

Ecclesiastes

Introduction

Title “Ecclesiastes” comes from the Greek word in the Septuagint for the name of the speaker who calls himself Ekklesiastes which basically means “teaches the public” or “one who acts in the assembly”. It is not an actual name but more of a title. This Greek word is the translation of the Hebrew word Qoheleth which acts as a pseudonym for the author instead of using his real name. Qoheleth means “one who assembles” or “assembler”. This is the name of the occupation of the author. Two weak and misleading English equivalents would be “Teacher” or “Preacher.”

Qoheleth /Coe-hell-eth/ is the Hebrew title of this book and the name/title/occupation of the speaker.

Author: Solomon

1. Traditionally, Qoheleth, is a name referring to Solomon
2. 1:1 – The superscript says that Qoheleth was the son of David, the king of Israel.
3. 1:12 – The first speaker in the book identifies himself as “king of Israel who ruled from Jerusalem.
4. Characteristics of the author:
 - a. 2:4-9 – extreme wealth
 - b. 1:16 – great wisdom
5. 1 Kings 8 records the dedication of the temple. The Hebrew verbal root used to refer to Solomon gathering the people to hear his speech is the Hebrew root *Qhl* which may be a direct connection to the “one who assembles” the people (*Qoheleth*) and what Solomon did in 1 Kings 8 and numerous other occasions, “assembled the people” (*Qhl*)

“Ten King Solomon summoned into his presence at Jerusalem the elders of Israel, all the heads of the tribes and the chiefs of the Israelite families...” – 1 Kings 8:1

The life of Solomon led him and his nation astray according to Scripture. This book of Ecclesiastes has been considered to be Solomon’s wisdom being demonstrated in his confession and repentance. But, it is not Solomon (some even consider it after the return from exile):

1. Ecclesiastes 1:12, “Qoheleth, was king over Israel in Jerusalem”
 - a. “was” indicates Solomon is writing after he had lost the kingship
 - b. 1 Kings 11, Solomon died while he was king
2. Ecclesiastes 1:16, “I have surpassed in wisdom everyone who ruled Jerusalem before me.”
 - a. That means he surpassed David
 - b. Unless we consider all the ancient kings including Melchizedek, Adoni-zedek, etc. of the Canaanites and Jebusites
3. After the first three chapters the author does not seem to be king or even close.
 - a. Ecclesiastes 4:1-3
 - b. Ecclesiastes 5:7-8
 - c. Ecclesiastes 10:20
4. Some say Hebrew strange as if written in Aramaic and translated back into Hebrew.
 - a. 96 words of late origin or Aramaisms
 - b. Articles are often omitted
 - c. Exceeding extra particles
5. Persian words
 - a. Pardes
 - b. Pitgam

Some would say the author is writing the life and teaching of the teacher. So, the author is not Qoheleth, but writing for Qoheleth.

Outline

Ecclesiastes 1:1-11

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Ecclesiastes 1:12-18 - The More You Know, The More Miserable You Are

Solomon gave himself wholly to study and teaching. Solomon felt God had called him to this task. He even introduces himself as the king in past tense. Solomon had moved on to the grandest pursuit of all, the pursuit of knowledge.

Now, after an extended time in this capacity in study, research and teaching the first thing Solomon says in the form of introduction about this venture is that it is a crummy, worthless career choice.

Solomon concludes that:

1. He cannot get to the information he needs in order to answer the questions that he has.
2. God is doing what he wants. All our study and the little bit of understanding we gain is not going to change a thing.

Solomon's career as a researcher and teacher is hopelessly summed up in a proverb in Ecclesiastes 1:15:

"What is crooked cannot be straightened; what is lacking cannot be counted."

What he intends to be saying is:

If God has twisted it, then the problem cannot be resolved. If God has not revealed the information, you are not going to find the answer.

Sure, advances can be made in science, technology, mathematics and all other fields. But, eventually, in every field, you are going to reach the point where you can go no further. And then, all you have are more twisted problems and more unanswerable questions.

"The more knowledge, the more grief!" – Ecclesiastes 1:18