

## Solomon's Closing Advice



### SABBATH—MARCH 24

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Ecclesiastes 12.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Everything has now been heard. And there’s [there is] the final thing I want to say. Have respect for God and obey his commandments. That’s [that is] what everyone should do” (Ecclesiastes 12:13, NlrV).

**A RUSSIAN WRITER, ANDREI BITOV, EXPLAINS A MOMENT THAT CHANGED HIS FUTURE:** “In my twenty-seventh year, I was riding the subway in Leningrad. I was overcome with depression so great that life and the future seemed to stop at once, without any sensible meaning. Suddenly, all by itself, a sentence appeared in my mind: Without God, life makes no sense. With surprise, I repeated this sentence. I rode the sentence up like a moving staircase, got out of the subway and into God’s light and went on living.”—Quoted in Ravi Zacharias, *Can Man Live Without God?* (Nashville, Tenn.: Word Publishing, 1994), p. 59; adapted.

In its own way, Ecclesiastes could have been summed up with the sentence “Without God, life makes no sense.” But that sentence can be read two ways. (1) If there is no God, life makes no sense; or (2) if we live without obeying God, life makes no sense. That’s because death is always there waiting to swallow us up into nothingness. Without an answer to death, there is no answer to life. But that answer is found only in Jesus, who defeated death. Because of that defeat, He offers us what we cannot get anywhere else. Jesus said, “You can’t [cannot] do anything without me [Jesus]” (John 15:5, NlrV). That includes finding a good reason for living. This week, we take our final look at Ecclesiastes, one of the Bible’s more creative ways of helping us understand that important reason.

**SUNDAY—MARCH 25****REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR  
(Ecclesiastes 12:1)**

In Ecclesiastes 12:1, Solomon picks up a subject that he talked about in Ecclesiastes 11. He is still giving advice to young people. He is warning them about the “evil days.” Last week, we looked at these days as being days of trouble. But the focus in Ecclesiastes 12:1 seems to be old age.

**What is Solomon saying in Ecclesiastes 12:1 that is almost the same as what he said in the last few verses of Ecclesiastes 11?**

Solomon's use of the word for “Creator” comes from the same Hebrew word used in Genesis 1:1 for “created.” The Hebrew verb *bara* is almost always found showing God's activity (Isaiah 65:17; Malachi 2:10; Amos 4:13). *Bara* is never used to describe human activities. So Solomon is showing the Bible understanding that ties in God as our Creator. He is our God *because* He is our Creator.

Also interesting is that the Hebrew word for “Creator” is in the plural. In the same way, the word for God in Genesis 1:1 appears in the plural. There have been many explanations through hundreds of years for this

plural form. But some Christians have seen it as proof showing the Three-in-One Godhead<sup>1</sup> (Genesis 1:26; Genesis 3:22; Genesis 11:7).

Solomon, has wasted the best years of his life—his youth. Now he is warning others not to follow his footsteps. The earlier people accept God, the better it is for them for many reasons. That is clearly Solomon's message now: Do not turn away from God in your youth.

**Why would it be better for people to accept the Lord while they are young instead of waiting until later? Take your list to class on Sabbath and compare<sup>2</sup> it with what others say. What can you learn from each other? Also read Deuteronomy 10:13; Luke 13:4,5; Philippians 3:13-15.**

**MONDAY—MARCH 26****WHEN THE GRINDERS CEASE  
(Ecclesiastes 12:1-7)**

Ecclesiastes 12:1-7 is a beautiful description of growing old. Many writers agree that Ecclesiastes 12:2 is talking about the loss of the mind in old age. The “keepers of the house” could be the arms, which were once strong and healthy but that now tremble and shake.

**What do some of the other symbols in Ecclesiastes 12:1-7 mean?**

<sup>1</sup>the Godhead—God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit make up the Godhead.

<sup>2</sup>compare—show how things are the same.

**(Remember that these verses are talking about growing old.) Why is Solomon talking about old age?**

As he reaches old age, Solomon reminds us that we, too, will die someday. This is a theme he touches on over and over in Ecclesiastes. No matter who we are, how we live, or even how long we live, sooner or later we all face death.

Some Christian youth wear a T-shirt with the saying, "It's [it is] not that life is so short but that death is so long! John 3:16." In his old age, with death before him, Solomon is trying to remind us all, especially the young, that we will die. If you are fortunate, you will live long, only to face the "evil days" of old age. The other option is that you will die young. So we all need to keep eternity<sup>3</sup> in mind. Eternity is the picture of what God has offered us through Jesus Christ.

**Revelation 21 and 22 describe the world God makes available to all of us through Jesus' death. What parts of these chapters stand out in your mind? Try to imagine what it will be like. Remember that this will be for eternity. This is the hope God offers us through Christ. So what else matters? How seriously are you taking the promises Jesus offers you?**

<sup>3</sup>eternity—life without end; forever.

## TUESDAY—MARCH 27

### THE MAKING OF MANY BOOKS (Ecclesiastes 12:9-12)

In Ecclesiastes 12:9-12, Solomon starts talking about wisdom, knowledge, and how he tried to teach it to others. Was Solomon talking about all his writings or just about the book of Ecclesiastes? He does not say. Solomon's point was that he truly tried to learn truth and teach it to others.

Read Ecclesiastes 12:10. He wanted words that were "pleasing [right]" (RSV). Does that mean he simply wanted to say what people wanted to hear? That does not make sense, when we think about the kind of words Solomon used in Ecclesiastes. The key is in the rest of verse 10. Solomon tried to use pleasing words that told the truth. Words of truth are pleasing, because Jesus is the Truth (John 14:6), and Jesus is pleasing to those who know and accept Him for themselves.

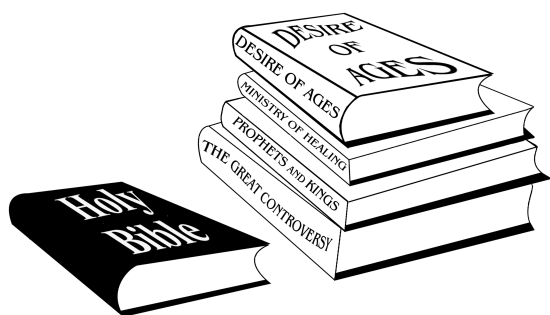
#### **What point is Solomon making in Ecclesiastes 12:11?**

The "goad" (KJV) was probably a pointed stick used to make cattle move. Along with the other image of "nails," Solomon's point seems to be that the words of the wise should (1) move people to act and (2) stay in a

person's memory. Many writers think that the "one shepherd" means God Himself (Psalm 23:1; Jeremiah 31:10; John 10:11-14). The words of the wise come from God. So Solomon is talking about God's leading. Solomon, like other wise men and the prophets, "spake [spoke] as they were moved [led] by the Holy Ghost [Spirit]" (2 Peter 1:21).

### What warning is in Ecclesiastes 12:12?

How interesting that right after talking about God's leading Solomon gives this warning about books. This is really a warning about the wrong kind of learning. How many people study themselves right into eternal<sup>4</sup> ruin? When there is so much information today, how important it is to be careful about the kind of learning we get!



Choose wisely the books you read.

What kinds of "knowledge" are in the world that could lead you away from God? Why must you be careful in the kind of knowledge you get?

<sup>4</sup>eternal—life without end; forever.

## WEDNESDAY—MARCH 28

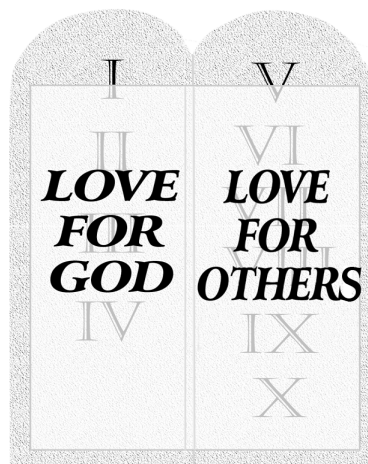
### FAITH, LAW, AND JUDGMENT (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14)

Solomon has gone on for a long time about life, death, and God. Now he ends this book with Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14. Summarize the important message of these two verses.

Solomon's final message in Ecclesiastes, the sum of all that he wrote before, sounds almost the same as the heart of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14.

**Read Revelation 14:6-12. What can you find in Revelation 14:6-12 that is almost the same as Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14?**

Solomon ends by telling us to keep the commandments of God. That is part of the third angel's message (Revelation 14:12).



Solomon talks about judgment. The first angel's message also talks about judgment (Revelation 14:7). Finally, Solomon's call to "fear God" is a way of explaining what it means to have faith in God, and to worship and obey Him. This is all part of the three angels' messages (Revelation 14:7-12). The fear of God and the worship of God are connected. "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear [respect] before him, all the earth" (Psalm 96:9). "Because of your great love I will come into your [God's] house. With deep respect I will bow down toward your holy temple" (Psalm 5:7, NIRV). No wonder the first angel's message also tells us to "fear God."

So the three basic parts in Solomon's closing are important parts of what we understand as present truth. Does this mean that Solomon was thinking of our time when he was inspired to write these verses? Of course not. Instead, these verses show us an important point: From the beginning, God's message of faith in (1) His forgiveness for us, (2) our obedience to His commandments, and (3) His upcoming judgment is nothing new. As Adventists we did not invent them. We have just been given the duty to preach them to the world.

**If you were to explain to someone what it means to fear God and keep His commandments, what would you say?**

## THURSDAY—MARCH 29

### THE END OF THE MATTER (Matthew 16:26)

We have come to the end of our study in Ecclesiastes. What is the meaning of this strange book, which is so different from almost every other book of the Bible? What is the message God has for us here? How do we figure this out?

**Go back over the book of Ecclesiastes. Think about it. Pray over it. Then write out what you would think is the key point of this book. What was God's message to you from Ecclesiastes? What have you taken away that helps you better in your walk with God? Be prepared to read your answer in class on Sabbath.**

It will be interesting to see the different answers. But one point does seem clear: In Ecclesiastes, God warns us against getting too caught up in the world. Sure, He gave us bodies and many physical pleasures. These are His gifts to us. These pleasures have a part to play in our lives. But these pleasures are not the end. In and of themselves, they are all *hebel* (meaningless). As you get older, your ability to enjoy them fades away. The moment you die, they are gone.

So Ecclesiastes is saying to us, think about who you are. Think about

why you are here and how you got here. Most importantly, think about where you are going when this short life is over. God has given us gifts. But these gifts do not last. Nothing in this life lasts.

Ecclesiastes is 12 chapters saying to us what Jesus said in one verse: "What good is it if someone gains the whole world but loses his soul? Or what can anyone trade for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26, NIV). Sadly, what people give for their own soul is always meaningless. How sad, because Jesus' blood has already bought our souls! His death offers all of us a one-way ticket out of all the "madness and folly [foolishness]" we suffer here on earth.

### FRIDAY—MARCH 30

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 113; book 3, p. 405; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 455.

"Human strength is weakness. Human wisdom is foolishness. Our success does not depend on our talents or education, but on our living connection with God. The truth is robbed of its power when preached by people who are trying to show their own learning and ability. Such people show also that they know very little about living their religion, that they are unholy in heart and life and are filled with false pride. They do not learn of Jesus. They cannot present

to others a Savior whom they themselves do not know. Their own hearts are not softened and impressed by the great sacrifice which Christ has made to save dying people."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 158, 159.

"You need not go to the far ends of the earth for wisdom, because God is near. It is not the abilities you now have or ever will have that will give you success. It is that which the Lord can do for you. We need to have far less faith in what people can do and far more faith in what God can do for every believing soul. God wants to have you reach after Him by faith. He wants to have you expect great things from Him. He wants to give you understanding in both worldly and spiritual matters. He can sharpen the mind. He can give wisdom and skill. Put your talents into the work. Ask God for wisdom, and He will give it to you."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 146.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ As a class, go over your answers in Thursday's lesson and discuss your opinions.
- ❷ Have people of different ages get up and talk about aging. What do we learn about life, about God, and about faith as we get older? What lessons can the older ones teach the young?
- ❸ What are the things in your society

that make it so easy to get “hooked” to the world? As a class, how can you help each other avoid these traps?

④ As a church, how well do we help our members see the difference

between what is eternal and what is meaningless? How do we honor wealth, power, fame, and knowledge in ways that can blur the line between what is good and what is bad?

# A Strange Place for Grace

By Jon L. Dybdahl

## Does God have two personalities?

Do Bible stories reveal a hidden personality disorder in the Creator of the universe? Is He "sometimes up, sometimes down," exhibiting a happy-go-lucky forgiving attitude of grace one day, but striking sinners dead the next?

Do Old and New Testament stories fit together to give us a consistent picture of God? Is the God who is worthy of our worship to be found in the Old Testament? You'll find answers here—not pat answers, but ones that Dr. Jon Dybdahl, president of Walla Walla College, has wrestled with for your benefit.

0-8163-2133-7  
Paperback, 144 pages  
US\$12.99

Available at your local  
Adventist Book Center:

**1-800-765-6955**

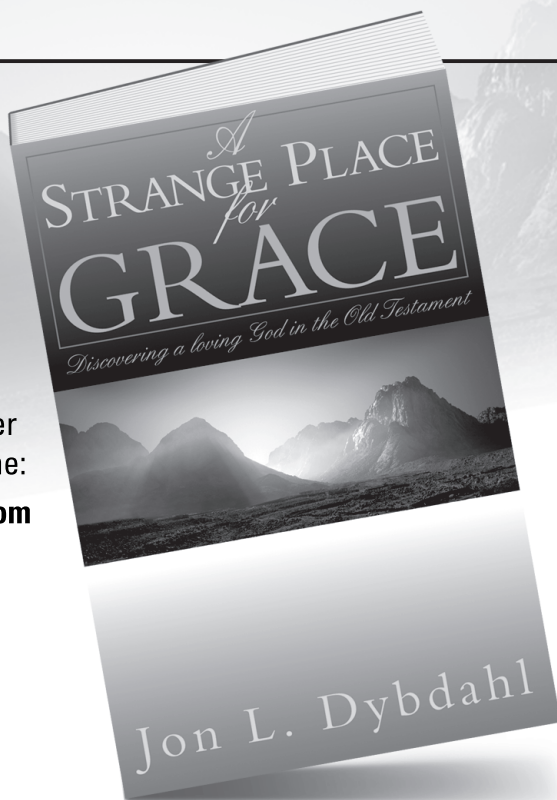
or read a sample chapter  
first and then order online:

**AdventistBookCenter.com**



**Pacific Press®**

Where the Word is Life.





# Searching for the God of Grace

*By Stuart Tyner*

**There's a glorious treasure right under our noses,  
but we can't see it.**

"This is a story about cautionary notes and narrow definitions. About distances that lead to disbelief. About buried treasure."

In *Searching for the God of Grace*, Stuart Tyner unearths the treasure of God's grace. Some who sing "Blessed Assurance" and "Amazing Grace" are afraid to claim the real thing. Don't be among them. Tyner calls you to the joy of knowing that Jesus gave you His free, unconditional pardon. Through the priceless and shining gift of grace, you can share eternity with Him.

0-8163-2152-3

Paperback

US\$17.99

Available at your local  
Adventist Book Center:

**1-800-765-6955**

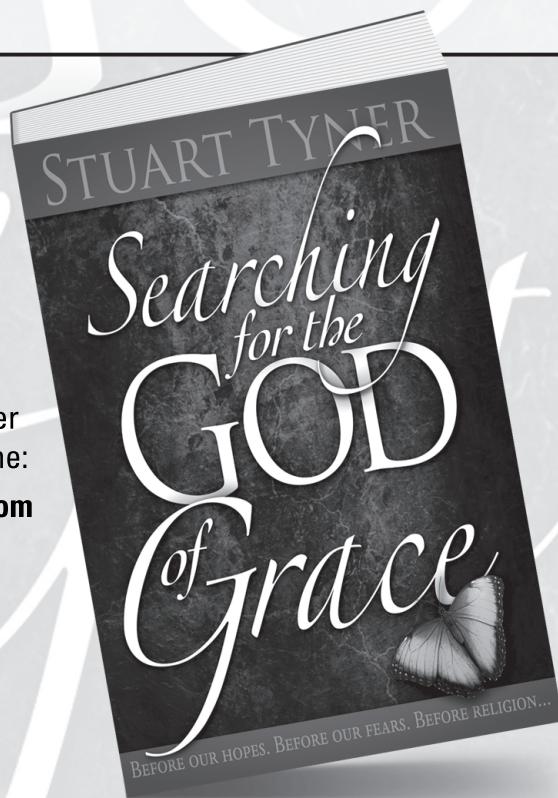
or read a sample chapter  
first and then order online:

**AdventistBookCenter.com**



**Pacific Press®**

Where the Word is Life.



# Messiah

By Jerry D. Thomas

Perhaps the greatest narrative on the life of Jesus is Ellen White's *The Desire of Ages*. *Messiah* is a contemporary adaptation of this classic. Writing in the language of our times, Jerry D. Thomas gives a new generation a fresh look at the Savior.

**Available in a variety of sizes and covers:**

Paperback, African-American cover, 0-8163-2002-0, US\$8.99

Paperback, Caucasian cover, 0-8163-1978-2, US\$8.99

Hardcover, 0-8163-1845-X, US\$19.99

**NEW! Pocket Edition (3 1/2" x 5")** *Share Jesus Anytime,  
Anywhere!*

ISBN 10: 0-8163-2132-9

ISBN 13: 978-0-8163-2132-2

US\$5.99

Available at your local  
Adventist Book Center:

**1-800-765-6955**

or read a sample chapter  
first and then order online:

**AdventistBookCenter.com**



**Pacific Press®**

Where the Word is Life.



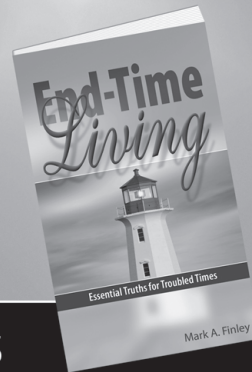
# End-Time *Living*

Sharing  
Book  
2007

Mark A. Finley



US\$1.99  
10 for US\$14.90  
Paperback, 128 pages  
ISBN 13: 978-0-8163-2174-2  
ISBN 10: 0-8163-2174-4



## Essential Truths for Troubled Times

### Have you sent an email to a friend lately?

It's never been easier to share a joke, a song, a picture, or an opinion. So why is it so hard to share your faith? It's not, really.

*End-Time Living* by Mark Finley makes it easy to share essential truths for our troubled times. It's a positive book filled with memorable stories and sound doctrine.

Pastor Finley shares prophecy's big picture, hope, prayer, how to heal from past hurts, and more. Get one for yourself and several for family, friends, and neighbors. Jesus longs for all of us to live abundant and happy lives . . . now and forever.

To order, call your ABC:

**1-800-765-6955**

or order online:

**AdventistBookCenter.com**



Pacific Press®