

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

"The Queerest Book in the Bible"

Ecclesiastes 1:1-3

Introduction

1. Some think that the entire Bible is queer. They have denied the authenticity of any and every book. But the one which seems to have challenged many is this one. It appears to have outdone all others in its queerness.
2. Indeed, this book has been read by many Christians with doubt and perplexity. To many it seems the book actually sanctions a form of behavior and belief which is inconsistent with the holiness and grace of the Bible generally.
3. For some, the book has been a source of hobbies, like the kind of false teaching which is found among many sects and isms. Those who reject the assurance of true salvation have found support here (9:5). The fatalists also have discovered his proof text (9:2) as has the libertine (9:2). So it is a book of question to a large number who accept the Word but are perplexed about this one.
4. To get at the pith of the matter, take some points of general concern about the book. These will serve as an aid to discover the richness of the message of this book.

1. ASCRPTION

There are those who come to this book and cannot find who actually wrote it. However, the text is quite clear about that (1:1, 12). The direction of attention is given to Solomon immediately. He is called "the Preacher." In the Hebrew, this is a feminine participle. It means a preacher, debater, assembler, one of an assembly. Meanwhile, the title of the book is a Latinized form of the Greek which means one who sits and speaks in a church. So, the great wise king of Israel, Solomon, became an exhorter.

2. DISTINCTION

For such a book as this, it must become clear that there is a difference between revelation and inspiration. The truth of God is the former, while the true record is the latter. By inspiration, God has given an accurate record of Solomon's words and findings. His theories and solutions, however, are not to be accepted as those of the Lord. The false doctrine of "soul sleep" must not be taught by this book (3:18-21; 9:4, 5) in view of direct statements of God to the contrary (2 Cor. 5:8). Like all books in the Bible, therefore, this one is designed to be Messianic, facing Christ, leading to Him, and finding all answers in Him (Col. 2:3).

3. EXCEPTIONS

Since this is man's search under the sun, it is to be expected that many items are lacking in the book. The holy covenant Name of God is omitted (Jehovah). The concepts of divine revelation on wisdom, righteousness by faith, and an appeal to personal trust in the Lord are all absent. There is no idea of divine mercy nor forgiveness in the book. Rites and ceremonies relating to Israel are all passed by. So, man in his futile attempt at finding under the sun a profitable arrangement loses out. He misses the best that God provides in Christ our Lord.

4. CONCLUSION

For those who look to find the key of the book, it is to be found near the door (1:1, 2). It hangs by the opening verses. The word "vanity" is found 37 times in the book. The phrase "under the sun" is written 29 times. They are key items. The entire book is focused on the present earthly life. Death is taken into judgment because it cuts off the joys of life and shortens life. So, Solomon looks at all things from the view of a natural man. He is wiser and richer than all others, so he brings a sharp view of things. He brings the final answer. The whole that he sees is a vapor. It is a feeding to the wind. Life is like chasing the wind. Emphatically, Solomon affirms that there is nothing better. He is the king and therefore has the whole world at his feet to provide the answer (2:12). He speaks for the world, the race for man, high and low, wise and foolish, rich and poor. He speaks before God. Somehow he sees that life under the sun is mysteriously related to and controlled by the unalterable purpose and work of God. His method of evaluation is not by processes of reasoning but by personal wise experimentation and wide observation.

5. INTENTION

Some ask why this book is in the Bible. There are good reasons: a. It is a warning to men to stop their imaginations and seek truth from God and His Word. b. The human heart is manifested (Jer. 17:9, 10). So, this book shows the wisest man to be a fool. He is left unsatisfied, confused, and with a life as a riddle--without God and His Word! c. It is important to learn that apart from God's special revelation, nothing is worthwhile. So, the final words of the book point to God (12:1, 13, 14).

Conclusion While some men are perplexed about this book, it has a message. All under the sun is a bubble. That which is worthy of concern is above the earth--Christ, the Father, and the Holy Spirit. Spiritual things are the real!