

Introduction:

The name “Ecclesiastes” comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew word “Qoheleth,” meaning “one who assembles.” Isn’t that what we all do in life? We assemble. We assemble our collection of toys as we grow up. We assemble our collection of friends and acquaintances. We assemble skills in order to do something, be it good or bad skills. We assemble our “toys” after we are grown up. We assemble our families, and later in life we hope to assemble some well-deserved relaxation and fun in retirement. But is that all there is to life? What is, after all, the real meaning of life?

An often used phrase in Ecclesiastes is “nothing makes sense”; have you echoed this phrase in your own life? How sad would it be to come to the end of your life and be thinking nothing has made sense...is this all there is? Did my life account for anything? Did I make a difference? Was there a reason I was born? Did anybody notice me while I walked this planet? What is next, if anything, after my death?

Thought to have been written around the time of the exile (538 BC), Ecclesiastes was not written by King Solomon who reigned around 970 to 931 BC. Some believe that Ecclesiastes is about King Solomon. They may be right. There is some evidence that points that way, since Solomon was the only king in Jerusalem from David’s family (see Ecc. 1:1). We can read in 1 Kings that King Solomon was wiser than anyone else in the world. If that is true, what was driving the statement “nothing makes sense”? Was it - that with all the power, wisdom and money a person could possibly have, it left him unfulfilled? Something left him empty, there was a hole, something missing - for in his thoughts with all he had, there must be more to life, but what was it?

The first 14 verses in the Book of Ecclesiastes Chapter 7 address the best of life, and I would like to share them with you as they were published by the American Bible Society in their “*The Learning Bible*”, a really nice accurate CEV Study Bible, by the way.

*“A good reputation at the time of death
is better than loving care at the time of birth.”*

*“It’s better to go to a funeral than to attend a feast;
funerals remind us that we all must die.”*

*“Choose sorrow over laughter because a sad face
may hide a happy heart.”*

“A sensible person mourns, but fools always laugh.”

“Harsh correction is better than the songs of a fool.”

*“Foolish laughter is stupid.
It sounds like thorns crackling in a fire.”*

*“Corruption makes fools of sensible people,
and bribes can ruin you.”*

*“Something completed is better
than something just begun;
patience is better than too much pride.”*

“Only fools get angry quickly and hold a grudge.”

*“It isn’t wise to ask, “Why is everything worse
than it used to be?”*

“Having wisdom is better than an inheritance.”

*“Wisdom will protect you just like money;
knowledge with good sense will lead you to life.”*

*“Think of what God has done!
If God makes something crooked,
can you make it straight?”*

“When times are good, you should be cheerful;

*when times are bad, think what it means.
God makes them both to keep us from knowing
what will happen next.”*

Written over 2,500 years ago, Ecclesiastes is as modern today as ever. Who hasn't said the following or something like it, at one time or another in their own lives?

“I have seen everything during this senseless life of mine. I have seen good citizens die for doing the right thing, and I have seen criminals live to a ripe old age.” (Ecc. 7:15 CEV)

In 1983, Harold S. Kushner published his bestseller book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, by Avon. Later, in 1997, Melvin Tinker followed with his book, *Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?* by Christian Focus. Obviously, this has been a question for all time.

I don't know why it is such a mystery to most; it should come as no surprise. We live in a fallen world where evil reigns until Christ comes again. We learn very clearly in Matthew 7:25 that the winds of destruction and the flood waters come against all people, the righteous and the unrighteous alike. Our promise from God is only that we Christians will be able to withstand these destructive forces, not that we will escape such calamity in our earthly lives. Many a new Christian mistakenly thinks that once they accept Christ as their LORD and Savior, their lives will be trouble free from then on. One only needs to look at the Apostles to see that all had harsh lives and all but John died a martyr's death.

In the pages of this book, we will look at what a real Christian is like. It is no secret, unfortunately, that there are many sitting in church pews that are Christians in name only. Jesus once said that many will call Him LORD and He will say I don't know you (Matt. 7:21-23). We will study what reveals the real Christian.

Why were we created? For what purpose are we here? The answer is simply this: we were created to first glorify God and then to be in relationship with Him. Once sin entered the world by the

fallen heavenly beings, God has been trying to reach out to us to bring us back into the fold. He finally sent His only begotten Son to take our sins upon Himself. One who was without sin made Himself sin to pay the price which was our debt, and show us the way back into relationship with God.

In the first section of this book, I compare our lives to that of a tree, how we develop roots for structure and seek out nourishment, the type of ground to which we set our roots and the impact that ground has on our growth. In the second section, I compare our lives to that of a tree branch. To what “trunk” are we connected? We find the words of Paul in Romans 6:16 CEV:

“Don’t you know that you are slaves of anyone you obey? You can be slaves to sin and die, or you can be obedient slaves to God and be acceptable to Him.”

Friends, you will become like the one you choose to obey. I suggest in Chapters 9 and 10 that you can connect to Satan and live in sin, or you can connect to Jesus Christ and live in righteousness...it is your choice. There are only two choices!

“The Voice of the Martyrs” (June 2011) report tells of Gasurama Prodhan, a 26 year old mother of three in India, who said, after her pastor husband was murdered for serving the LORD, that:

“I still have fear; there is still fear there. But God is with us, so He is leading us day by day.”

Her God is very real and very close, leading her not just once in awhile, but day by day. To Gasurama, each day is a blessing, and she just might not have a tomorrow. How would you live today if you were really unsure that you would even have a tomorrow? How real and close is your God? Are you in close relationship now? You can be if you seek the right nourishment and sink your roots into fertile ground. It is my hope and prayer that this book will help lead people to Jesus and that the present reality of Jesus Christ will become known to those searching for life’s meaning.

For eternity's sake, why not become a new creation; become a Different Kind of Tree. A new creation in Jesus Christ will save your soul for all eternity, bring a bit of heaven to you right now, and help you cope day in and day out as your new foundation will allow you to avoid collapse when the pressures of life pound against you. Yes, the winds of life will come upon you; will you stand? Yes, if properly connected. Learn about these connections in this book. While in this cursed world (Gen. 3:14-19) being a Child of God doesn't deliver you from the heavy weight of life, but it does guarantee your deliverance through the stressful tribulations you will experience. Many a young misunderstanding Christian has quickly given up hope when burdened by life, thinking all would be well if he only went to Church. That is not enough; it is all about your relationship with Christ and holding on to the hope in the one who said His yoke was easy and His burden light (Matt. 11:30). Yes, the flood waters will come up upon you and your house, but you will overcome that threat and survive (Luke 6:48). No matter what persecution comes your way, you can and will sing praise songs (Acts 16:25) for you will know in your heart "whose" you really are!

The way has been set before you. All has been made ready; it only requires your willingness to search, to open your eyes and your heart to the blessings of God. The invitation is before you right now; drop your excuses and attend God's Party (Matt.22:1-14). The Bridegroom [Jesus] is coming to take you to The Wedding Feast [Glory in Heaven], will you be ready? Will you make weak excuses about what you think "life" dumped upon you? You must be ready; today is the time to make ready.

"Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! But know

this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” (Luke 12:35; Luke 12:36-40 ESV)