

Three books of the Bible are traditionally attributed to Solomon. Both Jewish and Christian tradition says that he wrote them at different stages of his life. He would have written Proverbs during his adult years as he is passing on life's wisdom to the next generation. He would have written Ecclesiastes when he was old and frustrated by the futility of life in this rebellious world. He would have written Song of Songs/Solomon during the days of his youthful passion and vigor.

Ecclesiastes

Author: Though Solomon is not mentioned by name in this book, it is attributed to him because of the references to the author being king in Jerusalem (1:1, 12; 2:9), although many think that this refers to someone else. The title of the book refers to one who is able or authorized to address an assembly, or gathering, of people (the "Preacher"). If it is written by Solomon, it is during his crabby old age when he is looking back on his mistakes in life (wealth and women having cancelled out his God-given wisdom). His intended audience is young people, perhaps trying to help them not make the same mistakes he had made. The style is Hebrew poetry with its thoughts from line to line being parallel with one another. Is Solomon a believer or an unbeliever when he dies? *And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice¹⁰ and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the LORD commanded.¹¹ Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this has been your practice and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant." And Solomon slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David his father. (1 Kings 11:9-11, 43)*

Emphasis: The message of this book is that we cannot understand all that God does. This book presents life as it would be lived apart from a saving covenant relationship with God. In Judaism this book is read at the festival of Succoth (Booths, reminder of the 40 years in the wilderness), which is the autumn wine-making holiday (perhaps to put a damper on the festivities!). The main word to remember is meaninglessness, or vanity. This describes the emptiness of life lived without knowing God as Savior and Lord. The key phrase is "under the sun." The positive purpose in life is to fulfill our God-given vocation by doing the work He has given us to do. Jesus ("under the Son") is the answer to the questions and concerns that Ecclesiastes poses about an otherwise depressing life. The book does end with a clear call to have faith in God (12:13-14).

Date: This was written late in Solomon's life around 935 BC.

Outline:

1-6 Only God Gives Meaning to Life 7-12 Divine Wisdom Enables Us to Live Wisely

Important Chapters

3 There is a Time for Everything 12 Images of the Effects of Aging on the Body

Key Verses: Ecclesiastes 2:24-25 There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, for apart from Him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?