
Vanity of vanities says, the Preacher vanity of vanities! All is vanity. What does a man gain by all the toil at which he toils under sun. (Eccl 1:1-2)

I. The Man Who Could Not Be Satisfied

- a. In *Ecclesiastes* we find a guy faced with the monotony of life who tried to find meaning in all things, and in the end he concludes that everything is meaningless.
- b. Solomon is believed to be the author of *Ecclesiastes* although his name is not mentioned.
 1. He called himself the "son of David" and king of Jerusalem.
 2. Solomon began as a humble servant of God, seeking His wisdom and help. (1 Kings 3:5-15)
 3. As he grew older, his heart turned to the false gods of his many wives from foreign lands. (1 King 11:1-3)
 4. Solomon did many things that brought glory to Israel and to himself, but not to God. (1 Kings 10)
- c. *Ecclesiastes* is in essence an autobiography. Solomon possessed the wealth, wisdom, and opportunities to investigate the meaning of life. (vv.17-18)
- d. Solomon wrote *Proverbs* as a wise teacher; and *Song of Solomon* from the viewpoint of a royal lover; but when he wrote *Ecclesiastes*, he called himself the "Preacher (*koheleth*)."
 1. The Hebrew word *koheleth* is the title given to an official speaker who calls an assembly. The Greek word for "assembly" is *ekklesia*. This gives us the English title of the book, *Ecclesiastes*.
 2. The *koheleth* would debate by presenting an idea and discuss it aloud among the people.

II. The Purpose of *Ecclesiastes* Defined in the Meaning of Words

- a. We can learn how to live by learning from another's mistakes. This is the inspiration of *Ecclesiastes*. The Word of God is God's inspired revelation to His people for daily living.
- b. "Vanity" is used thirty-eight times in the book. It is the Hebrew word *hevel* meaning emptiness, futility vapor. Whatever is left after you break a soap bubble is *hevel*. Whatever disappears quickly, leaves nothing behind, and does not satisfy is *hevel* (vanity).
- c. "Under the sun" is mentioned twenty-nine times. It is the outlook of Solomon as he looked at life from a human perspective and not from heaven's point of view. Solomon wrote under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but examined life "under the sun." The reader must keep this in mind.
- d. "Profit" (*yitron*) used ten times. It basically means "that which is left over", surplus or gain. The word "profit" is the opposite of vanity.
- e. "Labor" (*amal*) there are at least 11 different Hebrew words for labor. *Amal* is used twenty-three times and it means "to toil to the point of exhaustion with little or no fulfillment in your work."
- f. "God" is mentioned by Solomon forty times and always uses *Elohim*, Mighty God, the glorious of creation who has sovereign power.
 1. He does not use the term Jehovah, (the *Lord* in English), who is the God of the covenant, the God of revelation who is eternally self-existent, yet reveals Himself to sinful man.
 2. *Ecclesiastes* is framed within the context of what Solomon sees "under the sun", therefore he uses *Elohim*.

III. Thoughts and Considerations for Action

- a. What is the application of this book today? Solomon saw injustice acts toward the poor; crooked politics; incompetent leaders, the corrupt committing more crime; materialism; and "a desire for the good old days."

Gospel Talk Bible Study
Ecclesiastes: "Learning to Live for Christ"
Ecclesiastes 1:1-17

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- b. If you have never trusted Christ, *Ecclesiastes* urges you to do so without delay.
 - 1. The first message of *Ecclesiastes* is to turn from the futility of sin and the world, and put your faith in faith Christ (John 3:16; Eph 2:8-10). If you do not know Christ all your work in this world will perish and you along with it.
 - 2. If you believe in Christ, but are not serving Him, Solomon asks you, "Are you living for God or things of the world?" Remember Solomon knew God, and he was greatly blessed, yet he turned from God.
 - 3. *Ecclesiastes* contains a message for the faithful believer who seeks to serve God in a difficult world. Solomon says, "Don't pretend problems don't exist and don't expect to solve every problem." The important thing is to obey God's will and enjoy all that He gives you.
- c. Solomon learned "the hard way" that there is no lasting satisfaction in possessions, pleasure, power or prestige. He had it all, yet his life was empty. We do not have to learn "the hard way."
- d. Whenever we begin to look at life from the wrong perspective, "under the sun" and not "above the sun", we will start majoring on things below. (v.15) (Colossians 3)
- e. Perhaps Solomon, should have trust in his own words of revelation from God found in Proverbs 3:5-6.
- f. What will life be for you, vanity or victory?