

'THE STRUCTURE OF ECCLESIASTES' CHART

INTRODUCTION	A study of life as a closed system in and of itself	1.1-11 The vanity (meaninglessness) of life as a closed system. referred to by the term:- 'Under the sun'. Human existence considered within its own bounds. This will be a philosophical study of life and death within time and space. What's the point of life? If it was designed like this then it's just a repetitive cycle of events in nature and peoples lives? There is nothing new, it's pointless and seems to have no meaning or purpose. Why is there this cycle of death on an eternal earth? What's the point in labours when our appetites and senses are never satisfied? The lives won't even be remembered by future generations. Finally, What's crooked can't be made straight Man can't make himself holy.	
	There is no ultimate point in life lived as a closed system	1.12-26 The preacher's study - to search out all things done under heaven. He finds all is vanity (meaningless) and vexation of spirit. This is a fallen earth- crooked and wanting. He purposes to know Wisdom and Folly (and folly in action-Madness) v17. Wisdom brings grief, knowledge leads to sorrow. Personal experience PLEASURE? - Mirth, Wine, Works, Possessions: These give some pleasure but ultimately it was all vanity and vexation, there was no profit to it. WISDOM and FOLLY? 2.12. Wisdom excels folly but all events happen to both the wise and foolish, and in the end they're all forgotten and gone. Therefore the preacher hates life because it is pointless and vain. He despairs realizing what you get from all your endless hard work; sorrow and grief. He concludes that there is nothing better to do from an earthly perspective than to satisfy your appetites and enjoy your work, but it is God that enables a man to do this. To the 'Good' He enables wisdom, knowledge and joy. To the 'Sinner' He frustrates in travail and he works only to hand it to others.	
OBSERVATIONS	God orders all things by His work of providence	3.1-15 PROVIDENCE - God orders things by His ongoing works of providence. There is a time for all things, and God brings all things about in their time. WHY? So that people will find contentment. God works things for eternal ends so that people will 'Fear' before Him (this term is used as a synonym for a true believer). In order to LEAD MEN TO HIMSELF to acknowledge God and reverence Him v14. Because GOD IS A MORAL BEING and will 'require that which is past' as the Great Judge on Judgement day.	
	Man tries and fails to judge rightly	3.16 Human and Divine JUSTICE How Mankind tries to rule himself in Justice fails. 'Under the sun' there is no true justice, it's all mixed up; good and bad, right and wrong. Therefore God will be the ultimate Judge v.17.	
	Man in this state is no better than the beasts	3.18-22 Just like beasts We need to be shown by God that to purely live in this earth as a closed system is to exist just as the animals do. By implication; There is a better, higher plain we can find in life.	
	Rulers and the ruled	4.1-13 POLITICAL OPPRESSION Oppressions of Rulers 4.1-3 People are oppressed by the powerful and cry but find no comforter. Therefore, in this condition, it's better to be in the grave viewed from an earthly perspective in this closed system. Can life be just about work? If this is how you see things (living for this life only), then the dead are really better off than those who are about to experience life's oppressions or those who are currently experiencing them. The labour of the ruled 4.4-13 Full of Envy 4.4/ Laziness 4.5-6/ Loneliness v7- people are better off working together 9-12. If an oppressive king (ruler/governor) is unteachable/ correctable then he's no better than a poor child.	
	Cycles of rulers	4.15-16 GENERATIONS The cycles of life mean there's nothing new but an endless succession of generations and rulers. The next generation will not agree with the policies of the last and bring different ideologies. They go over and over in a repetitive pointless cycle. This is ultimately meaningless if there isn't a greater purpose to life.	
	How to approach the church	5.1-8 WORSHIP The best approach when seeking and considering true religion. When going to the house of God process things spiritually. Slow to speak and quick to listen, not trusting in vain ceremony (the sacrifice of fools) v2. Don't make hasty promises to God e.g "I'll change if you just help me". The goal is to 'Fear God' (become a Christian). Consider, when you see injustice, don't be surprised and think things are out of control, nothing outside of God's decree, there is nothing higher v.8.	
	The reality of physical existence	5.9-14 LOOK HOW POINTLESS IT IS TO LIVE FOR WORK AND POSSESSIONS. Everyone is dependant on the earth for weather and food etc v.9. If you love money you'll always want and it will never be enough for you v.10. If you work hard and enjoy you labour you'll sleep well finding a measure of contentment v.12. If you horde riches they'll be hurtful and disappear v.13. We're born with nothing and we'll take nothing out of this life in the end, therefore all labour is ultimately pointless v.14. A man feeds his appetites in much ignorance, sickness, sorrow and anger.	
	A right perspective	5.18-6.12 It is the gift of God to be able to find enjoyment in your labours. God gives people contentment. It is a natural evil that people cannot find contentment in their lot, even though they may want for nothing. If a man's soul isn't filled with good, what does it matter if he gains the whole world (riches, long life and flourishing family)? It's better if he died at birth. The appetite is never satisfied, so don't live for it. If this is all life is about then what is the benefit of being wise rather than foolish? It's better to be led by the mind than by the feelings and desires. Conclusions of these observations Questions in the light of all this: There are so many things that are in the end meaningless, so why does man think he can profit by them? This is a short life, who can tell what the right thing to do is? By implication, God must lead and guide us not men.	
LESSONS	Consider the gravity of the sad aspects of life in order to mould character	7.1-7 Let sadness make you serious. Who you are is more important than what you do for a living. Consider the sad things in life and heed their warnings. Sorrow is better than pleasure, feasting and parties etc, because it makes you deeper and improves who you are as a person.	
	Look to a heavenly hereafter	7.8-12 Patience is better than the Pride of Life Look to a future hereafter, don't long for 'the good old days of sin', but rather a superior INHERITANCE v.11. Wisdom gives this life (everlasting). Wisdom and money are both a defense in this life, but only wisdom and knowledge of God can give life eternal .	
	Don't try good works	7.13-20 Only God can 'make the crooked straight' - that is turn a person from sinner to saint v.13 There's no gain trying to be a good person in and by yourself apart from God. In fact you'll die young trying and to attempt this is wicked. In bad and good times: rejoice in prosperity, but in adversity consider, God has made them both. God has set one against the other, in contrast, so that people may see that there's nothing beyond God v.14. We can see that sometimes a 'good' man dies and a 'wicked' man lives v.15. Therefore, just attempting to be a good person won't give you earthly advantage. Trying to be self righteous is proud (over wise), it will destroy you. Don't run after wickedness either. Realize, good or bad, he that 'Fears God' (truly finds the Lord's righteousness) shall come out on top, being wise unto salvation, because the wise will realize there is no-one righteous v.20	
	Don't worry about insults or the opinions of those around you dissuading you from seeking God.	7.21 Don't pay too much attention to what people say about you, caring about people's opinions more than God's. For you know you've said things about others that you didn't mean. You may have secretly admired the Faithful.	
	Humble yourself. Realize there are things beyond our grasp.	7.23-24 The preacher wanted to prove everything by wise thought but realized there are things beyond knowing, out of the reach of reason and empiricism. The answer is by faith- by Divine intuition.	
	Watch for the trap of relationships, which typify worldly seduction.	7.25-28 A lesson learned in his study more bitter than death is the woman whose heart is a snare and whose hands are restraints. This will break your heart. A sinner will be trapped by her. The world system is like this, don't be seduced by the world . The obedient to God will escape her. He finds only One righteous person , and he's a biological man - Christ. God made man righteous but they have all gone astray and turned to their own ways. There is none righteous.	
	How to recognize the true believer	8.1-8 This is how you can know who is a true believer : When they hear of the wise things of God, their faces light up v1. They keep the law of God v2. They don't live in continual sin or rush into sin v3. The Bible is their guide v4. Obedience keeps them from falling. They understand 'Time and Judgement', living with the day of judgement in mind. They don't trade time for eternity. For every act in time will be judged v5,6. We don't know the future v7 and we don't know when we'll die v8- living a sinful life will be no gain to you then- 'There's no discharge in that war'!	
	Look at the final end of those who fear God and those who don't	8.9-14 Even though in this life there is injustice and unfairness, in the next is life or death. One man rules over another and hurts him v9. The wicked are not punished and die, even though they were amongst holy people, they weren't brought to account v10. Justice isn't swift, so people think they can get away with it v11. But even though the wicked get away with things, know that it will be well for those that 'fear God' (true believers) in the end v12, and it will not be well with the wicked in the end because they don't fear God. Don't expect absolute justice in this life, here just men get injustice and wicked men get let off.	
	Like taking pleasure in the simple things of life, salvation is by faith not by wearying, exhaustive knowledge.	8.15-17 The preacher commends 'mirth', enjoying the simple pleasures in life, eating and drinking and being happy in good company (looked at from an earthly perspective, it's as good as it gets); you'll value and remember these as good times, more than the proud studies. Don't proudly determine to know and understand all the deep things, the mysteries of God's providence, before you accept God. It's by a humble, simple faith that He'll be found. <i>Psalms 131.1,2 "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child."</i>	
	This present life is your opportunity to find God	9.1-10 We're all in God's hands , and although one event (good or bad things) happen to both the righteous and the unrighteous, the men who do wickedly will go to the dead- Only while there is life there is hope of salvation. This life is your chance. The living can know that death is coming, but the dead can't do anything, their life is over, nothing more can be done for their souls in the earth (there is no such teaching a purgatory). So, take this as your opportunity, while you're alive seek the Lord "a living dog is better than a dead lion". Only within the span of your life is your opportunity provided v7. Enjoy what God gives you v9. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it to your best ability. Wherever you find yourself- don't run after another life- we're in God's hands.	
	Not by your own effort but by Christ	9.11-18 Salvation is not by your own effort or skill. If you're Fast, Strong or Intelligent it doesn't follow that you'll necessarily win the race or the fight or increase your goods. Time and chance (providence) orders all things v11. Wicked men will fall suddenly into an evil trap of the Devil no matter how fast, strong or smart they are. V13-18 THE POOR WISE MAN parable. This is Christ as seen in world history from an earthly perspective, entering into this closed system. Remember Him and his work, unlike the world sees Him. Realize He's the reason for the salvation of the 'city' of a person's soul. This is Gospel truth.	
Watch your walk: Watch your actions and words	10.1-20 Having found Christ, watch for those small follies and sins, they're chinks in your armour. Keep on the straight path, don't look away. Watch your actions and how they're perceived. If the authorities rise against you, be calm and compliant. Worldly authorities put fools high and the wise and noble low. The foolish shall not succeed in what they do because they act foolishly. The fool always wants to speak and can't be told anything. A fool frustrates everyone with his foolishness. If a king acts like a child, and the princes are lazy and drunk, woe to the land. But blessed if the king learns from his elders and the princes are sensible and practical about their health and appetites. If you're lazy you'll have no money to live. In your spiritual life don't be lazy and run after your earthly appetites , that won't bring spiritual health or prosperity. Be circumspect, watch what you say about others, watch out for gossip.		
How to approach Christian service	11.1-6 Do good works of service liberally , in the end you'll get a return from them by and for God v1. Cause and effect- You can't control everything. If you worry about trying to find the right time, you'll never do anything for the Lord. It's the Holy Spirit's work v3. So therefore work in service constantly and let God do the work, you don't know what will be effective or when will be the right time. We pray that amongst our efforts they'll be a word in season v6.		
Consider the span of life from youth to old age	11.7-12.7 Don't just live for the present at the expense of the future. Enjoy the good days you're given, but never forget the dark days are given also v7,8. Go have fun, enjoy yourself youngster, but know that for all these things God will judge you v9. Therefore be joyful in the Lord and purge yourself of evil by growth in grace and sanctification. Remember childhood and youth are short lived and a passing vanity v10. Remember your Creator, you'll grow old in body and die, so prepare for death and seek to live for God 12.1-7.		
CONCLUSION	Life as a closed system is meaningless. Only through the word of God bringing us Christ, can it have meaning	12.8-11 Earthly life is meaningless. To live as if that's all there is in a closed system is pointless. This is to just consider the physical life without the spiritual (just seeing things from an outward perspective). Take heed of God's words in the Scriptures: Take heed of The Word- Christ the Shepherd 10,11.	
	The whole duty of Man (Find the Lord and live for Him)	12.13 FEAR GOD (find the Lord in faith through Christ) and KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS (live for Him in obedience, worship and service). This is the whole duty of Man. Don't go running after other truths, meaning or purpose.	
	Live in light of Judgement day	12.14 For God is of these God, and Judgement Day is coming, and every secret, whether good or bad, will be judged.	