.
3. Sorrow, specifically the experience of mourning, promotes sobriety and a deeper reflection on the realities of life. It serves to create a more thoughtful heart.
4. The text repeatedly states that even the wisest of men cannot know the future. This limitation highlights the uncertainties and the "hevel," or futility, of trying to control all outcomes.
5. The text observes that the righteous do not always prosper. While there is a normative expectation, the world's uncertainties demonstrate that there is no guarantee that righteousness will bring material success.
6. Kohelet reflects on the potential snare of woman even to a wise man, highlighting the tension between the sexes caused by the Fall and woman's potential to impede wisdom, as well as the tension between authority.
7. The text suggests that the wise man should approach both the king and God with reverence and caution. Just as one should not question the divine, one should carefully consider what battles they wage with human authority.
8. The phrase implies that success is not determined solely by natural advantages, like speed or strength. Rather, time and chance, ultimately controlled by God, influence the outcomes of human endeavors.
9. "Cast your bread upon the waters" encourages risk-taking and adventurousness. It conveys the idea that one must be willing to invest and act, even without a guarantee of return, in order to find success.
10. According to the epilogue, man's ultimate duty is to fear God and keep His commandments. This is the conclusion of the matter because God will judge all deeds.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the concept of "hevel" in Ecclesiastes, and how it influences Kohelet's advice for living. How does the idea of "hevel" impact traditional wisdom literature?
2. Analyze the tension between the pursuit of wisdom and the acknowledgement of its limitations in the book of Ecclesiastes. How does Kohelet suggest we navigate the search for wisdom in a world marked by uncertainty?
3. Explain the recurring "enjoy life" refrains throughout the book, and how they relate to both the acceptance of life's futility and the call to present action.
4. Explore the themes of justice and injustice in Ecclesiastes, focusing on how Kohelet deals with the apparent lack of immediate justice in the world.
5. How does the epilogue of Ecclesiastes (chapter 12:9-14) provide a conclusion to the often perplexing questions raised throughout the book? Consider the final call to "fear God" in relation to Kohelet's previous musings.

Glossary of Key Terms

Amal: Labor, toil, work. Often associated with the hard and sometimes frustrating aspects of human endeavor.

Fear of God: A concept that encompasses reverence, respect, and an awareness of God's judgment and authority.

Hevel: Vapor, breath, futility, vanity. Used to describe the fleeting, transient, and often absurd nature of life under the sun.

Sheol: The grave, the place of the dead. A concept of the afterlife, but not a place of reward or punishment in the traditional sense.

Tov: Good, desirable, favorable. A goal that Kohelet pursues in the face of "hevel," searching for what is good in this life.

Yitron: Profit, gain, advantage. Often associated with a lasting or ultimate benefit, which Kohelet struggles to find in this world.

Inyon: A burden.

Bema Seat: The place where God renders judgment, from the Greek word meaning "seat."

5. FAQs on Fuhr, Ecclesiastes, Session 9, Ecclesiastes 7=12, Text Exposition, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on the Book of Ecclesiastes

1. **What is the central question Kohelet grapples with, and what does he seek to find throughout Ecclesiastes?** Kohelet is on a quest to find *Yitron*, or ultimate, lasting gain or profit in life. He explores various avenues such as wisdom, wealth, and pleasure, only to conclude that they do not provide lasting satisfaction. Underlying this quest is the fundamental question posed in 6:12: "Who knows what is good?" Kohelet is looking for what is *Tov*, what is truly good for a person in a fallen, uncertain world.
2. **Why does Kohelet emphasize the importance of death and mourning over birth and feasting?** Kohelet emphasizes the importance of death and mourning to promote a sober and realistic perspective on life. The day of death is better than the day of birth not in the sense of preferring death, but in that it provides a clear conclusion and reflection point. By going to a house of mourning, one is reminded of the inevitability of death, which encourages taking life seriously and understanding the consequences of one's actions, promoting wisdom over fleeting pleasures. It is better to wait until the "end of a matter" to celebrate, rather than prematurely boasting.
3. **What is the role of wisdom according to Kohelet, and how is it both beneficial and limited?** Wisdom is presented as a valuable and beneficial tool for navigating the uncertainties of life, offering a measure of safety and advantage. It's described as a shelter, like money, and is said to preserve the life of its possessor. However, Kohelet acknowledges the limitations of wisdom, particularly in predicting or controlling the future. It cannot guarantee justice, prosperity or ultimate answers to life's big questions. Wisdom is helpful but not sufficient.

4. **How does Kohelet view the concept of justice in a fallen world, and how should one respond to the apparent lack of it?** Kohelet observes the world with apparent injustice, noting that sometimes the righteous suffer while the wicked prosper. Despite this, he advises against being "over-righteous" or "over-wicked," recognizing that there are no guarantees for outcomes based solely on moral conduct. Instead, he suggests one should fear God and avoid extremes, acknowledging both the expectation of God's judgment and the uncertainties of life under the sun. The proper response is not to tempt God or "fate" with extreme behaviors, but to accept life with sobriety.
5. **What are the "enjoy life refrains" in Ecclesiastes, and what do they suggest about how to live meaningfully?** The "enjoy life refrains," repeated throughout the book, emphasize the importance of experiencing joy, gladness, and gratitude in the present. They encourage readers to eat, drink, and be glad in their work, seeing these as gifts from God within the reality of life's limitations. The enjoy life refrains are not just about hedonism, but about finding meaning in everyday life despite the *hevel* or absurdity of existence and the uncertainty of the future. These moments of joy should be seen in light of both the good and the bad in life.
6. **How does Kohelet portray the relationship between work and the passage of time, and what lessons can be drawn from that portrayal?** Kohelet presents a perspective that promotes both the need for hard work and the recognition of time's limitations. He encourages activity, risk-taking, and diligence. One should do what their hand finds to do with all their might. However, he also emphasizes that labor alone does not guarantee results, for "time and chance" happen to all. Thus, present opportunities should be grasped with vigor, knowing that in death, there is neither work nor wisdom. You must act now.
7. **What role does the "fear of God" play in Kohelet's worldview, and how does it relate to enjoying life?** The "fear of God" is a crucial element in Kohelet's teachings. It encourages a balanced life, not simply one of enjoyment. Fear of God implies a recognition of God's sovereignty, a posture of reverence, and an awareness of a future judgment. It's not about living a life of anxiety but about living with accountability and sobriety. Fearing God is a way of avoiding folly and acknowledging limitations. It provides a framework for enjoying life while understanding that actions have consequences before a divine judge.

8. **What is Kohelet's ultimate conclusion about the meaning of life, and how does the epilogue contribute to it?** Kohelet concludes that life under the sun is often *hevel*—meaningless, fleeting, and absurd—and that man's wisdom, success, and earthly pursuits cannot bring lasting satisfaction. Yet, in this reality, he advocates for enjoying the gifts of life with a balanced perspective. The epilogue confirms the validity of Kohelet's wisdom and emphasizes that the whole duty of man is to fear God and keep his commandments. It highlights the future judgment, underscoring the need to live both enjoyably and responsibly, making the most of present opportunities while remaining mindful of accountability before God.