

Cover to Cover: From Genesis to Maps
Sermon # 21 – “Ecclesiastes”
October 28, 2007

If Psalms is a worship manual (hymnal), and if Proverbs is a teacher’s manual (textbook), then Ecclesiastes is a diary.

This is the diary of Solomon. It’s his autobiography. 1:1, 16; 12:9-10

The book’s title comes from its opening verse (i.e., “the Teacher” = preacher, assembler, leader of the assembly.) Ecclesiastes is closely related to “Ekklesia”, the Greek word for assembly or church.

Ecclesiastes is one of 3 books written by Solomon. They are not placed in chronological order in the Bible.

- Song of Solomon was written in his early years, expressing a young man’s love.
- Proverbs was written in his mature years, expressing a middle aged man’s wisdom.
- Ecclesiastes was written in his declining years, expressing an old man’s sorrow.

The sorrow, cynicism & regret that we find this book are not what we expected. How did it happen? Solomon knew & taught truths that he did not apply to his own life.

The Book of Ecclesiastes is the result of one man’s pilgrimage, a highly philosophical quest for meaning in life. The words in this book can be somewhat disappointing and depressing, but God put it in the Bible for a reason: That we might learn from it.

Outline of Ecclesiastes

1. Solomon’s Honest Confessions. Chapters 1-3.

- Solomon’s basic view of life (Chapter 1):
 - Unfulfilling. 1:1-8
 - Unexciting. 1:9-10
 - Unfair. 1:11-13
- Solomon’s personal experimentation with life (Chapters 1-2):
 - Wisdom. 1:17, 18

- Wit. 2:2
- Wine. 2:3
- Work projects. 2:4-6
- Wealth. 2:7-8a.
- Women (and music). 2:8
- Worldly recognition. 2:9
- Worldly pleasures. 2:10

Solomon's assessment of all he had tried—2:11

- Solomon's philosophical reflections on life (Chapter 3):
 - He shows sparks of eloquence and spiritual insight. 3:1-8, 11, 14
 - He implies a fatalistic view of life. 3:9
 - He has acquired a low view of man. 3:18-20
 - He seems to toy with agnosticism. 3:21

2. Solomon's Hard Conclusions. Chapters 4-10

- Solomon has looked beyond his own life, and seen dissatisfaction and unhappiness everywhere—oppression (4:1); toil (4:2); friendlessness (4:8); futility of wealth (5:10-11; 6:1-6); and the inequities of life (7:15).
- Solomon's summation of all he had observed—9:1-3

3. Solomon's Helpful Counsel. Chapters 11-12

4 simple truths we can glean from Solomon's pilgrimage: If you're going to get the most out of life, you must learn that...

- Life is to be shared. 11:1
- Life is to be enjoyed. 11:7-8a.
- Life will be judged. 11:9
- Life should be valued. 12:1