

## Books of the Bible – Old Testament

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Week 15 – Ecclesiastes



## Ecclesiastes

- This is the most negative book in the whole Bible
  - There is much pessimism and delusion
- Some theologians say that this book doesn't belong in the Bible
  - It doesn't glorify God
  - It doesn't teach of how to live for God.
- It speaks from the viewpoint of “under the sun;” in other words, without God's revelation and understanding
  - Without God, there is no purpose, or hope in life



## Ecclesiastes

- In the Jewish Tenach (Old Testament) the name of this book is “Cohélet”
  - This is a derivative of the word “Qahal,” which means to convoke an assembly
- “Cohélet” means “he who is charged with the responsibility of convoking the assembly and directing the meeting”
- The word Ecclesiastes is the Greek translation of the title
  - This is derived from the word “ekklēsia,” which means “assembly”
  - The title means “the public speaker, preacher, or moralist teacher”



## Author & Date

- The common understanding, since the time of Martin Luther, is that King Solomon wrote this book.
  - The name of the author isn't included in the book.
  - Jewish tradition doesn't give a definitive answer, although some say that Hezekiah wrote it.
- “The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem” – 1:1
  - However, the term “son of David” can (and is) equally applied to all the kings of Judah



## The Fall of King Solomon

*Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?*

- 1 Kings 3:9



## The Fall of King Solomon

- The focus of King Solomon's life was in the gaining of wisdom
- He said: “*The fear (reverence) of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*” – Pro 1:7
- He also said: “*Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding*” – Pro 4:7
- However, King Solomon never had the intimate relationship with God that his father, King David, did



## The Fall of King Solomon

*But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites;<sup>2</sup> Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon cleaved unto these in love.*

- 1 Kings 11:1-2



## The Fall of King Solomon

*And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.<sup>4</sup> For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.*

- 1 Kings 11:3-4



## The Fall of King Solomon

*For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.<sup>6</sup> And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father.*

- 1 Kings 11:5-6



## The Fall of King Solomon

- According to the common understanding, this book was written by King Solomon at the end of his life, after repenting for his sin.
  - Once again, there is nothing written in the Bible that supports this understanding, or even that he repented and turned back to God at the end of his life.
  - Even if he didn't repent, this book is still worthwhile, because it shows the musings of someone who was disillusioned by their sin. Had King Solomon not repented, he would have written it in that state.



## The Influence of a Woman

- Even though King Solomon was the wisest man in the history of the world, his wives influenced him to serve other gods.
- In the New Testament, every place where it speaks of the marriage relationship, it speaks to the woman first.
- God created the woman to be a "helpmeet"
  - Literally this means "one who surrounds to support"



## The Influence of a Woman

*Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;<sup>2</sup> While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.*

- 1 Peter 3:1-2



## The Influence of a Woman

*And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.*

- Genesis 3:6



## Purpose & Interpretation

- There have been various purposes and/or interpretations that have been offered for the existence of this book in the Bible:
  - This book reflects the pessimism of a man who has not maintained good communion with God
  - This book is an attempt to combine the traditional Jewish religion with the pessimism of the time of Cohelet
    - This pessimism would have come from the Greek influence
    - However, this theory requires that the book of Ecclesiastes was written several centuries after the time of King Solomon



## Purpose & Interpretation

- There have been various purposes and/or interpretations that have been offered for the existence of this book in the Bible:
  - This book reflects the understanding of a believer who is trying to find meaning for life in the framework of the limited revelation that he has.
  - God's objective in the writing of Ecclesiastes is to create an apologetic thesis, as part of the preparation for forming the New Covenant
    - It speaks clearly about the "secular" man of today
    - If we look at it in this way, it can become a tool for evangelism
    - The book ends with the theme "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"



## God in Ecclesiastes

- Jesus:
  - Shows us His viewpoint on materialism
  - Shows us his viewpoint on obedience
- Holy Spirit:
  - There are various places in the book that "the spirit" is mentioned. Because this book is written from a "secular" viewpoint, when it speaks of "the spirit" it is referring to the force which gives us life
- Father God:
  - At the end, this book shows the need for an ongoing relationship with God the Father



## The Wisdom of Ecclesiastes

- This book speaks more than anything of human wisdom, and its lack of true value.
- There are many sayings and proverbs that have been adopted by the church.



## Themes in Ecclesiastes

- Vanity (something done without reason or value):
  - Of life
    - Whatever activity we find to do in life doesn't satisfy us
    - There is nothing new under the sun
  - Of knowledge
    - He was a man of much wisdom (1:16)
    - All understanding and wisdom do is cause more worries (1:18)
  - Of pleasure
    - Had tried all types of pleasures, without being satisfied (2:10-11)
    - Had completed great projects without being satisfied



## Themes in Ecclesiastes

- Vanity
  - Of wisdom
    - Even though wisdom is greater than fame, the wise have the same ending as the fool (death)
  - Of work
    - Everything one gains by dint of hard work is consumed in just maintaining their life
    - Work causes pain and sadness (2:23)



## Themes in Ecclesiastes

- Opportunities in life:
  - There is time for everything (3:1-8)
    - God has control of everything in our lives
    - Everything is predestined
  - Oppression (3:18 - 4:8)
  - Coming together in agreement brings strength (4:9-12)
  - Wisdom doesn't come through time (4:13-16)
    - Those who have wisdom, also have influence



## Themes in Ecclesiastes

- The futility of being self-absorbed
  - Responsibility towards God (5:1-7):
    - Not giving only a pittance, or bribe to God
    - Listen to Him, instead of always talking to Him
    - Don't make rash promises
    - Complete those promises that you make to God
  - Riches don't have any lasting value
    - Rich people are never satisfied with what they have (5:10)
    - Riches often damage the character of the person who has them
  - Our destiny is already determined



## Themes in Ecclesiastes

- Wisdom:
  - What is best (comparisons) (7:1-14)
  - Avoiding extremes (7:15-24)
  - Wisdom in the king's court (8:2-5)
    - Obedience
  - Inequality in life (8:9-9:1)
    - They are vanity, but they are part of life



## Themes in Ecclesiastes

- Death, everyone's destination
  - We all will die
  - The just have hope in death, while the sinner has none
  - Do what you can while you are here, because there won't be a chance to do it after death
  - Those who win aren't always those who deserve to win. Without God, everything is determined by "luck" or "chance." But, with God, there is hope.
  - Wisdom helps us in this life

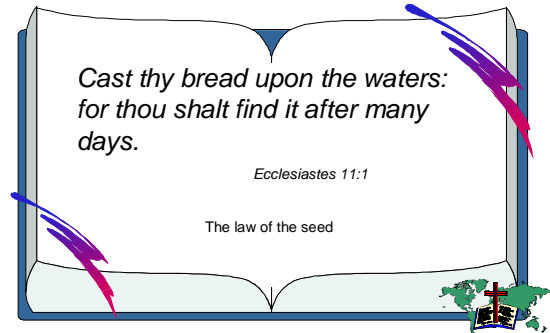


## Themes in Ecclesiastes

*Cast thy bread upon the waters:  
for thou shalt find it after many  
days.*

*Ecclesiastes 11:1*

The law of the seed



## Themes in Ecclesiastes

- The law of the seed
  - What we give to others, to help them, is the seed that we sow in this life
  - We need to plant seed, because we never know which seed will bring us the harvest we need
- Live in reverence to God, all the days of your life



## Themes in Ecclesiastes

*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them*

- Ecclesiastes 12:1

