

BIBLE SYNTHESIS III (Bible Survey)

Introduction to Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes is written from the point of view of “man under the sun.” It presents the purely human view of life. This view holds no place for God, revelation, or resurrection (future life). The one who leave God out of his life, ignores His word, denies the soul, follows the completely materialistic approach, and if he is completely honest and thoughtful, must face the reasoning of Ecclesiastes at some time in his life.

Many passages in Ecclesiastes clearly contradict that which the rest of the Bible teaches, unless the reader understands that this is reasoning about life as man sees it, *apart from revelation from God*. However, we must be assured that this book is no less inspired by God (God-breathed) than any other book of the Bible. God gave us this book. He has preserved it for us, along with the other books of the Bible, “for our admonition.”

Jesus is the beginning of all in Proverbs. He is the end of all in Ecclesiastes. Wisdom in Proverbs is piety (faith). Wisdom in Ecclesiastes is prudence and sagacity. Ecclesiastes is the soul’s biography, or the book of experience. “Vanity” is the key word. See Ecclesiastes 2:11.

—*Selected*

1. Name of the Book:

The name “Ecclesiastes” means “the preacher” — This is in the Greek.

The name in the Hebrew is *Kohleth*, “one who assembles.” This has been taken to mean either (1) “one who collects” wise sayings (see 12:9-10), or (2) “one who addresses an assembly,” that is, a preacher.

2. Author:

The author is Solomon, although this is a minority view. However, Fundamentalists accept the Solomon authorship because of the following:

- 1:1 — The title
- 1:16 — His wisdom
- 2:3 — His pleasures
- 2:4-6 — His building activities
- 2:7 — His servants
- 2:8 — His wealth

3. Date:

It is thought by some that Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes when he was backslidden. Some think that this took place during the latter years of his life.

Yet, did he ever get right again? The concluding verses of Ecclesiastes seem to indicate that he did.

4. Theme of Ecclesiastes:

“Man’s reasoning” — Scofield

“Man under the sun” — apart from God, life is full of weariness and disappointment. It is vanity.

5. Key Terms:

“Under the sun” — 29 times

“Vanity” — 37 times

“Upon the earth” — 7 times

6. Key Passages:

(1) Ecclesiastes 6:12 — This is typical of the theme.

(2) Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 — This is the conclusion of the matter.

7. Features:

(1) Passages which are at variance with the rest of the Bible: 1:15; 2:24; 3:3, 4, 8, 11, 19, 20; 8:15.

(2) The LORD (Jehovah), God’s covenant name, is not used in the book. Only God (Elohim) is used. This speaks of God as Creator.

(3) The book of Ecclesiastes begins and ends with the *Law*: 1:3 and 12:13.

(4) Dr. A. T. Pierson well said, “The key to Ecclesiastes is that a man is too big for this world.”

We find in this book that we can never find satisfaction and happiness in this world. True happiness apart from Christ is impossible. We find dissatisfaction among the poor and rich alike, among the ignorant and learned, among people and kings.

—*Selected*

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Outline of Ecclesiastes

First, a Suggestive Summary:

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|---|----------------------|
| 1. Confession | —Eccl. 1 — 7 |
| (1) Try Wisdom! | —Eccl. 1 |
| (2) Try Pleasure! | —Eccl. 2 |
| (3) Try Architecture! | —Eccl. 2:4 |
| (4) Try Gardening! | —Eccl. 2:5-6 |
| (5) Try Cattle Breeding and Art Collecting! | —Eccl. 2:7-8 |
| (6) Try Just Living the Weary Round of Life
— With Discretion! | —Eccl. 3 |
| (7) Try the Stoic's Philosophy! | —Eccl. 4 |
| (8) Try Ritualism — Formal Religion! | —Eccl. 5 |
| (9) Try Wealth! | —Eccl. 6 |
| (10) Try Reputation! | —Eccl. 7 |
| 2. Admonition | —Eccl. 8 — 12 |
| (1) Look Up! | —Eccl. 8 — 10 |
| (2) Remember Thy Creator in Youth | —Eccl. 11 — 12 |

Outline

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|---|----------------------|
| 1. Problem Stated: "All is Vanity" | — 1:1-3 |
| 2. Experiment Made | — 1:4 — 12:12 |
| • Seeking satisfaction in the following: | |
| (1) Science | — 1:4-11 |
| (2) Wisdom and Philosophy | — 1:12-18 |
| (3) Pleasure | — 2:1-11 |
| (4) Materialism (Living for the "now") | — 2:12-26 |
| (5) Fatalism | — 3:1-15 |

- (6) Egoism — 3:16 — 4:16
- (7) Religion — 5:1-8
- (8) Wealth — 5:9 — 6:12
- (9) Morality — 7:1 — 12:12

3. Result of Experiment — 12:13-14

- All things under the sun are vanity.
- A right relationship with God, in any age, through the way He has made, brings the only abiding satisfaction.
- *What a difference between the man “under the sun” and the man “in Christ” seated in the heavenlies far above all suns!*

—Dr. J. Vernon McGee