

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

SEPT 14TH-15TH, 2019 // BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

ABOUT SOLOMON (991 B.C.-931 B.C.)

- Some debate, but Solomon is the author.
- He was the son of King David. Solomon wrote Song of Solomon (young), Proverbs (middle), and Ecclesiastes (old).
- The “wisest man ever” (1Kings) and his reign was called Israel’s Golden Age because of their prosperity and worldwide influence.
- Solomon didn’t end well. Though he started off strong, his power and money led him to have 700 wives, 300 concubines, allegiances with countries that worshiped false gods, and eventually even he “was not wholeheartedly devoted to the Lord.” (1Kings 11:4)

ABOUT THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

One of the most misunderstood books of the Bible. Three words summarize this book: **comfort**, **disillusionment**, and **warning**.

- It tells us that we don’t know it all. Solomon’s words humble us because even the wisest of us cannot fully understand God. **It is about the futility of selfish pursuits and a life without God.**

WAS THIS SOLOMON’S REPENTANCE LETTER?

The Bible doesn’t clearly say that Solomon ever repented for the evil he had done (wives, bringing in foreign religions, excess), but many believe Ecclesiastes was his repentance.

- Keddie calls Ecclesiastes “a divine bait-and-switch apologetic that carries the reader from the edge of hell to the threshold of heaven.”

POINTLESS (ECCLES. 1:1-8)

A PRETTY ABRUPT START

The main theme of this book comes into focus immediately: **life without God is a meaningless and bleak existence**. Solomon’s goal is to crush any idea that we can have true contentment apart from knowing God.

- The word “futile” is used 3 times in the second verse alone.

ABSOLUTE FUTILITY?

We need to make sure we take Ecclesiastes in context. The world God created should be appreciated and life should be lived to the fullest, but the pursuit of the things is empty if we don’t have a relationship with the Creator.

- **The trick is realizing where our blessings come from! God is the giver of all things good (Js. 1:17).**

“UNDER THE SUN”

This phrase is another way of saying life apart from God is pointless, and though the opening of this book seems depressing, Solomon’s hopeless narrative forces us to cry out for something more.

- **If this life is all there is, that truly is futile because we will die! Solomon begs the question, what truly matters?**

CONTRASTING MAN AND NATURE

Solomon uses several analogies about nature to show just how small a person’s life is compared to the age of the earth.

- Though the earth will pass away and we’re of the greatest value to God, **our lives on this earth are short and transient**. Therefore, **we must use our time wisely and invest in eternal things**.

WE DON’T LIKE THINKING ABOUT MORTALITY

The Bible calls our lives “smoke that appears and dissipates” (Js. 4:14) and that “we are not promised tomorrow” (Pr. 27:1). We can be assured of the sun rising tomorrow, but not that we will be alive to see it.

- **Christians shouldn’t be afraid of our mortality because we should have some understanding of immortality.**

BACK TO THE POINT

The pursuit of the natural is “wearisome more than anyone can say” and the “eye is not satisfied by seeing or the ear filled with hearing.”

- No matter how much we try to fill ourselves up with material possessions, power, pleasure, or even the good things of this life, **without God we will never be satisfied or content**.

NOTHING NEW (ECCLES. 1:9-11)

“THERE IS NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN”

One of Solomon’s most famous phrases is another way of expressing that life apart from God is meaningless.

- Though there are new innovations throughout time, things like power, status, wealth, and pleasure have always been the selfish pursuit of people.

NEW PACKAGE, SAME RESULT

The “good life” has been repackaged in every generation, but the results have been the same. **Even when one gains all the pleasures of this world, without God life is empty.**

- Solomon had it all! More money, power, sex, and influence than anyone else of his time! Look at people in our time that “have it all” but are miserable.

EVEN A LEGACY FALLS SHORT

Pr. 13:22 says, **“A good man leaves an inheritance for his grandchildren.”** A good legacy is important, but Solomon is saying that even the strongest legacy is pointless if the remembered person isn’t saved.

- Think about famous musicians, actors, and entrepreneurs that we still talk about but probably weren’t saved.

PUZZLING (ECCLES. 1:12-18)

STUDY AND EXPERIMENTATION

Solomon “applied [his] mind to examine and explore...all that is done under heaven.” Not only did he explore all pleasures, but he had become extremely knowledgeable in other religions, arts, sciences, and philosophy.

- **Education is good, but the pursuit of knowledge without knowing the Giver of knowledge is futile.**

THE MEANING OF LIFE

We often ask what the meaning of life is, but without something greater than this life, that question has no answer.

- **It is only by acknowledging that a personal God exists that we truly find purpose in living.** Without an afterlife, this life might as well be self-serving anarchy.

IT IS LIKE CHASING THE WIND

Solomon says the pursuit of knowledge without God is like trying to catch the wind. **Mankind feels the force of something greater, but when our futile means of explaining it doesn’t work, we get angry and hopeless.**

- Our culture’s plan for happiness shifts like the wind and is elusive.

AND WE CANNOT FIX OUR PROBLEMS (V15)

The idea of some kind of manmade utopia is a complete farce. Mankind is incapable of fixing itself, hence the 1st coming of Christ and the eventual 2nd coming.

- **There is no political, economical, or philosophical answer that will make humanity good. It’s only the power of God’s Spirit that can restore us.**

LEARNING FROM SOLOMON’S MISTAKES

V16-17 give a resume of how far Solomon took his pursuit of understanding life. He was the most wise and affluent leader of his time and had indulged in virtually every sin, but at the end of his life **it had all come up short**.

- 1 Kings says God gave Solomon incredible wisdom and he had memorized over 3000 proverbs.

THE WRONG PURSUIT HAS DIRE CONSEQUENCES

In Solomon’s selfish pursuit, he engaged in “madness and folly.” **Folly** is a lack of good sense leading to poor choices. **Madness** is boastful arrogance that sets one’s self against God.

- **If we pursue the wrong things, we will not only make poor decisions, we will set ourselves against God.**

BALANCE AND TARGETS

- The Bible is full of balance and Ecclesiastes must be approached with balance. **There is nothing wrong with learning, asking questions, and enjoying this life, but we must do this without sinning and with proper motives.** We must be balanced by the Holy Spirit. If we pursue the wrong things, we will not only make poor decisions, we will set ourselves against God.
- What are we pursuing? **What is our definition of the meaning of life?**
- What are the motives behind our pursuits?
- Are we sacrificing eternal things (people and our own salvation) for temporary things (money, power, pleasure)?
- **Have our pursuits given us the results we have wanted?**