

ECCLESIASTES – INTRODUCTION

I. TITLE AND AUTHORSHIP OF THE BOOK

- A. The Hebrew word, “Koheleth” literally means “speaker in an assembly.”
 - 1. It is translated “the preacher” (1:1)
 - 2. “Ecclesiastes” is taken from the Greek-version of the Old Testament which is equivalent to “preacher.”
- B. King Solomon is indicated as the author.
 - 1. “The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem” (1:1-2; Samuel 12:24).
 - 2. “... was King over Israel in Jerusalem (1:12; I Kings 4:1, 8:1)
 - 3. “I have gotten me great wisdom above all that were before me in Jerusalem” (1:16; I Kings 3:10-12, 10:7).
 - 4. “I was great, and increased more than all were before me in Jerusalem (2:9; I Kings 2:12, 10:7).
 - 5. “...set in order many proverbs” (12:9; I Kings 4:32, Proverbs 1:1)
- C. Date for the writing of the Book: towards the close of Solomon’s life – 935 B.C.

II. THE THEME OF THE BOOK

- A. All that is in the world is vanity.
 - 1. Some 33 references are made to “vanity” in the Book (cf.1:2, 11:10, etc.)
 - 2. The word is from the Hebrew word, “*Hebel*” which points to “*something transitory, and unsatisfactory,*” therefore “*empty.*”
 - 3. The world under the sun provides unending monotony (cf. 1:8-10).
- B. Solomon explored every avenue of earthly life and was given wisdom to observe the truth about what life apart from God gives.
 - 1. “vanity and a striving after wind” (2:17).

III. PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

- A. To show that all earthly pursuits as the chief aim in life will not bring happiness.
 - 1. Various “vanities:”
 - (a). The vanity of human wisdom – wise and fool die alike (2:15-16)
 - (b). The vanity of human purpose – man proposes but God disposes (2:26)
 - (c). The vanity of human fame – brief, uncertain and soon forgotten (4:16)
 - 2. Solution: fear God and keep his commandments – the whole of man (12:13).
 - 3. To enjoy the fruits of our labor is the portion God gives us under the sun – Intermediate conclusion offered seven times (2:10, 24, 3:12-13, 22, 5:18; 8:15; 9:7-9).

IV. OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

- A. The vanities of life (chapters 1-4)
 - 1. As experienced by Solomon (chapters 1-2)
 - 2. As observed by Solomon (chapters 3-4)
- B. Miscellaneous proverbs (chapters 5-10)
- C. Solomon’s answer to the purpose of life (chapters 11-12)