

INTERACTIVE TRAVEL GUIDE

DESTINATION: *Ecclesiastes 1-12*

The book of Ecclesiastes records an intense search by Solomon to find meaning and fulfillment in life. The main theme in Ecclesiastes is “vanity.” Solomon realized that all the things this world has to offer are empty, that life’s pursuits lead only to frustration, and that life apart from God is meaningless.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

961 - 922 B.C.

Solomon reigns over the Unified Kingdom of Israel

The dating of this book is a subject of controversy. Some believe that Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes in the early years of his life, before he was swept away into carnality by his foreign wives. Still others speculate that he wrote Ecclesiastes in the twilight of his life, as a testimony of the futility of a life lived without God.

TRIP PLANNER:

What is the meaning of life? At some point in life, everyone asks this question. The book of Ecclesiastes is a search to answer that question. Does fulfillment come through wealth, power, relationships, and wisdom? After tasting all that this world has to offer, Solomon concludes that life without God is meaningless. Ecclesiastes can be divided into three parts.

1. Declaration of vanity: 1:1-11
2. Demonstration of vanity: 1:12-6:12
Included here are the pursuit of knowledge, amusements, possessions, madness and folly, labor, philosophy, and riches. All are vanity, otherwise stated as “meaningless.”
3. Deliverance from vanity: 7:1-12:14
Without God’s help, humans cannot discover what is good for them to do; and without God’s revelation man does not know what is in the future. Conclusion: All man’s efforts to find happiness apart from God are without result.

PLACES OF INTEREST:

Israel – Israel is mentioned one time in Ecclesiastes. In Prov. 1:12 the author describes himself as the King of Israel over Jerusalem. During this time in the history of the kings, the Kingdom of Israel had not yet been divided. Israel was the name given to Jacob as a promise by God that He would make of his descendents a mighty nation – the Nation of Israel.

Jerusalem – Jerusalem is mentioned six times in this short book. Jerusalem was the city of the king of Israel and the center of all religious activity. It is likely that the book of Ecclesiastes was written from Jerusalem.

PEOPLE OF INTEREST:

Solomon – Author of the book of Ecclesiastes. His title is given in 1:1, “Son of David, King in Jerusalem.” Enthroned at a very young age, he was cast into leadership at a volatile time in Israel’s history. 1 Kings 3:4-9 records that God came to Solomon at night in a dream and said, “Ask for whatever you want me to give to you.” So Solomon asked God for wisdom and a discerning heart. God answered that prayer, for Solomon was known for his extraordinary wisdom. Ecclesiastes is a glimpse into the pursuit and folly of all wisdom.

FUN FACTS:

Search for Satisfaction - As Solomon drifted away from God he sought fulfillment in many things. Solomon sought after wisdom (1:12-18), pleasure (2:1-3), accomplishments (2:4-6), and possessions (2:7-17). The result of this search brought Solomon grief (1:18), vanity (2:1), and a hatred for life (2:17).

Vanity - The word literally means “breath” or “vapor.” Solomon uses this word to describe wealth, power, pleasures, and fame as passing away, much as warm breath fades away in the cool, crisp air. This same word is used by Job (Job 7:7) to describe human life, and by Jeremiah (Jer. 18:15) to denounce idolatry, but nobody uses it more than Solomon in Ecclesiastes. He says that all of life is vanity without God.

Ecclesiastes - The Hebrew title qoheleth is a rare term found only in Ecclesiastes. The Greek word is Ecclesiastes, which comes from two words ek “out of” and klesis “a calling,” and it literally means one who speaks to an assembly or, as Solomon calls himself, “the preacher.”

Example of Solomon’s wisdom - Solomon’s wisdom is most often recalled by a famous incident in which two women came before him with a baby, each claiming to be the mother. Solomon ordered the child be cut in half, and by observing each woman’s reaction determined the true mother.

The Byrds - Ecclesiastes 3 was the inspiration to a song entitled “Turn, Turn, Turn,” written in 1965 by The Byrds, a 60’s rock group!

NOTES:



BOOK OF

DATE

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