

Union Chapel M.B. Church

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“Ecclesiastes, Part I”

(Study Material from Illustrated Bible Survey: An Introduction)

The book of Ecclesiastes shows us everything in life is meaning/less. The key to unraveling the mysteries of Ecclesiastes is to recognize the recurring themes found throughout the book and come to an informed understanding of how those themes relate to one another.

I. The Vanity of Life

- a. “Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity” (1:2). It is the Hebrew word *hevel*, literally meaning “vapor or mist” (James 4:14).
- b. The metaphor or “futility” (*hevel*) is used throughout Ecclesiastes to describe various aspects of life experienced in a fallen world...“fleeting,” sometimes “senseless,” even “absurd” aspects of our earthly existence.
- c. And so, Solomon searches to find if wisdom can provide any solution to the dilemma of the meaning/less of life (1:3; 3:9).

II. Life Under the Sun

- a. The expression “life under the sun” refers to the activities of man as observed and experienced from a human perspective (1:3; 1:13).
- b. He is the simply realistic in observing life from a human perspective, in other words, *life without God* (John 15:5). The perspective reveals the random emptiness of human existence.

III. The Value of Wisdom

- a. Ecclesiastes is written from a wisdom perspective. Solomon acknowledges the limits of wisdom to provide any lasting solution to the fallen condition, he nevertheless upholds the value of wisdom (2:13-14).
- b. In finding what is good for a man in the “meaning/less” days of his life (6:12), Solomon affirms the application of wisdom to a wide variety of matters.

IV. The Sovereignty of God

- a. Solomon recognizes the sovereignty of God and man’s inability to comprehend the ways of God yet realized that God “has made everything beautiful in its time” (3:11).
- b. Solomon acknowledges that God has purposed to keep man from ever fully grasping the mysteries of His sovereign ways, knowing that God “works so that people will be in awe of Him” (3:14).
- c. In the end, Solomon notes that wisdom can only plan for contingencies but cannot guarantee the future (7:13-14; 9:11-12; 11:1-6).

V. The Inevitability of Death

- a. As Solomon observes life “under the sun,” he cannot escape the reality that death is coming (3:18-21; 12:1-7).
- b. The inevitability of death highlights the transitory nature of mortal life and provides the driving force for Solomon’s conclusion to make the most of every opportunity (9:1-10).

VI. The Enjoyment of Life

- a. Solomon concludes that life should be enjoyed to its fullest (2:24-26; 3:12-13; 3:22; 5:18-20; 8:15; 9:7-10; 11:9-10).
- b. In light of the brevity of life, man should enjoy the simple things in life while he has the opportunity.

VII. Remembering God

- a. Although Solomon realizes that wisdom does not have the capacity to explain fully the ways of God, he clearly understands that wisdom demands reverence for God (5:1-7).
- b. Life is brief; death and judgment are surely coming (3:17-19; 12:14), so the wise person will acknowledge his Creator all the days of his life.

VIII. Application

- a. Mankind will never find meaning on earth because mankind was created with an eternal destiny. Only the LORD can give us meaning in this earthly life as we journey to eternal life to come.
- b. Let us apply the word of God by getting to know the LORD early, 12:1-2. It is never too late to seek the LORD right now (1 Chron 16:11; Isa 55:6)!

Notes: