



*Lesson 1 (Eccl. 1)*

## WHO, WHAT, AND HOW?

Chapter 1 of Ecclesiastes offers a brilliant introduction to the whole book. Who is the speaker? What is the problem? What is the method of solving it? These three questions not only set forth the scope of the book but also draw us into the book's process of questioning. We feel the intensity of the Preacher's search, and we identify with it, because he is asking our own most fundamental questions about how to make sense of what we see and experience in our brief span of time on earth.

### DAY ONE—WHO IS THE SPEAKER?

To begin, read through the first chapter of Ecclesiastes. What are your first impressions of this speaker?

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We first meet the speaker as “the Preacher” in Ecclesiastes 1:1. Some translations just call him “Qoheleth”—the actual Hebrew word, meaning “one who assembles or calls together.” In fact, our title “Ecclesiastes” comes from the Greek translation of “Qoheleth.” This title for the speaker appears three times in Ecclesiastes 1, once in the middle of the book (7:27), and three times at the end.

1. What do we learn of this Preacher in Ecclesiastes 12:9–10?

2. What else do we learn of the Preacher in Ecclesiastes 1:1 and 1:12?

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3. How do the following verses relate Solomon to the one named Qoheleth?

- 1 Kings 2:10–12

- 1 Kings 4:29–34

- 1 Kings 8:1–2, 5, 14, 22, 65–66

4a. Note that the Preacher, in the book's first and final lines, is introduced in the third person ("he"). But in the main

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body of the book, beginning in Ecclesiastes 1:12, how does the Preacher refer to himself?

- b. How might this narrative perspective affect the book and our reading of it?

DAY TWO—WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

- I. What general observations would you make about the book's opening prologue/poem in Ecclesiastes 1:2–11?



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- b. According to Genesis 3:17–19, when and why was the creation subjected to futility in this way?
  - c. According to the same verses in Genesis (3:17–19), to what is Adam made subject at this point?
4. Now read Ecclesiastes 1:3, and in the context of these other verses, comment on the Preacher's frustration.







DAY FOUR—WHAT METHOD  
WILL THE PREACHER USE?

The Preacher has poured out the problem in the poetic prologue: life is fleeting and meaningless. Now he introduces his method of exploring this problem.

1. Ecclesiastes 1:12–18 summarize his method in two brief cycles, which will be more fully developed in Ecclesiastes 2. How do the two cycles (Eccl. 1:12–15 and 16–18) conclude similarly in their final two verses?

2. In the first cycle (vv. 12–15), what specific things does the Preacher want us to know about his search?



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6. In the second cycle (vv. 16–18), what is the method and focus of the search?

7. Find all the references to “wisdom” in Ecclesiastes 1:12–18. From this context, what can we say about wisdom?

8. How do the following verses enlarge our understanding of wisdom?

- Proverbs 9:10

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- Jeremiah 8:9
- Daniel 2:27–28
- I Corinthians 1:18–25





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5. We've seen that Ecclesiastes already points our thoughts back to Genesis and the stark reality of a fallen world cut off from God. In conclusion, take a peek ahead and meditate for a few minutes on the very end of the story, in Revelation 21:1–5. What perspective do these verses bring to Ecclesiastes 1?