

The Unity of Ecclesiastes

There is an inner unity in Ecclesiastes that does not follow the typical linear thought process.

Unity in Ecclesiastes appears through:

- Structure
- Style
- Concepts

Unifying concept #1: Life is Vanity

- The toil which is endured bears no relationship to what is gained from it (Ecc. 1:3, 2:22ff)
- There is a cheerless outlook of the social structure of humanity:
 - Injustice rules in the place of justice (Ecc. 3:16).
 - There is no comfort for the oppressed (Ecc. 4:1).
 - The wicked man enjoys more success than the good man (Ecc. 7:15, 8:10, 9:2).
 - Man is incapable of controlling the future (Ecc. 8:7, 9:1, 10:14).
- Wisdom brings vexation (Ecc. 1:16-18).

Unifying concept #2: God determines the events in the world

The events in the world are not a haphazard jungle:

- Every event and every activity is subject to determinism (Ecc. 3:1-11).
- Man is totally subject to this determinism (Ecc. 9:11).
- There is no comfort in the determination of every phenomenon (Ecc. 9:11).
- The world is controlled and encompassed by God's free activity (Ecc. 3:14).

Unifying concept #3: Man is unable to take into account what has been decreed in any given situation by God

- The objectives of God are beautiful (Ecc. 3:11).
- Man cannot find out what God has done (Ecc. 3:11).
- Man does not know his time (Ecc. 9:12).
- Man does not know the future (Ecc. 7:14).
- What has been decreed is unfair to the righteous and the wicked (Ecc. 8:14ff).



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Unifying concept #4: Man's ultimate satisfaction is in God

- The creature must draw near to listen to the Creator in heaven (Ecc. 5:1,2).
- Israel's joy in her heart is found in the house of God (Ecc. 5:1,20).
- The fear of the Lord is the antidote for life's meaninglessness (Ecc. 5:7).
- Man must be ready to receive whatever good thing God is ready to grant him (Ecc. 7:14).
- Man must recognize a divine intention directed towards him for good (Ecc. 3:22, 5:17).
- Man must see himself within the divine purposes of a beneficent God (Ecc. 2:24, 9:7-9).