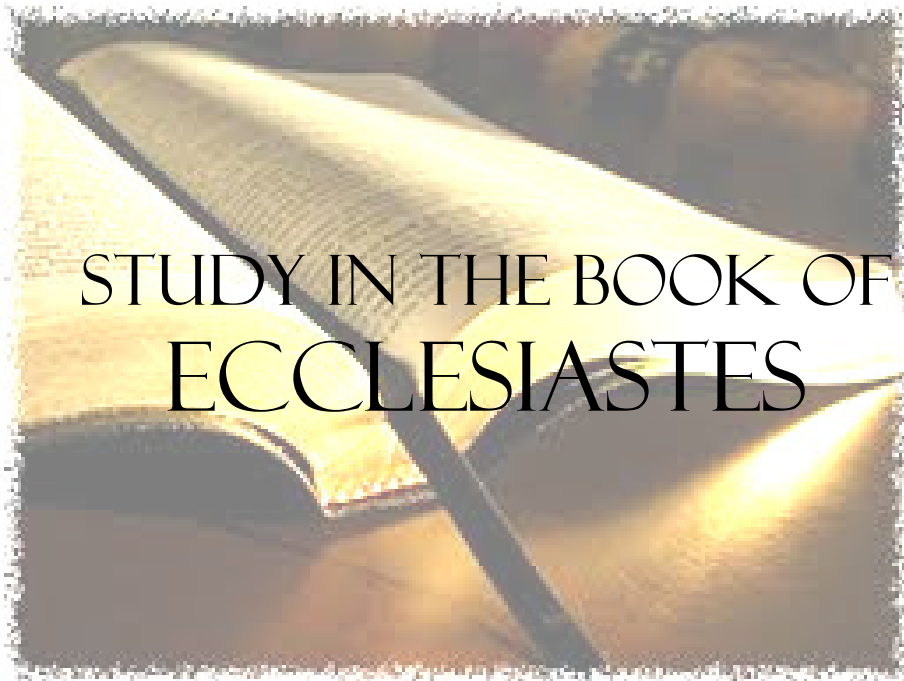


Footprints



CHRISTIAN RESOURCES



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Footprints into Africa

ECCLESIASTES

STUDY 1

INTRODUCTION - THE AUTHOR, THE MOTTO, AND A SURVEY OF THE SCENE

Chapter 1:1-11)

1. INTRODUCTION

The voice of the Old Testament has many different accents, from the impassioned preaching of the prophets to the cool reflective comments of the wise. There is poetry, law and story telling but there is nothing in the Old Testament like Qoheleth called Ecclesiastes.

A. IMPORTANCE.

This book was written over 3000 years ago and as **Romans 3:15** says “**It and was written for our learning.**” The main message for this book is “**A life that is worth living**’ It is the story and testimony of Solomon and his search for meaning until he found the Lord. This book is therefore of great importance today

B. KEY

It is not an easy book to understand and therefore one must always remember the key

i) The Natural Man.

At times Solomon will speak through the eyes of the unconverted, without light of salvation. The natural man looks at life and all he says is: ‘**meaningless, meaningless.**’

ii) The Spiritual Man

This is the man who looks at life from a totally different perspective. He sees God as Creator and as Sovereign and as wise. He realizes that anything without God is in vain but that God is worthwhile.

C. STRUCTURE

This book has a very simple structure, there is the introduction, the body and the conclusion. In **Chapter 1:1-11** we find the introduction. From **1:12-12:7** of the book consisting of four sermons, and then in **12:8-14** we have our conclusion.

D. TITLE

Ecclesiastes is a very strange title and it comes from v.1 ‘**The words of the preacher.**’

2. THE AUTHOR

A. THE TEACHER

He is able to teach us because he looks back over his life and tells us of his search for God and then he turns to his present stage and explains how he came to know God:

- i) The Penitent Soul
- ii) The Preaching Soul

B. SON OF DAVID

Solomon always took it with great honour that he had a father who was a great King. He mentions this because he regretted having disobeyed him.

C. KING OF JERUSALEM

He calls himself the king, because he had taken over from his father.

3. THE MOTTO

‘Meaningless, meaningless.’ As Solomon surveys life, he comes to this conclusion that everything is a waste of time, that all is pointless and once again, he emphasizes that anything without God is meaningless. This is mentioned something like 30 times in the book.

4. A SURVEY OF THE SCENE

In these verses, Solomon will clarify what he has just said. In **v.3** he asks: **‘What is the purpose of man’s work?’** In **v.6-7** he says that everything carries on as normal. **‘The streams fall into the sea but the sea never gets full.’** So he says in **v.8** **‘All things are wearisome.’** But not only that says Solomon, but **‘There is nothing new under the sun.’**

CONCLUSION

This is how Solomon saw life as a natural man. He asks the question : **“Is life worth living.?”**

ECCLESIASTES

STUDY 2

THE FIRST SERMON

Chapter 1:12-3:15)

INTRODUCTION

Solomon is now going to illustrate from his own experience how he found meaning to life. In the first section we will see Solomon looking at life as a natural man, unenlightened by God's revelation. But then in the second section, he tells us of the change that happened when God came into his life.

1. UNDER THE SUN (1:12-2:23)

Solomon looked to four areas for meaning to life.

A. INTELLECT IS NOT THE KEY TO LIFE (1:12-18)

At this stage Solomon tried to find meaning to life in Philosophy. He devoted himself to study. But he found that the more he studied the more he was dissatisfied in his heart, he even became the wisest man in the world (v.6) When he found the answer it drove him to bitterness and grief.

B. PLEASURE IS NOT THE KEY TO LIFE. (2:1-11)

Here is one of the most challenging passages for today. Solomon now tried to find meaning to life in laughter, drink, gaining all possessions, building houses, planning vineyards, having lots of servants. He had a harem of prostitutes, the works of art and music, but this was all meaningless it was like chasing the wind.

C. PRE-EMINENCE IS NOT THE KEY TO LIFE (2:12-17)

Solomon now excelled most men in every area of life, others could equal him, but none could surpass him. He thought that by becoming number one he would be happy.

D. HARD WORK IS NOT THE KEY TO LIFE (2:18-23)

Then Solomon tried hard work. He built massive projects, worked harder than anybody else, but this brought him despair.

So Solomon got into a time of depression because these things could not give him joy.

2. **GOD IN THE PICTURE** (2:24-3:15)

A. **THERE IS NO SATISFACTION WITHOUT GOD** (2:24-26)

Solomon finished trying all these different things, but they were all useless, there was no satisfaction.

B. **EVERYTHING IS PART OF A PLAN** (3:1-8)

Solomon realized that everything is part of a big scheme. There is a season for every event, for everything is part of a plan.

C. **EVERYTHING IS FULL OF PURPOSE** (3:9-15)

Once God becomes the centre of our lives everything becomes filled with purpose.

CONCLUSION

This remarkable testimony of Solomon is relevant today in a society that is searching for meaning to life. We must make it clear that without Jesus we have nothing, listen to Solomon.

ECCLESIASTICS
STUDY 3

THE SECOND SERMON
Chapter 3:16-5:20)

INTRODUCTION

Solomon's second sermon is basically the same as the first sermon, the only difference is that in his first sermon he occupied each of his view points once, but now in his second sermon he does it twice. The lesson is still the same. A man without God sees life as being meaningless, but the one who has God seen with lots of meaning.

1. FUTILITY (3:16-4:16)

A. NO PRE-EMINENCE (3:16-22)

In his search, Solomon now is led into law courts and to his disgust he finds that instead of there being proper administration of justice, he discovers wickedness and evil. This leads him to the conclusion that we are no better off than animals.

B. NO COMFORTER (4:1-3)

In his search, Solomon felt that life was full of oppression and for a natural person there is no comfort so he concludes by saying that the dead people are better than the living.

C. NO REST (4:4-6)

In his search, he sees another meaningless point, that is all men's labour, achievements are because of envy, and this brings no rest.

D. NO COMPANION (4:7-12)

The only conclusion here is that money does not bring friends.

E. NO FOLLOWING (4:13-16)

The person without a friend is a very lonely person says Solomon.

2. WORSHIP OF GOD (5:1-7)

Now Solomon speaks as a spiritual man and his points change dramatically like day and night.

A. HOUSE OF GOD (5:1-3)

The spiritual man loves the things of God and loves the house of God. But remember when you go in the house of God that you first go to listen before offering foolish sacrifices.

B. VOWS TO GOD (5:4-7)

When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it

3. FUTILITY (5:8-17)

Solomon again switches to the natural man and he writes these paragraphs describing the hopelessness of having too much money.

A. NO JUSTICE (5:8-9)

Solomon looks at life and notices that as each person climbs up the ladder he uses the person below him as an advantage.

B. NO SATISFACTION (5:10-12)

Greedy people need to be reminded that money does not bring happiness (v.7) money does not satisfy.

C. NO PERMANENCE (5:13-17)

Solomon says possessions are very insecure, therefore money brings no security.

4. GIFTS FROM GOD (5:18-20)

For the second time, Solomon speaks in the manner of the spiritual man who sees the blessings of life as beings gifts from God and not rewards for fruitful labour. Things such as food, clothing, etc, they come from God.

CONCLUSION

Unless God is in your life, life is hopeless. Once God is at the centre in your life, worship, service and joy are the results.

ECCLESIASTES
STUDY 4

THE THIRD SERMON
(Chapter 6:1-8:13)

INTRODUCTION

Solomon's third sermon follows the patters of the first two sermons. He will first of all occupy the position of an unsaved man, and will speak about the futility of life, but then he will also speak as a spiritual man and will speak of things in life that are worthwhile.

1. FUTILITY - THREE THINGS WHICH ARE A WASTE OF TIME.
(6:1-12)

A. HOPING WEALTH WILL LAST (6:1-2)

Here is a person who has all the money in the world, he has all the riches which his heart could wish for but he does not enjoy them. The reason is that he dies and he has to give all his wealth to a stranger. He has no son to be heir, what a tragedy it is to build up your wealth for a stranger.

B. HOPING WEALTH WILL SATISFY (6:3-9)

This is the same thought as in the first point and it is a strong reminder that money does not satisfy it is far better to be content with what you have than to spend your wealth on things that do not satisfy.

C. HOPINGS THINGS WILL CHANGE (6:10-12)

Many people are living each day thinking things are going to change, that things are going to be better.

2. WISDOM - NINE THINGS WHICH ARE WORTHWHILE (7:1-8:13)

Now Solomon speaks as a spiritual man and he tells us of the nine things that are worthwhile.

A. HONOUR IS BETTER THAN LUXURY (7:1)

It is far better to go out of life having accomplished something worthwhile than to have passed your days in meaningless self indulgence.

B. SERIOUSNESS IS BETTER THAN FRIVOLITY (7:2-6)

Now Solomon has particular reference to the world of entertainment. We can learn far more in a house where there is mourning than when people are in a pub or shebeen drinking and laughing.

C. RESTRAINT IS BETTER THAN RASHNESS (7:7-10)

Solomon warns us here to be very careful before we speak or act, it is better in life not to react too quickly to criticism.

D. WISDOM IS BETTER THAN WEALTH. (7:11-12)

This is in a world that believes that money has all the answers. Solomon says wisdom is better.

E. SUBMISSION IS BETTER THAN REBELLION (7:13-14)

Whether it is in a home or a government, to submit is better than to rebel.

F. GODLINESS IS BETTER THAN EVERYTHING (7:15-22)

This is the greatest quality in a person's life and that is godliness.

G. REVELATION IS BETTER THAN REASON (7:22-29)

Always be guided by God's Word and not by reason.

H. DISCRETION IS BETTER THAN STUBBORNNESS (8:1-5)

I. THE FEAR OF GOD IS BETTER THAN EVIL (8:6-13)

Solomon closes off this magnificent sermon by showing us the need to have the fear of God in our lives.

ECCLESIASTES

STUDY 5

THE FOURTH SERMON

(Chapter 8:14-12:7)

INTRODUCTION

The pattern of Solomon's fourth sermon does not alter from the previous three. For the first two and a half chapters (8-10) he occupies the position of a converted man and then in the last one and a half he writes as a man of God.

1. FUTILITY (8:14-10:20)

A. ENJOY YOURSELF WHILE YOU CAN. (8:14-9:16)

For the person without God, there is no hope of life after death, therefore all he does is eat, drink and be merry.

i) ...Because God's Purposes are Unknowable (8:15-17)

We cannot understand the mind of God, life is unpredictable and therefore many people eat, drink and get merry.

ii) ...Because Death is the End (9:1-10)

For the unconverted man. Death becomes a monster after which there is nothing.

iii) ...Because Life is Uncertain. (9:11-16)

In this life, there is no telling who is going to win or lose, you do not always receive that which you expect, we are all by chance.

B. LESSONS WORTH LEARNING (9:17-10:20)

In spite of all the above, unconverted men and women are still able to make some helpful observations in life.

i) ...About Wisdom and Folly (9:17-10:15)

As we go through life we must seek to be guided by wise people, wisdom must not be despised

ii)... About the Rule of Kings. (10:16-20)

Solomon speaks about the principles of government and how dreadful it is when decisions fall into the hand of inexperienced people. He further reminds us that laziness accomplishes nothing so the first section closes with the picture of the unconverted people's thoughts, which is 'life is meaningless and their attitude is, eat drink, and be merry.'

2. PURPOSE (11:1-12:7)

Now Solomon speaks as the man who knows the Lord.

A. DO GOOD WHENEVER YOU CAN (11:1-8)

'Cast your bread upon the waters and after many days you will find it.' This is a well known verse and it means that as children of God instead of indulging ourselves we should learn to give freely and eventually our gifts will come back

B. SERVE GOD WHILE YOU ARE YOUNG. (11:9-12:7)

Solomon exhorts young people to walk with the Lord while they are young. So many put away this call until they are old.

ECCLESIASTIES
STUDY 6

EPILOGUE
(Chapter 12:8-14)

INTRODUCTION

After preaching his four sermons Solomon now brings us to the conclusion

1. THE CONCLUSION OF THE EARTH BOUND MAN (12:8)

Meaningless, meaningless everything is meaningless. A man or woman without God can ultimately do nothing more than to wring their hands and join Solomon in saying, meaningless, meaningless.

2. THE AIM AND AUTHORITY OF THE PREACHER (12:9-12)

Solomon reminds us that he had searched for the right words to write this book but ultimately says they were given by one shepherd in other words he wrote the book under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

3. THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER (12:13-14)

A. FEAR GOD

This means that instead of living for ourselves and pleasures we should be reverent and have respect for our God, because of His glory, it means that we acknowledge the Lord at every step and we review everything according to His Word.

B. THE INWARD LIFE OF A MAN OR WOMAN SHOWS ITSELF OUTWARDLY - IN OBEDIENCE

Solomon now calls for obedience and that is how the Christian should be.

C. DAY OF JUDGEMENT

Solomon now reminds us of the coming judgement, we must never forget that one day we will stand before Christ and be judged and therefore we must live each and every day in the light of the judgement day, following the commandments.

- i) No other Gods
- ii) No Idols
- iii) No Using of the Lord's Name in Vain
- iv) Keeping the Sabbath
- v) Respect Your Father/Mother
- vi) No Murder
- vii) No Adultery
- viii) No Stealing
- ix) No Lies
- x) No Coveting.

