

## INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS ON QOHELET

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### A. Possible Major Markers

1. "Vanity and striving after wind" AG Wright (ch. 1-6)
2. "Not find out/who can find out" AG Wright (ch. 6-12)
3. Positive encouragements: 2:24a; 3:12; 3:22a; 5:17; 8:15a; 9:7-9a; 11:7-12:1 (cf. Whybray)

### B. Paragraph divisions

1. 1:1-11. Cycles: there is nothing new.
2. 1-6, Vanity
  - a) 1:12-18. His global search.
    - 1) 2:1-11, pleasure.
    - 2) 2:12-16, Wisdom and folly.
    - 3) 2:17-23, Labor (not searched out, but hated).
  - b) 2:24-3:22, God's Sovereignty in the Cycles of Life (responds to 1:1-11)

This seems to have a basically chiasmic order, with the positive exhortations at both ends and at the middle.

    - 1) 2:24-26. Enjoy life.
    - 2) 3:1-9. The seasons of life.
    - 3) 3:10-11. "I have seen:" men frustrated, God in control.
    - 4) 3:12-15. "I know" (2x): Man rejoicing, God in control.
    - 5) 3:16-21. Confusion of righteous and wicked.  
17b: cf. vv.1-8. God has a use for both.
    - 6) 3:22. Enjoy life.
  - c) 4:1-12, Interpersonal relations
    - 1) 4:1-3, oppression. Cf. 3:16-21.
    - 2) 4:4-6, futility of labor.
    - 3) 4:7-12, loneliness.
  - d) 4:13-5:9, Authorities

Chiasmic, with two sections about kings surrounding one about God.

    - 1) 4:13-16, the youth and the king.
    - 2) 5:1-7, speak little before God.
    - 3) 5:8-9, oppression and the responsibility of the king.
  - e) 5:10-6:9, Wealth

Note chiasm.

    - 1) 5:10-13, Riches do not satisfy.
    - 2) 5:14-17, Men lack power to enjoy riches.
    - 3) 5:18-20, Enjoy life.
    - 4) 6:1-6, No power to enjoy riches
    - 5) 6:7-9, Riches do not satisfy.
3. 6-11, Ignorance

Note how "the works of God" are always associated with man's ignorance: 7:13; 8:17; 11:5.

  - a) 6:10-12
  - b) 7:1-14, Living with Oppression
    - 1) 7:1-10, Its intrinsic value
    - 2) 7:11,12, Wisdom can help with it.
    - 3) 7:13-14, Ultimate solution: trust in God's inscrutable will.
  - c) 7:15-18, Confusion of Righteous and wicked

- d) 7:19, value of wisdom
  - e) 7:20-22, none righteous
  - f) 7:23-25, hard to find wisdom.
  - g) 7:26-29, problems with women
  - h) 8:1, value of wisdom
  - i) 8:2-8, power of the king
  - j) 8:9-14, confusion of righteous and wicked
  - k) 8:15, Enjoy life
  - l) 8:16-9:1, cannot understand God's work.
  - m) 9:2-6, confusion of righteous and wicked w.r.t. death.
  - n) 9:7-10, enjoy life.
  - o) 9:11-12, time and chance happen to all. Effort futile.
  - p) 9:13-18, the poor man and the king.
  - q) 10 ??? Note repeated references to the king.
  - r) 11:1-6, sow regardless. Can't understand work of God.
  - s) 11:7-12:8 (alternation): enjoy life; the end is coming.
4. Conclusion

### C. Repeated themes

1. Cycles of life
  - a) 1:1-11. Cycles: there is nothing new.
  - b) 3:1-8. The seasons of life.  
Is this comparable to the cycles in 1:1-11?
2. Confusion of righteous and wicked
  - a) 3:16-21. Confusion of righteous and wicked.
  - b) 7:15-18, Confusion of Righteous and wicked
  - c) 8:9-14, confusion of righteous and wicked
  - d) 9:2-6, confusion of righteous and wicked w.r.t. death.
3. Cannot understand the work of God
  - a) 3:9-11. No profit in labor.
  - b) 7:13-14, cannot understand the work of God
  - c) 8:16-9:1, cannot understand God's work.
  - d) 11:1-6, sow regardless. Can't understand work of God.
4. Enjoy life
  - a) 2:24-26. Enjoy life.
  - b) 3:12-13. Enjoy life.
  - c) 3:22. Enjoy life.
  - d) 5:18-20, Enjoy life.
  - e) 8:15, Enjoy life
  - f) 9:7-10, enjoy life.
  - g) 11:7-12:8 (alternation): enjoy life; the end is coming.
5. Someone better than the king
  - a) 4:13-16, the youth and the king.
  - b) 9:13-18, the poor man and the king.
6. Inheritance problem
  - a) 2:17-23, Labor. (not searched out, but hated. Is this together with the next the conclusion? Hates labor; takes refreshment in life)
  - b) 5:10-17, futility of riches; problem of inheritance. cf. 2:18ff.
  - c) 6:1-9, futility of unenjoyed riches; problem of inheritance.
7. Futility of labor
  - a) 2:17-23, Labor. (not searched out, but hated. Is this together with the next the conclusion? Hates labor; takes

- refreshment in life)
- b) 3:9-11. No profit in labor.
  - c) 4:4-6, futility of labor.
  - d) 9:11-12, time and chance happen to all. Effort futile.

D. Observational Cycle

Set attention	See	Speak
1. 1:13	14	16
2. 1:17a	17b	2:1,2
3. 2:12	13	15
4.	3:16	17,18
5.	4:1	2
6. 7:25	26	27

E. Statements of Understanding:

- 1. I saw
- 2. I said (in my heart)
- 3. I know

F. Antitheses to XBL

- 1. YeTeR
- 2. YiTRON
- 3. +oB
- 4. XeLeQ