



The Book of Ecclesiastes (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament)

By Tremper Longman III

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Ecclesiastes is one of the most fascinating -- and hauntingly familiar -- books of the Old Testament. The sentiments of the main speaker of the book, a person given the name Qohelet, sound incredibly modern. Expressing the uncertainty and anxieties of our own age, he is driven by the question, "Where can we find meaning in the world?"

But while Qohelet's question resonates with readers today, his answer is shocking. "Meaningless," says Qohelet, "everything is meaningless." How does this pessimistic perspective fit into the rest of biblical revelation? In this commentary Tremper Longman III addresses this question by taking a canonical-Christocentric approach to the meaning of Ecclesiastes.

Longman first provides an extensive introduction to Ecclesiastes, exploring such background matters as authorship, language, genre, structure, literary style, and the book's theological message. He argues that the author of Ecclesiastes is not Solomon, as has been traditionally thought, but a writer who adopts a Solomonic persona. In the verse-by-verse commentary that follows, Longman helps clarify the confusing, sometimes contradictory message of Ecclesiastes by showing that the book should be divided into three sections -- a prologue (1:1-11), Qohelet's autobiographical speech (1:12-12:7), and an epilogue (12:8-14) -- and that the frame narrative provided by prologue and epilogue is the key to understanding the message of the book as a whole.

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"An indispensable resource for those wishing to understand the intricacies of the original text of Ecclesiastes."

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"On the whole, Longman has provided an up-to-date, conversant and provocative commentary on the ever-difficult words of Qohelet."

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"This commentary goes a long way in solving the riddle that is the book of Ecclesiastes. . . Will be highly treasured by those who have opportunity to teach and preach the message of Ecclesiastes."

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"Longman offers a provocative genre- and structure-based explanation for the divergent perspectives expressed within the book of Ecclesiastes. His thorough exposition of Qohelet's 'meaningless' search for meaning and of the canonical book's final critique of skepticism ultimately points readers toward Jesus Christ, whose death and resurrection have restored meaning to life 'under the sun.'"

About the Author

Tremper Longman III is Robert H. Gundry Professor of Biblical Studies and chair of the Religious Studies Department at Westmont College, Santa Barbara, California. His other books include *Introduction to the Old Testament*, *How to Read the Psalms*, *Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind*, and *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation*.

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