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## Name, Author and Date

### A. The Name of the Book

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The name engraved on this book is Ecclesiastes. This word is a Greek translation of the Hebrew word, *Qoheleth*. The word, *Qoheleth*, is a present participle and is related to the Hebrew noun, *qahal*. The latter word means “assembly”, especially the assembly of the people of Israel. It seems, then, that the word *Qoheleth* refers to someone who has something to do with the assembly of the people. From a further analysis of the form of this word, we may conclude that *Qoheleth* indicates someone who has a specific function at such an assembly.

This could be one of two functions. Either *Qoheleth* denotes the person who convenes the assembly and leads it, or it refers to the speaker at such an assembly. The book of Ecclesiastes suggests that the latter meaning is the correct one (cf. 12:9,10, where the image of a wise teacher is presented). Moreover, the entire book has a teaching character. Thus we may conclude that *Qoheleth* indicates a “teacher of wisdom”. It is, therefore, regrettable that the word is translated in the RSV as “Preacher”<sup>1</sup>, for *Qoheleth* is not exactly a preacher. The word is more accurately translated in the NIV as “Teacher” and that is what we will continue to use.

The Teacher is the man who calls the people (i.e. God’s people, the church) together, and, according to God’s command, brings the Word to that gathered church or covenant community. (See also 12:9-11 about the Teacher.)

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<sup>1</sup> The problem is the same in the Dutch language, which uses the word “Prediker” i.e. “Preacher”

3. Skepticism is a philosophical trend which states that man can never know anything for certain, especially not things pertaining to matters of faith. Can you explain why the book of Ecclesiastes has been called the “Handbook of Skepticism”?
4. Is doubt (for example, about God’s existence, the trust-worthiness of the Bible, your own election or salvation) normal or not? Some think that doubt is a necessary element in the spiritual growth of man, especially in young people. What do you think about this?
5. This question continues along the same line as the previous one: is doubt a sickness or a sin? How can we help people who are in doubt? How can we, especially in the church, help ourselves and each other?
6. An unbeliever sometimes says that he approaches the Bible without bias: he wants to see with his own eyes and decide for himself what the Bible is. What do you think about this? Is it possible to approach the Bible without bias? See also part B of the following outline.
7. Where, and in what context, does the Bible speak of the dragon, which stands over against the (pregnant) woman, in order to kill her child?
8. What does it mean that the church is a stranger on this earth?