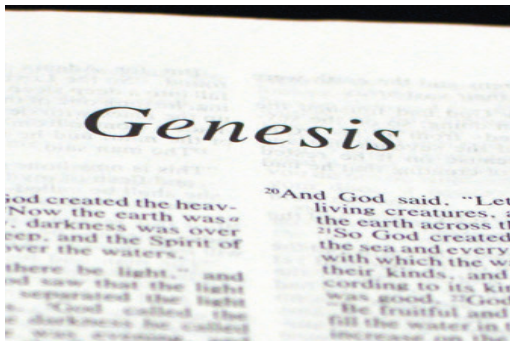


# Read through the Bible in 2010: Week 22



## FRIDAY May 28

**Eccl. 1:1-11; 2:12-16; 3:18-22; 6:10-12; 8:16-17; 9:1-11, 12**

Solomon's most valuable wisdom is found in Ecclesiastes. Here he tackles the age old question, "What is the meaning of life?"

I tend to be positive when answering such a question. Solomon, however, takes a different approach entirely. In Eccl. 1:1, he begins his assessment of life's meaning with the words "Meaningless! ... Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."

Solomon did not find fulfillment through his status as king of Israel, in intimate relations with 1,000 women or through his immense wealth. He had everything, yet still he declares it all "utterly meaningless!" Despite Solomon's discovery thousands of years ago, we still seek fulfillment in all the wrong areas to this day.

Make a list of areas in which you hope to find fulfillment. Are any of these areas fulfilling? Why or why not?

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## SAT./SUN. May 29/30

**Eccl. 1:12-2:11, 17-26; 4:1-6:9; 7:1-8:15; 9:13-18; 10:1-11:6; 12:9-12**

Ecclesiastes reveals Solomon's wisdom as he discerns the meaning of life. He explores pleasure, wealth and labor among many other pursuits, concluding that they all are meaningless. Nevertheless, men foolishly continue "in search of many schemes" (Eccl. 7:29).

As you read, you may find his words discouraging. However, know that if you take to heart what Solomon says in this book, you should be motivated to reprioritize your life. You should no longer seek fulfillment and meaning where it cannot be found. Instead, you will be led to discover that your purpose comes from God.

Take a second to evaluate yourself on the lines below. On what is your money being spent? About what do you dream? Are you pursuing a meaningless scheme?

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## MONDAY May 31

**Eccl. 3:1-17; 11:7-12:8; 12:13-14; 1 Kings 11:41-43; 2 Chron. 9:29-31**

Over the past few days, we have read Solomon's wisdom concerning the meaning of life. Understand first and foremost that Solomon declares the human pursuit of meaningless schemes to be utterly foolish. Hopefully, you applied this to your life by examining yourself to uncover any meaningless schemes that you currently are pursuing.

Today's reading was like a breath of fresh air, as Solomon declares that life does in fact have meaning. Solomon wisely advises his readers to "fear God and keep his commandments," which is "the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13). It is in this that life has its meaning; in this pursuit man discovers his purpose. Do you agree with Solomon's conclusion? Why or why not?

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## TUESDAY June 1

**1 Kings 12:1-13:32; 2 Chron. 10:1-11:4; 11:13-17**

After Solomon died, the nation was to pass to his son, Rehoboam, but it was not that simple. Most of Israel's tribes had been unhappy, so upon Solomon's death, they came together to negotiate terms with this new regime. In 1 Kings 12:12-15, Rehoboam gives a harsh response to these tribal concerns, providing all the spark necessary for a rebellion to ensue. As a result, the nation turned into a divided kingdom: Rehoboam controlled "Judah" to the south, and Jeroboam controlled "Israel" to the north.

The discontent between the northern and southern tribes had existed for quite some time. However, had Rehoboam taken the advice given by the elders in 1 Kings 12:6-7, it is very possible that it would have kept the nation from dividing. Instead, Rehoboam took the ill-advised approach of his peers, which resulted in rebellion.

In our own lives, we also may follow poor advice or take shortcuts. Learn from Rehoboam's poor response so you can avoid oncoming turmoil instead of falling prey to it.

## WEDNESDAY June 2

**1 Kings 13:33-34; 14:1-18, 21-31; 15:1-8a; 2 Chron. 11:5-12, 18-23; 12:1-16; 13:1-20a, 21-22; 14:1a**

Have you ever been mistreated by an individual or an organization? Maybe your employer didn't pay you what you were worth, or perhaps your church did something that offended you. Whatever it was, you were wronged, and you responded. However, sometimes our responses turn foolish.

Though Rehoboam's harsh retort to the tribe's concerns is essentially what instigated the division of the kingdoms, it is the rebelling tribes that eventually fell into ungodliness. With no access to the temple in Jerusalem, the Northern Kingdom established alternate religious avenues. Eventually their king, Jeroboam, even built altars to pagan gods and established priests to operate these "high places." This led the Northern Kingdom into wickedness.

Sometimes when we respond to injustice, we turn too far—as did the Northern Kingdom. Our church offends us, so we quit attending church altogether. A friend forgets us, so we go behind his back and ruin his name. Though it's understandable that we will respond to the injustices we face, that does not make it appropriate to abandon our convictions and beliefs in the process.

## THURSDAY June 3

**1 Kings 14:19-20; 15:8b-16:34; 21:25-26; 22:41-44, 46-47; 2 Chron. 13:20b; 14:1-18:1; 20:31-33**

Below is today's commentary from *The Daily Bible* by F. LaGard Smith. It is an excellent introduction that I would like to share:

"... almost a quarter of a century has passed since the once-powerful nation of Israel divided into two Kingdoms .... Judah, blessed with two good leaders in Asa and his son, Jehoshaphat, will remain largely faithful to God. Both men will bring about reforms in Judah and reinstate appreciation for the law.

In Israel, by contrast, none of the next seven kings will bring moral enlightenment to an idolatrous nation, and civil war will continue to divide God's people. It is a sober reminder that God's people will, through the ages, face division and strife when they forsake their God.

Are you aware of any divisions among God's people today? Why do you think these divisions occur?

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