

The Book of Ecclesiastes

When Guy Montag meets Granger, he is introduced to a community in which each member is dedicated to learning a book by heart. Their purpose is to commit whole texts to memory and pass them down to future generations, surviving the "Dark Age" of atomic war and [self-imposed] censorship. Montag chooses the book of *Ecclesiastes*, a text from the biblical Old Testament, probably written about the third century BC.

Narrated by the "Teacher" who is traditionally considered to be King Solomon, *Ecclesiastes* is a...collection of advice on matters including good and evil, temptation and vice, love and hate, vanity, and wisdom... *Ecclesiastes* is an essential part of...early Jewish philosophy...*Ecclesiastes* offers... guidance about the nature of the world.

Here are some passages:

there is "a time to rend and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love and a time to hate" (3:7-8)

Chapter 1 v17 "I wanted to learn all that I could learn about wisdom. I also wanted to know how a fool thinks. But this, too, was like somebody who tries to catch the wind."

Chapter 12 v11 "A farmer uses a stick when he wants his animals to move. Proverbs are like the stick that the farmer uses. Proverbs come from God. He is like a guide because he shows us the way to live. He uses proverbs to do that."

Chapter 12 v14 "We may do good things. Sometimes we do wrong things. We think that nobody sees us. But God sees the things that we do. And he will ask us to explain the answer to this question: 'What have we done with our lives here on the earth?'"

Ecclesiastes does not provide any easy answers. Ultimately, this very short book is an endorsement of concrete human experience...The Teacher asserts that one should experience life as fully as possible...

The use of...concrete imagery is a call to experience all one can while learning that the difference between good and evil is not to be fully [understood] by mere mortals. The prominent themes of wisdom and mercy in *Ecclesiastes* make the book a fitting choice for Montag to learn. [*Ecclesiastes*] is...in a sense, a book to stand for all books, which in their entirety give a loud chorus of voices, the voices that the firemen in *Fahrenheit 451* wanted to extinguish in the first place.