

Old Testament Literature

Session 6 - Ecclesiastes Part 1 - Dr. Chris Miller

Ecclesiastes gets at our view of who God is and what He's like.

- Would God fit in my circle of friends? Would God be any fun as a friend?
- If it wasn't about Salvation... would you even like the person of God?

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." A.W. Tozer

Various Views

- **Bruce Waltke** - Leading Hebrew Scholar of our generation.
"Ecclesiastes is the most misunderstood book in the entire Bible"
- **Old Scofield Reference Bible** - original study Bible 1917 - 1980 - only one available
Conclusions and reasonings of a man -- not truth from God.
Filled with the kind of reasoning you want to AVOID!

"Inspiration sets down accurately what passes, but the conclusions and reasonings are, after all, man's." By the inspiration of God, words are accurately recorded ... but the lies of Satan in Genesis 3 weren't true.
 - **But... Solomon is the author**, "Son of David", many parallels between the "Author" of this book and the way Solomon is described elsewhere in 1 Kings... his money, wisdom, servants, and building projects.
 - **The conclusion of the book** says: these are "*delightful words*" and "*words of truth*"; they are like "*well driven nails, given by One Shepherd*"
Truth you can hang your life on. Ps 23... "*Yahweh is my Shepherd*".
- **Ecclesiastes Total Life** By Walter C. Kaiser, Jr (OT Scholar, Pastor)

Look at Solomon's Life: reigned 40 years from 970 BC to 930 BC

Near to God...

(Enjoy Life)

Solomon asked for Wisdom

At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a

dream, and God said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you."

Solomon answered, ... "give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?" 1 Kings 3:5,7-9

Then Far from God... accumulates horses, gold & foreign wives who turn his heart

(Vanity - Emptiness) away from the Lord. God sends discipline against him to turn Solomon around.

Finally Turns Around... and he writes out his testimony. (Ecclesiastes)

*There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen, that it is **from the hand of God**. For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him? (God enables us to enjoy life) For to the person who is good in his sight. He has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, **while to the sinner he has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This too is vanity and striving after wind.** Ecc 2:24-26*

Problems?

- “Vanity” or “meaninglessness” (NIV) most of the time refers to ALL people, not just the sinner!

But if a man lives many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many. All that cometh is vanity Ecc 11:8

then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it, 'Vanity of vanities', says the Preacher, 'all is vanity!' Ecc 12:7-8

- Kaiser is RIGHT when he says that God gives the ability to enjoy life and is pleased when we do so, BUT whatever this “vanity” is, everyone, not just the sinner is getting a full dose of it.

*“Vanity! Vanity” says the teacher. “All is vanity! Everything is vanity!”
“Vanity! Vanity! Says the teacher. “All is vanity!” Ecc 1:2, 12:8*

Importance & Definition of “Vanity”

Note the bookending of the word... (1:2;12:8) From the **dictionary**: Not “meaningless” Transience, perplexity, vapor... but where does this come from?
*Where else in **Scripture** is the concept defined?*

*I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. **For the creation was subjected to vanity, (the trouble that comes from the curse of Genesis 3) not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.** Rom 8*

*Then to Adam He said, “... Cursed is the ground because of you; In **toil** you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; by the **sweat of your face** you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; **For you are dust, and to dust you shall return. (death)** Gen 3:17-19*

*the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so **dies** the other, indeed they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity. All go to the same place, **All came from the dust and all return to the dust. “Under the sun”** (as far as life right now is concerned) the **curse** will get you just like it gets roadkill. Ecc 3:19-20*

Fuller Definition

Futility, Frustration, limitation and ultimately death which every person experiences as a result of living in a sin-cursed world.

Or succinctly: "Life as a result of the curse"

Flat tires... a part of real life. Broken relationship. Bad Weather. Flu. Bad breath. Cancer... happens to all of us. Bills bigger than a paycheck. Car accidents. Death of a parent, a friend, of me.

Solomon's Goal? Show us how to **approach life** AFTER Eden and BEFORE the kingdom.

Eden (perfect)	PERFECT LIFE	Future Kingdom (life will be perfect again)
	Now	
	CURSE ("Under the Sun")	

Survey of the book - Ecclesiastes Chapter 1-11

Major point: All of life is affected by the curse!!!

"Vanity, vanity, laments the Teacher, Absolute vanity. Everything is vanity! Ecc 1:2 What does man gain from all his labor at which he toils under the sun, a generation comes and a generation goes but the earth remains forever.

(don't you understand how wrong it is? The world is turned upside down) Ecc 1:3-4

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them **rule** over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." Genesis 1:26 (before the curse Adam and Eve are supposed to rule over it - it's hard when you're six feet under)*

The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to where it rises.

The wind blows to the south and turns to the north; round and round it goes, ever returning on its course. All streams flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place the streams come from, there they return again. Ecc 1:5-7 (The earth is eternal but people are temporal)

The Problem: Nobody remembers people

There is no remembrance of men of old and even those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow. Ecc 1:11

The Biggest Tragedy: Generations won't know the great men from the past.